



Testimony of Nate Cloutier

Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government
March 16, 2023

In Support of LD 894, "An Act to Preserve Heating and Energy Choice by Prohibiting a Municipality from Prohibiting a Particular Energy System or Energy Distributor"

Senator Nagle, Representative Stover, and distinguished members of the Committee on State and Local Government: My name is Nate Cloutier, and I am here today on behalf of HospitalityMaine in support of LD 894. HospitalityMaine represents more than 1,200 restaurant and lodging operators of all sizes across the state.

We thank Senator Harrington for bringing LD 894 forward. This bill allows Maine businesses the freedom of choice to use the energy source it wishes, including gas, oil, wood, and renewable energy. Cities and towns in other states have tried to restrict how our homes and businesses are heated and energized through banning specific energy sources in new construction and renovations. This bill would limit the ability of municipalities to enact restrictions on fuel choice by consumers. This is a critical bill as it seems Maine may already be on that the path to restrict energy choice. You may have seen recently that the city of South Portland is considering restricting gas-powered lawn equipment for consumer use.

Many of our restaurants rely on gas powered stoves to cook the food our members serve to consumers. We should not have to worry about the looming threat of a municipality banning gas, potentially irreversibly damaging our businesses. We would respectfully ask that the committee consider adding the word "cooking" before "heating or energy system..." in line 6 to specify that cooking units would be covered under the prohibition ban in the bill.

We urge the Committee to work with businesses and find ways to incentivize energy efficiency upgrades. Our members take pride in the steps they are taking to be more energy efficient. This bill protects our businesses from what could be rash and permanent disruption to our restaurants.

Please vote LD 894 ought to pass. Thank you for your attention. I would be happy to answer any questions.