Maine Conservation Voters

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Testimony in Support of LD 1868, An Act to Advance a Clean Energy Economy by Updating Renewable and Clean Resource Procurement Laws

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Lucy Hochschartner, and I am the Climate and Clean Energy Director with Maine Conservation Voters (MCV). MCV represents over 14,000 members and supporters who are building a just, thriving future for all by acting on the climate crisis, protecting the environment, and safeguarding our democracy. I am here today to testify in support of the sponsor's amendment to LD 1868, An Act to Advance a Clean Energy Economy by Updating Renewable and Clean Resource Procurement Laws, because transitioning to clean energy is the only way to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, save money, build a homegrown energy industry, and stabilize prices.

This bill may well be the most important that you consider this year; it is certainly one that is important to me personally. I grew up on a small educational farm in the mountains. As a kid, my whole life revolved around the seasons — I spent the spring maple sugaring, the summers weeding in the garden, the falls harvesting potatoes and slaughtering chickens, and the winters ski racing. Even though I was a worrier, I remember how safe I felt in my mountains. I didn't have to worry about the volcanoes or tsunamis I saw on the TV. I didn't come across tornadoes or earthquakes. But then, in elementary school, I was taught about climate change. I so clearly remember learning about greenhouse gases, something I intuitively understood, since I had worked in our own greenhouses. It was a good thing that I learned about what was happening when I was so young, because it has helped me understand everything since.

When I was 14, Tropical Storm Irene brought huge landslides down the mountains and caused millions of dollars in damage. I am still shocked every time I drive by the water marker by the local river, showing that it rose higher than my car, taking out homes, bridges, a local fire station. When I was 22, I moved to Montana after college to join a professional biathlon team. That summer, a new set of mountains I called home caught fire and destroyed numerous houses. And since then, I've felt like the canary in the coal mine, being a skier in southern Maine. I coach middle and high schoolers at a local public school who can hardly learn to ski due to the lack of snow. And as the snow goes away, so too does a huge part of our small towns' culture. All of it breaks my heart.

Building more clean energy is the only way out of this mess. To bring down greenhouse gas emissions, it is crucial that we electrify our economy. This is because there is a much clearer path to zero emission electricity than there is to zero emission liquid fuels.[1] The task then is to both make our electricity more clean and to make more of our end uses electric. While decarbonizing our heating and transportation sector in Maine is indeed critical since they are our largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions, we cannot actually do that without clean electricity.[2] It is also clear that while this will be a challenge, it is an achievable goal. The Pathways to 2040 report commissioned by the Governor's Energy Office makes clear that not only can we reach 100% clean electricity, but there are multiple ways to get there and many cobenefits that we will see by doing so.[3] Unlike our existing renewable portfolio standard, LD 1868 is not prescriptive about what kind of clean energy we rely on, which means it will allow us to have the most flexibility moving forward to capture those additional benefits and make use of new technologies. What the Pathways report makes very clear, though, is that no matter what choices make along the way, offshore wind, onshore wind, and solar will need to make up the bulk of our electricity supply. These are the cheapest, most abundant, and most market-ready solutions.[4]

Transitioning to clean electricity will also save Mainers money. In 2021, Maine spent more than $4.7 billion on imported fossil fuels. By moving to clean electricity to heat our homes and power our vehicles, we are going to save that money instead. Analysis shows that moving to 100% clean electricity could lower average household energy costs for Maine families by about $1,300 per year.[5] It's no surprise. Between 2011 and 2022, Maine ratepayers saved an average of $21.5 million per year due to our renewable portfolio standard, a similar policy to this one.[6] Those savings were largely achieved through a reduction in wholesale market prices, as cheap, clean energy replaced expensive, dirty plants. It is clear that Maine is in the middle of an

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[1] Roberts, D. (2017, October 27). The key to tackling climate change: Electrify everything. *Vox*. https://www.vox.com/2016/9/19/12938086/electrify-everything

[2] Bureau of Air Quality, Maine Department of Environmental Protection. (2024). *Tenth Biennial Report on Progress toward Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goals*. https://www.maine.gov/dep/commissioners-office/kpi/details.html?id=606898

[3] Brattle Group and Evolved Energy Research for the Governor's Energy Office. (2024). *Maine Pathways to 2040: Analysis and Insights*. https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/2025-01/Maine%20Pathways%20to%202040%20Analysis%20and%20Insights.pdf

[4] Lazard. (2024). *Levelized Cost of Energy*. https://www.lazard.com/media/xemfey0k/lazards-lcoeplus-june-2024-_vf.pdf

[5] Brattle Group and Evolved Energy Research for the Governor's Energy Office. (2024). *Maine Pathways to 2040: Analysis and Insights*. https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/2025-01/Maine%20Pathways%20to%202040%20Analysis%20and%20Insights.pdf

[6] Sustainable Energy Advantage for Governor's Energy Office. (2024). An Assessment of Maine's Renewable Portfolio Standard. https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/inline-files/Maine-RPS-Impacts-and-Procurement-Policy-Options-Report-Master-FINAL.pdf

affordability crisis[7] and that while it is not the entire solution, clean energy must be the centerpiece of *any* affordability solution.

Clean electricity also keeps money in our communities. Maine is blessed with world-class offshore wind resources[8], and the ability to harness the wind and sun onshore as well. On the other hand, we do not have any fossil fuels. In other words, clean electricity is homegrown electricity. As the Department of Energy acknowledges, this offers real national security advantages.[9] Maine has a once in a generation opportunity to go all-in on an industry that can create good, union jobs in our communities, be owned and operated by Maine businesses or public entities, and not only keep our communities safe, but help them prosper.

Clean electricity is also less volatile. We all know what it is like to be hit with a bill you didn't know was coming — whether it's your car breaking down, an unexpected medical expense, or yes, a huge increase in energy prices because of global markets. We all saw the way this happened when Russia invaded Ukraine. As the World Resources Institute notes, once clean and renewable energy sources are built, their fuel source is generally free, making them less vulnerable to shocks.[10] This stability, in addition to their lower cost, is going to be something that helps the most vulnerable among us.

It is up to us to make sure that we make the most of this transition. There are a number of bills still remaining for the committee to work on relating to the fate of the clean energy transition. MCV is committed to engaging across legislation to ensure that we are moving to clean energy as quickly as possible, with the greatest benefits to Maine families, and the strongest environmental, labor, and equity standards. If you have questions or need any resources for any work session, we would be happy to provide them.

Sincerely,
Lucy Hochschartner

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[7] VEIC for the Electricity Ratepayer Advisory Council. (2024). Quantifying Maine's Household Energy Burden and Affordability Gap. https://www.maine.gov/meopa/sites/maine.gov.meopa/files/inline-files/ERAC%20Report%20with%20Consultants%20Reports%20Embedded.pdf

[8] Maine Offshore Wind Initiative. (Accessed May 2024). About. https://www.maineoffshorewind.org/about/#:~:text=Launched%20in%20June%202019%20by,MAINE'S%20OFFSHORE%20WIND%20PARTNERS

[9] Department of Energy. (Accessed May 2024). Energy Independence and Security. https://www.energy.gov/eere/energy-independence-and-security

[10] World Resources Institute. (Accessed May 2024). Renewable Energy Shouldn't Be Blamed for Spiking Energy Prices — It's the Solution. https://www.wri.org/insights/why-renewable-energy-solution-high-prices