



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

PO Box 3760
Portland, ME 04104
Phone: (207) 761-5616
www.sierraclub.org/maine

To: Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

From: Matthew Cannon, Sierra Club Maine

Date: January 14, 2026

Re: **Testimony in Support of LD 838: An Act to Explore Public Financing and Ownership of Electric Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure**

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

I write on behalf of the Sierra Club Maine Chapter, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million supporters and members nationwide as we work towards combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable future for all people. To that end, we present this testimony in support of LD 838.

With energy affordability on all Mainers' minds this winter, we need to take bold action. Costs are skyrocketing due to fracked gas volatility, oil prices, and utility profits, just to name a few causes. To fully decarbonize our grid and make it more resilient to the increasing challenges of our warming climate while reducing costs to ratepayers, we need something new. Our current system isn't working, and a public transmission authority is the big solution we need right now. While it doesn't completely address energy costs, it will ensure that more clean energy and battery storage is built, saving Mainers money.

The biggest benefit of this bill is the ability to use public bonding authority to save on interest. That savings means our dollars will go much further to building clean energy capacity, battery storage, and the infrastructure we need.

This Board will also take on important transmission planning work. Though there is currently grid planning happening by the utilities at the PUC, it is taking far too long, and really should be done through a public entity, in collaboration with the new DOER.

The make up of the Board is fair and appropriate, with appointments from impacted parties, the general public and standing members from agency leads closest to this work.

Lastly, the Board's ability to fund various projects ensures Maine moves forward with its climate and clean energy goals. The Board 'shall' consider efficiency options, including storage and advanced transmission technologies (e.g.), accelerating decarbonization and grid resiliency, while effectively reducing costs for ratepayers. Moreover, they may fund:

- A. Transmission and distribution projects, including energy storage systems;
- B. Alternative transmission technologies or grid-enhancing technologies, as defined in section 3148;
- C. Nonwires alternative technologies; and
- D. Energy generation projects, geothermal projects or beneficial electrification projects that help to meet the State's greenhouse gas reduction target or qualify for the State's clean electricity standard as described in section 3210.

Although we would have loved to see even more bold legislation (i.e. a generation authority), this transmission authority is a significant step for Maine, and one that we should take on immediately. Please support LD 838.

Matt Cannon
State Conservation & Energy Director
Sierra Club Maine