

To: Honorable Members of the Maine Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
FROM: Lissa Widoff, Town of Freedom resident  
DATE: Feb. 25, 2026  
RE: LD2174

Dear Members of the Committee:

My name is Lissa Widoff. I have resided in the town of Freedom for over 35 years, I have had a 40 year long career in environmental science, policy and planning and currently serve on the Selectboard in the small town of Freedom in Western Waldo Co., where I also served on our Planning Board and Appeals Board and Comprehensive Plan committee. I also previously served on the Maine Board of Environmental Protection. Today, I am writing as an independent citizen.

LD 2174 is clearly a response to the increasing pushback from towns, large and small to the expansion of energy development projects of all kinds, especially into rural areas. I served on the BEP during the period in which the well-intentioned rules to expedite wind farm development resulted in every single wind farm proposed in the organized towns ending up as an appeal to the BEP. In all cases towns and residents felt they were being sidelined with reduced opportunity for input. None of the projects won an appeal and few of those projects provide energy for Maine. The Town of Freedom is home to one small wind farm, built before the law went into effect, and has its own saga.

The Town of Freedom also joined other towns when the LS Transmission line was proposed to go through Freedom and many adjacent towns. Relatively poorer towns like Freedom with 700 residents a town clerk and practically volunteer selectboard, barely has the capacity to respond. Similarly solar farms have removed productive farmland from use since energy development companies can afford to compete for land in a poor rural economy. Fortunately, with strong advocates and leadership, our town developed strong and useful ordinances for major solar developments and transmission lines, Freedom has been able to use our ability to set the framework for energy and other developments. LD2174 does much more than erode Home Rule.

It is understandable that developers of any nature would want consistency when applying for a permit for a major development, especially when concerning several towns. However, if the response to the pushback from towns is to usurp that Town knowledge, care and authority by eroding home rule and overriding local knowledge and planning, then the cure is worse than the disease.

In my view, there really is no such thing as “green energy” and I call myself and environmental advocate at heart. Every energy development has tradeoffs, and we need to have honest conversations about those tradeoffs, and engage towns to define the terms that are most consistent with the desire for comprehensive planning that

reflects local values while encouraging strategies that support economic and energy development appropriately.

I strongly urge rejection of LD 2174 and the proposed amendment, both submitted by Representative Kessler. Just as the legislature mandated a task force to look at property tax reform, to address increasing burdens on towns, the legislature could take a similar approach to engage diverse voices in reconciling energy demands for Maine and how those will be met while supporting the values of conservation and comprehensive planning that are sorely needed to plan for increasing growth in our towns. Taking away the power of small towns to address multifaceted needs and goals does not bode well for how our towns can work to collaborate towards shared interests. Regional cooperation is needed, not elimination of local authority.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lissa Widoff

PO Box 21

Freedom, ME 04941

[lissawidoff@gmail.com](mailto:lissawidoff@gmail.com)