

Testimony of Rene Augustus La Casse in Support of  
**LD 1967: Resolve, to Establish the Maine Home Energy Navigator and Coaching Pilot Program**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and honorable members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee. I am Rene Augustus La Casse, and I am the Manager of Municipal Strategy and Policy Analyst at A Climate to Thrive (ACTT). ACTT is a community-driven non-profit that is working on a clean energy transition that prioritizes community benefits across Maine, with a particular focus on energy equity. Thank you for providing me with this opportunity to support **LD 1967: Resolve, to Establish the Maine Home Energy Navigator and Coaching Pilot Program**.

This legislation seeks to create the Maine Home Energy Navigator and Coaching Pilot Navigator Program which will be overseen by the Office of Community Affairs. This program will provide Maine homeowners with impartial education and analysis about energy-saving opportunities, as well as home assessments of home building performance. The program will function by working with two to five non-profit organizations around Maine to assess the effectiveness of their program, and understand consumer feedback of these programs.

This bill seeks to replicate efforts that have already proven successful. For example, York has implemented a volunteer-powered energy coaching program which has resulted in hundreds of visits by a devoted team of coaches who help homeowners navigate the overwhelming amount of information available to support identification of applicable home performance solutions and available funding to support implementation.. In Massachusetts, the HeatSmart Alliance program has been instrumental in assisting thousands of homeowners in over fifty towns by providing clear information and support to help homeowners access heat pump installation.

At A Climate to Thrive, we have implemented several “Weatherize” and “Electrify” programs over the years to support homeowner insulation, air sealing, and heat pump installation. We have heard time and again that the value in this programs is the clear information they provide to help homeowners navigate what otherwise feels like an overwhelming system and process in terms of understanding available improvements, identifying contractors, and understanding available incentives. In our work throughout the state, we have heard repeated requests from all corners of Maine for a program like the one outlined in this bill. In fact, the need for such a program was referenced in the recommendations made by both the Buildings Working Group and the Energy Working Group during the recent update to Maine Won’t Wait, the state climate action plan. ACTT has also heard from numerous organizations throughout the state who are eager to implement this type of energy navigator program, but are unable to do so due to a lack of

funding. This bill would address this funding challenge and accelerate critical, cost-saving building improvements throughout the state.

While heat pumps are an important building performance solution, this bill does well to center building science in the program's construction. This is critical, as foundational solutions like insulation or window improvements are often essential first steps, particularly here in Maine where we have one of the oldest housing stocks in the country. Coaching can illuminate these important steps, supporting homeowners in taking impactful, lasting action.

At a time when many homeowners are struggling to pay their heating bills, a program like this would have lasting, profound impact. This bill will help homeowners learn about minor and major changes they can make to their home that will save them energy and money. ACTT encourages this honorable committee to support **LD 1967: Resolve, to Establish the Maine Home Energy Navigator and Coaching Pilot Program.**