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LD 2174

My name is David Nishizaki, I live in Vassalboro, ME and I am testifying in opposition to LD 2174 "An Act to Replace the Maine Waterway Development and Conservation Act with the Maine Renewable Energy and Associated Transmission Development and Conservation Act.

The bill's sponsor, Representative Kessler, has circulated a proposed amendment that completely replaces the original legislation. He has requested that interested persons provide comment and input on this amendment rather than on the bill as printed. The new title is LD 2174, "An Act to Increase Predictability in the Permitting of Renewable Energy Development."

Do not be fooled by the title. This bill serves as a ploy to expedite energy domination by global, centralized energy corporations. It would push Maine to produce five to six times its current energy output—not to power our homes and local businesses, but to feed the insatiable demands of the growing AI and tech industry. Make no mistake: this bill paves the way for destructive data centers that will consume enormous amounts of energy while offering little benefit to our communities.

This legislation would undermine home rule authority and circumvent the environmental protections that should apply to projects of this scale. While renewable energy production is necessary and important, it also demands a discerning and judicious approach—one that respects local voices and local impacts. This bill operates on the dangerous assumption that "the State knows best" and that "energy corporations know what is best" for our communities. If we lose our agency at the local level to decide what impacts we will accept, we forfeit our ability to shape the future of our own towns.

Home rule is not an obstacle to progress—it is an essential checks and balances tool. It allows us to participate in building our communities for future generations instead of letting distant energy corporations determine our futures from boardrooms far from Maine.

Sustainable energy systems are democratized and decentralized, with conservation at their core. This bill, by contrast, encourages a pathway that favors corporatism over democratic process. It hands decision-making authority to extractive industries that view our landscapes and our communities as resources to be exploited rather than places to be stewarded.