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Karen Blakelock, Policy Advisor
The Nature Conservancy in Maine
karen.blakelock@tnc.org



Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

RE: LD 838—An Act to Explore Public Financing and Ownership of Electric Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, my name is Karen Blakelock, and I work as the energy policy advisor for the Nature Conservancy in Maine. I appreciate this opportunity to comment in support of LD 838.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that both nature and people can thrive. We work in more than 70 countries, and use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners.

While we understand that at the time of this public hearing the bill is still a work-in-progress, The Nature Conservancy supports the concept of a public entity tasked with providing low interest financing for the purpose of reducing the costs of building electric storage and transmission infrastructure.

A study conducted by the Clean Air Task Force in California found that public-private financing for transmission infrastructure could save Californians \$3 billion per year.¹ If even a fraction of this amount of savings could be possible for ratepayers in Maine, this committee should consider the opportunity presented in this bill. In November 2025, the Office of the Public Advocate released a statement that, in the face of rising and volatile energy costs, “affordability must remain at the center of every decision we make about Maine’s energy future.”² Polling that TNC conducted last February demonstrated that the vast majority of Mainers view the cost of living and the cost of electricity to be very serious problems. LD 838 offers the opportunity to explore a piece of the solution.

With the knowledge that this bill will likely change drastically between now and when this committee votes on it, we ask that you **vote Ought to Pass on LD 838 in that it supports public financing and ownership of electric transmission and distribution infrastructure.** I am happy to answer any questions now or in the future.

¹ <https://www.catf.us/2024/12/analysis-public-private-financing-transmission-infrastructure-save-californians-3-billion/>

² <https://www.maine.gov/meopa/about/news/public-advocate-responds-2026-standard-offer-supply-rate-increases>