



Testimony in Opposition to LD 2220:

“An Act to Establish the Maine Home Energy Navigator and Coaching Resource Hub”

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Montana Towers, and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free market think tank, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to LD 2220, “An Act to Establish the Maine Home Energy Navigator and Coaching Resource Hub.”

This proposal creates a new government-managed program within the Department of Energy Resources and appropriates \$100,000 in taxpayer funds to develop standardized training curricula and materials for community-based energy coaching programs. We believe this approach represents unnecessary bureaucratic expansion, duplicates existing services, and moves Maine further toward centralized energy planning rather than consumer-driven solutions.

Creation of a New Bureaucratic Program

L.D. 2220 establishes the “Maine Home Energy Navigator and Coaching Resource Hub” within the Department of Energy Resources. The department would be responsible for developing and distributing standardized curricula and materials to communities seeking to implement energy coaching programs.

This is not a limited pilot program. It creates a new, standing government function. Even though the bill calls the appropriation a “one-time” funding of \$100,000 for FY 2026–27, history demonstrates that new government programs rarely remain one-time expenses. Once the Legislature establishes such initiatives, they tend to grow in scope, staffing, and funding over time.

Maine already faces structural budget pressures, rising energy costs, and competing demands on limited taxpayer resources. The Legislature should be cautious about adding new programmatic responsibilities to state agencies absent clear evidence of necessity and measurable return on investment.



Duplication of Existing Services

The bill's stated purpose is to help residential consumers, particularly low-income, rural, and underserved communities, understand and navigate energy efficiency and clean energy investment options. However, Maine already has several entities that do similar work. Groups like the quasi-state agency Efficiency Maine, which, according to its website, "provides consumer information, marketing support, demonstration pilots, discounts, rebates, loans, and other initiatives to promote high-efficiency equipment and operations that help Maine's homes, businesses, and institutions reduce their energy costs and lower their greenhouse gas emissions."¹ The Maine Housing Authority also administers multiple programs that are designed to achieve similar goals. There are even private companies that provide home energy audits and consultation services.

Creating a centralized, state-directed "coaching resource hub" risks duplicating these efforts and crowding out private-sector innovation. Rather than building a new government-run curriculum and coaching framework, the state should focus on reducing regulatory barriers and streamlining access to existing programs.

Centralized Energy Planning vs. Consumer Choice

The structure of this bill reflects a broader policy trend toward centralized guidance and state-facilitated decision-making in household energy use. When dealing with complex issues such as energy policy, policymakers must be careful not to move toward mandates or mechanisms that favor specific technologies or outcomes.

Energy decisions are deeply personal and highly variable. Each Maine family faces different financial constraints, housing conditions, heating sources, and risk tolerances. A standardized, state-developed curriculum cannot adequately account for these individualized circumstances. Markets, by contrast, allow consumers and private providers to respond dynamically to price signals, technological innovation, and local conditions. When the government attempts to steer decisions, particularly in complex sectors like energy, it risks misallocating resources, favoring politically preferred technologies, and crowding out private-sector expertise.

Maine's energy affordability challenges are not the result of insufficient administrative coordination. They stem from policy choices that constrain supply, layer mandates onto utilities, and increase compliance costs. LD 2220 would continue this trend.

¹ <https://www.energymaine.com/about/>



A Better Path Forward

Energy decisions are deeply personal and often financial in nature. The most effective way to empower Mainers is through competitive markets, not additional layers of state-directed bureaucracy. If the Committee's goal is to ensure that low-income and rural Mainers can access energy efficiency improvements, there are more effective alternatives such as:

- **Regulatory Reform:** Remove permitting, zoning, and licensing barriers that increase the cost of home energy upgrades.
- **Market Transparency:** Improve access to clear, standardized cost comparison tools without centralizing program administration.
- **Tax Relief:** Reduce tax burdens so families have more disposable income to invest in efficiency improvements voluntarily.
- **Streamline Existing Programs:** Audit and reform already existing energy programs before creating new ones.

Conclusion

LD 2220 expands the government's role in household energy decision-making at a time when Maine families need lower costs, not more bureaucracy. The state already administers multiple efficiency programs, and private providers offer consultation services across Maine. Creating a new centralized resource hub risks duplication, long-term spending growth, and further market distortion.

Rather than expanding administrative infrastructure, the Legislature should focus on policies that increase competition, reduce regulatory burdens, and make energy more affordable.

For these reasons, Maine Policy Institute strongly urges this committee to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 2220. Thank you for your time and consideration.