

Testimony of Ajay Lesperance
In Support of
LD 1792, *An Act Regarding Energy Policy of the State*
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
May 15, 2025

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology; I am Ajay Lesperance, President of United Steelworkers Local 900 representing the working men and women, here today to provide testimony in support of LD 1792, "*An Act Regarding Energy Policy of the State*." representing the hourly work force of the ND Paper Mill in Rumford, Maine. Our 363 members and their families live and work in Rumford and Western Maine. After going through difficult times in recent years, we are working together to make our mills safer and more competitive. We look forward to ensuring a positive future for our families and our communities.

We are concerned that the need for paying the costs of NEB may needlessly risk remaining jobs in rural Maine.

As you may know, Maine has a lot fewer manufacturers than it once did. This is especially true in the Androscoggin River Valley. The societal impact of these losses is a hard reality.

We are not opposed to the responsible growth of more renewable energy, and our unions are committed to participating in the move to a lower carbon future. We believe that can be done without risking our jobs. The decisions you are going to be making in passing LD 1792 could have a substantial impact on our jobs. We can minimize that impact with an equitable allocation of Net Energy Billing costs as proposed by this bill. We urge you to make your decision on the basis of avoiding irreversible impacts on jobs like ours.

The cost of high energy prices has already affected manufacturing in the state. The closure of Dragon Products, for example, was a huge blow to the rural area. Layoffs at the Thomaston plant began in December 2023 and concluded earlier this year. During that time, the unemployment rate in Thomaston rose from 3% to 5.5%.

If the state does not curb the burden being placed on manufacturers more facilities will close. This will be detrimental to our rural communities and to Maine as a whole.

Please approve LD 1792. This is a fair solution that minimizes risk to Maine's working men and women.