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**TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE ASSOCIATION OF PLANNERS
TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY PROVIDED NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST LD #2174
“An Act to Increase Predictability in the Permitting of Renewable Energy Development”**

**Honorable Senator Denise Tepler, Honorable Representative Victoria Doudera,
Distinguished Members of the Environmental and Natural Resources Committee:**

The Legislative Policy Committee of the Maine Association of Planners submits testimony neither for nor against LD2174: “An Act to Increase Predictability in the Permitting of Renewable Energy Development.” As planners, we are committed to building a more sustainable future for Maine residents and see the value in expanding production and storage of solar, wind, and hydroelectric power. We also have concerns regarding the limitations on local control proposed in LD2174.

LD2174, as currently proposed, would limit a municipality’s authority over solar energy developments, wind energy developments, energy storage system developments, and high-impact electric transmission lines. A municipality would be unable to adopt standards, conditions, or requirements more stringent than those contained within 38 MRSA §420-D; 38 §480-F; 38 §480-E; and 38 §3204. Those already adopted would become null and void.

LD2174 also sets special processing time limits for the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP) regarding solar energy developments and energy storage system developments. In practice, this will likely result in projects being approved automatically or projects being prioritized over others within the queue. Additional staffing may be required to ensure processing time limits are met without significant impacts on other MDEP applications.

We understand that standardizing requirements for solar energy developments, wind energy developments, hydroelectric energy developments, energy storage system developments, and high-impact electric transmission lines provide predictability to developers. Cities like Saco and Augusta have proven track records for implementing large-scale solar projects within their communities. LD2174 may open up opportunities within smaller towns and villages.

With that said, we suggest the following amendments to LD2174:

- We request that minor technical rulemaking be changed to major substantive rule making for additional discussion regarding implementation.

- We request that a statewide unified standard regarding soils be adopted. Development of prime farmland outside of growth zones should be discouraged through this standard.
- We request that municipalities be listed second on decommissioning plans to ensure enforcement authority.
- We request high-impact electrical transmission lines be removed from LD2174.

In sum, we support the increased production of renewable energy developments within Maine, but see potential issues with LD2174 as it is currently proposed. Further discussion and revision may be warranted to avoid unintended consequences of the bill.

Sincerely,

Maine Association of Planners Legislative Policy Committee