

To: Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
From: Jackson Chadwick, Maine Youth for Climate Justice
Date: Thursday, October 30, 2025



RE: Testimony in Support of L.D. 1966: “An Act to Improve Access to Community Solar Programs in the State”

Dear Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology,

Good afternoon, my name is Jackson Chadwick, and I represent Maine Youth for Climate Justice (MYCJ) as their Advocacy & Organizing Director. MYCJ supports young people in the fight for climate action and justice through legislative advocacy, community organizing, and educational programming. Our 500+ members range from high school and college students to young adults entering and contributing to Maine’s workforce.

On behalf of MYCJ’s members, I am testifying in support of L.D. 1966: “An Act to Improve Access to Community Solar Programs in the State.” In addition to the bill’s goal of expanding access to community solar for low- and moderate-income residents, we are specifically testifying in support of the provisions to improve transparency about administrative and public policy charges on ratepayers’ bills.

In recent years, Mainers have heard much dis- and misinformation about why their electricity bills are increasing. As part of this, there is confusion as to what “public policy charges” consist of and how they factor into ratepayers’ bills. Public policy charges include renewable energy programs, low-income energy assistance programs, and more. As of 2023, Central Maine Power estimated that these charges accounted for just 5.1% of their average customer’s electricity bill¹.

Although a small percentage of a monthly bill, we believe that all public policy charges should be listed and described in detail—including their costs and benefits to ratepayers. Doing so increases transparency around charges on a customer’s bill that an electric utility does not set. For young Mainers renting for the first time or purchasing their own home, this will help clear up any confusion when reading their bills and understanding where particular charges originate from.

MYCJ’s members also value the section regarding administrative charges. In the name of transparency, we believe that an electric utility (as defined in the bill) with over 50,000 customers should disclose all administrative costs (e.g., for grid interconnection) on any proposal or invoice sent to customers. If the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) finds that an electric utility has charged customers excessively for administrative costs, it is only fair to require the utility to refund those costs.

L.D. 1966 also requires the Electric Ratepayer Advisory Council to suggest ways for the Public Advocate to enhance access to community solar programs. It is crucial that low- and moderate-income Mainers are empowered to participate in the clean energy transition and have access to these programs to lower their electricity costs; therefore, we support this provision.

¹ “Know the Facts.” Central Maine Power. 2023.

https://www.cmpco.com/documents/40117/115964240/FINAL_Design_Know+the+facts_CMP+bill+components+fact+sheet_10.6.23_V2.pdf?5c1d81a-9e2a-a9dc-cf99-d575fd08f87f&t=1696625623312

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Lastly, MYCJ has been skeptical of significant rollbacks to the state's Net Energy Billing (NEB) program. While we retain that skepticism, we understand the Committee's actions this year to explore ways to reduce the program's operational costs. We ask that the Committee and the PUC continue to proceed cautiously and find ways to reduce costs without sacrificing benefits for Mainers currently enrolled in the program, particularly low- and moderate-income households.

As a whole, this bill intends to ensure fairness for Maine ratepayers and to establish clearer guidelines to enhance transparency for our electric utilities. Therefore, Maine Youth for Climate Justice kindly asks you to vote "ought to pass" on L.D. 1966.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our testimony. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Jackson Chadwick
Advocacy & Organizing Director
Maine Youth for Climate Justice
jackson@mycj.org