

To: Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

From: William J. Weber, Portland Climate Action Team

Date: January 5, 2026

Re: 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

Affordability, affordability, affordability.

Dear Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and Members of the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, did I mention affordability? The 132<sup>nd</sup> Maine Legislature must enact every conceivable measure to make living in our state more affordable. LD 1730 is one such measure.

I am writing to you on behalf of the Portland Climate Action Team (PCAT) 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. PCAT, with a membership of over one hundred Portland residents and business owners, supports the City's efforts to address climate change through the implementation of the strategies laid out in the City's Climate Action Plan, One Climate Future. Implementing low cost residential solar is a core element in that strategy. LD 1730 is a step in that direction.

Let's face it, regulations and state incentives favor the property owner, the homeowner. This is hardly an equitable approach to dealing with the high energy burden in low-income households in Maine. A report issued in December 2024 by VEIC & Beech Hill Research found that home energy burden for low-income households is 14%, more than double the 6% affordability threshold and that over 200,000 households are facing unaffordable home energy costs.

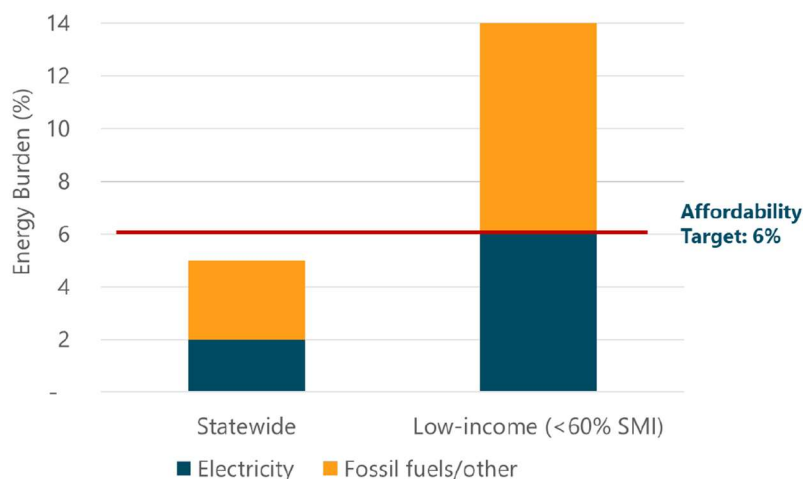


Figure 3. Statewide home energy burdens, for all households and low-income households.

The report [Quantifying Maine's Household Energy Burden and Affordability Gap](#), A report to the Maine Electric Ratepayer Advisory Council, went on to say,

**Maine's aggregate home energy affordability gap is growing: it more than doubled between 2020 and 2022, and we expect that it will increase further in 2024 to over \$400 million.**

Portland as well as several other big cities in Maine, South Portland another, have a large percentage of renters in multifamily units. These renters are locked out of many energy savings programs that are available to homeowners. In Portland over half of our housing units are occupied by renters. See figure below.

#### Portland, Maine • Housing tenure\*\*

■ Renter occupied housing units	17,531
■ Owner occupied housing units	14,722



>>>> Renters take up 54% of Portland, Maine real estate, occupying a total of 17,531 units, while homeowners live in 14,722 properties.

Source: [Point2Homes, October 2025](#)

Renters who can't install a heat pump or take advantage of roof-top solar can benefit from the plugin solar units that are widely popular in Europe. The [Texas Solar Energy Society reported](#), "Germany currently has around 550,000 balcony solar systems installed, adding 200 MW of power to their grid in the first half of 2024 alone. This popularity is partially because apartment dwellers comprise more than half the population of Germany, and partially because the technology helps combat increased energy prices following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Many German cities offer subsidies for balcony solar, as well, making the systems more affordable for consumers."

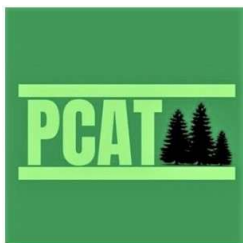
In August 2025 Maine's Solar For All grant faced cancellation by the fossil fuel friendly Trump EPA. This \$62 million dollar program was meant to assist low income and disadvantaged communities' access to renewable energy and lower the cost of energy in multi-family housing units. The State of Maine and other states are suing the government for breach of contract but for certain that money is not going to assist low-income families soon. Enacting LD 1730 would provide low-income residents with an opportunity to make living and working in Maine more affordable.

One of PCAT's core beliefs is promoting the **equitable** transition from fossil fuels to less costly forms of renewable energy. The passage of LD 1730 will assist Portland and the State in meeting the affordability crisis and at the same time help to meet our climate goals.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'W. J. Weber'.

William J, Weber, P.E. retired



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