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Greetings Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and Members of the ENR Committee:

As a member of Maine Youth for Climate Justice and a Board Steward for the Center for an Ecology-Based Economy, I support the advancement of clean energy projects that reduce our reliance on, and the costs of, finite resources such as fossil fuels. I would like to see a future unburdened by harsh climates and increasingly common “100-year” weather events that damage and destroy local infrastructure.

However, as a municipal officer, I oppose legislation that undermines home rule authority in favor of larger, dominant corporations being able to act quickly without adequate consideration of local environmental and recreational interests. As written, this bill appears to undermine home rule authority and circumvent environmental protections for such projects. Small towns like mine are already ill-prepared to manage and regulate large developments such as these and often rely on state protections to prevent enterprises from taking advantage of this reality and reaping benefits from our community - benefits for which we are often not adequately compensated.

Before advancing legislation such as this in the name of promoting clean energy, I urge our Legislature to first establish protections against the development of immensely energy-consuming AI data centers, as well as fair taxation policies for companies that benefit from our shared resources. Only then should action be taken on proposals such as this, for which many communities remain ill-prepared.