



Testimony in Opposition to LD 1730

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

January 9, 2026

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the committee, my name is James Cote and I am here today on behalf of Versant Power to testify in respectful opposition to the Sponsor's Amendment to LD 1730.

Versant's opposition stems solely from technical concerns about the safety and reliability of plug-in solar and battery devices for customers, our employees and the grid.

Versant believes there is a clear path forward, which the Company would support, that would authorize the permissive usage of these devices outside the utility interconnection process once the devices themselves (not just their component parts) have been certified as meeting applicable industry and safety standards.

Versant's understanding is that such standards are under active development and anticipate they may be finalized soon. Such an approach would track that taken in Utah, which this year became the first U.S. state to authorize the usage of these devices outside utility interconnection processes.

Versant recognizes the deployment of plug-in photovoltaic (solar) and battery systems may have the potential to help customers offset their electricity usage and control costs. Versant supports empowering customers to manage their energy consumption and production and is committed to facilitating the deployment of technologies, including "balcony solar" devices, that can help accomplish this.

As a transmission and distribution utility, Versant's first responsibility is safety, of our customers and our employees. Recognizing the potential safety and reliability concerns these devices can pose to customers, electrical workers and the reliability impacts they may have on the grid, Utah structured its recently adopted statute to allow permissive use plug-in solar devices under certain conditions, including a requirement that the device "meets the standards of the most recent version of the National Electrical Code ("NEC"); and is certified by Underwriters Laboratories or an equivalent nationally recognized testing laboratory."¹

¹ See Utah H.B. 340, "Solar Power Amendments," signed by the Governor 3/25/25.



The Sponsor's Amendment to LD 1730, however, departs from Utah's H.B. 340, including by specifying that only the device's *inverter* be UL listed. Given UL standards for complete plug-in solar products are still in development, such inverters may be being used by these products in ways that differ from those for which they were UL listed.

Additionally, the amendment would require compliance with an Article of the NEC before the NEC has been updated to specifically accommodate plug-in devices.

Plug-in solar and storage are relatively new technologies and Underwriters Laboratory ("UL") standards for these products are still in the process of being developed. As such, Versant's understanding is that there are currently no UL-listed and NEC-certified complete plug-in solar products on the market.²

Similarly, the National Fire Protection Association ("NFPA") has thus far declined to make code changes to specifically allow for the use of plug-in solar systems within the NEC until the UL process is complete and there are Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter ("GFCI") devices designed and certified to work bi-directionally (current GFCIs have only been certified in the load direction).

Once these standards are in place, Versant supports the ability of customers to adopt such products in Maine outside the interconnection process, subject to certain reasonable criteria, e.g. the overall size limitation and utility notification requirement already contained in the Sponsor's Amendment.

Versant would also note for the Committee's consideration that should Maine allow for the use of plug-in solar and/or storage devices outside the current interconnection process, utilities may be impaired in their ability to proactively identify system upgrades necessary to ensure safety and reliability upon the interconnection of new generation devices.

Currently, utilities model such needs prior to a new interconnection, ensuring safety and reliability needs are met and the "cost-causer," i.e., the interconnecting customer, is responsible for the cost of such upgrades (rather than those costs being absorbed by all ratepayers).

If plug-in devices are adopted in sufficient numbers (especially in certain areas on Versant's system, which already has an extremely high level of DER penetration as a percentage of load), it is possible, if not likely, that necessary system upgrades may be identified "after the fact." In such a case, there would be much less clarity regarding which customers may have caused the grid need or how such

² There has been some confusion regarding this fact as there may be individual components (e.g. the inverter) of these systems that are UL-listed; however, the complete system itself is not UL-listed as UL standards for these systems have not yet been adopted.



costs ought to be allocated and recovered, presenting an important policy question for regulators and policymakers to resolve.

Versant supports the ability of customers to leverage technologies to manage their energy, including plug-in solar in battery devices. The Company also believes such devices must be subject to rigorous safety standards in order to protect customers and those who work on the electrical system. We believe a reasonable path forward would be to follow the approach recently adopted in Utah and subject to the other reasonable requirements set forth in the Sponsor's Amendment.

Thank you for your consideration and we would be happy to answer any questions for the work session.