

Testimony
In support of LD 1730

*An Act to Make Small, Portable, Plug-in Solar Generation Devices
Accessible for All Maine Residents to Address the Energy Affordability Crisis*

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs and members of the Energy Utilities and Technology Committee my name is Sue Inches and I am an environmental writer and educator. My husband and I own a small farm in North Yarmouth.

I am delighted to see this bill proposing small scale “balcony solar”. Balcony or small or scale plug in solar is a low-cost alternative that can provide supplemental power to households and small businesses. Balcony solar is particularly well suited to farms.

My husband and I have a commercial scale hoop house that’s 27x40 feet in size. It has a large indoor vegetable garden inside. It runs on a small fan that keeps it inflated 24/7. We also have an irrigation pump that pumps water from a pond to our greenhouse and outdoor gardens. Balcony or small scale solar would be the perfect way to power our greenhouse and irrigation system.

Most Maine farms have similar hoop houses, barns, sheds, outbuildings and irrigation systems that could run on portable solar power. Small scale solar could provide lighting, ventilation, water and electricity for small equipment on farms.

LD 1870 would define a new class of small scale solar that would be exempt from utility interconnection agreements. As I understand it the bill would also create safety standards for plug in solar panels.

By legalizing these small scale solar units, the legislature would support farms, small businesses and residents who are seeking to lower their energy costs. This bill would also set the stage for a new industry in Maine to manufacture, sell and install small solar units.

I can see no downside to making these small solar units legal and available without involvement from our electric utilities. Please vote in support of this bill.

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