

STATEMENT OF JON HINCK  
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY  
STATE OF MAINE LEGISLATURE  
IN SUPPORT OF LD 1232  
'AN ACT TO INCREASE ADOPTION OF SOLAR POWER IN MAINE'  
APRIL 4, 2023

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler and distinguished members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology.

My name is Jon Hinck. I am an attorney in private practice in Portland where I also reside.

I am presenting this testimony on behalf of the Portland Climate Action Team ('PCAT'). PCAT is a volunteer group of greater Portland area residents committed to addressing the current climate crisis. We advocate for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and we promote a practical, equitable and rapid transition from fossil fuels that still dominate the region's energy supply to clean renewable power. In accord with those objectives, and for sound economic reasons, we urge an 'ought to pass' report on L.D. 1232 'An Act to Increase Adoption of Solar Power in Maine'.

With the passage of L.D. 1232, new warehouses and other buildings with a roof area of 25,000 square feet or larger (permitted and built after December 31, 2023) must be optimized for solar power or, in other words, be made 'solar ready'. In practice, this just means that warehouses and other large buildings must reserve a section of at least 40% of the roof area or building overhang, that can be used for a future installation of a photovoltaic or solar thermal system. The 'solar-ready' zones must be free of obstructions like pipes, vents, HVAC equipment and skylights.

The key point is that constructing buildings to be 'solar-ready' at the outset greatly reduces the time and cost associated with retrofitting buildings for solar power. At the time of initial construction, the buildings design adjustments called for in this bill are modest but can significantly increase the cost-effectiveness of retrofitting for solar energy collection and storage.

The law will encourage owners of large building to envision a transition toward using solar energy. Maine is making progress toward greater use of solar energy and preparing our large buildings for the future is smart planning for the transition. Typically, lighting and space heating account for approximately 76 percent of total energy use in a warehouse. Adding new efficient

solar systems to solar-ready buildings is cost effective saving both energy and money. The energy generated also reduces the anticipated strain on the electricity grid.

As the State's Energy Office explains: "Solar electricity ... can provide a variety of benefits to the electrical grid. Solar installed behind-the-meter, such as on a homeowner's rooftop, lowers load on the distribution system and can offset the building's energy bill."

Of course, maximizing the use of rooftops for solar power generation eases the pressure to develop large scale solar on land that may be desirable for use in agriculture or other competing desirable uses. Rooftop solar is popular now to achieve energy independence and to have electricity during power outages. But development on smaller buildings is limited because small arrays do not get the benefit of economies of scale. Power generated by larger arrays will invariably cost less per unit of generated power. Even the economies of scale on larger building are not fully realized if the roofs are not made solar ready when built.

The One Climate Future Plan for Portland and South Portland summarized the energy opportunity offered by area rooftops. The report states:

**In 2020, GridSolar completed an analysis of rooftops in the Greater Portland area to estimate the cities' maximum capacity for rooftop solar generation, based on a set of physical and economic parameters for what constitutes a viable rooftop solar array. The study found that Portland and South Portland could collectively accommodate 375 MW of rooftop solar, or 599,492 MWh of annual generation—a capacity that could meet 29% of all electricity needed in both cities, even with electrification of buildings. See Report <https://www.oneclimatefuture.org/> at page 90.**

Of course, the same reasoning applies with greater megawattage potential statewide.

At least one other state, New Jersey, has led the way enacting a solar-ready buildings law in 2021. That measure, similar to the bill before you, was passed by the New Jersey Assembly with strong bipartisan majorities in both of that state's House and Senate. Gov. Phil Murphy signed A3352 into law in November 2021 and it has been law in that state for a year.

In short, Maine can advance our State's energy future in a small but significant way by enacting this measure. I respectfully encourage you to vote "ought to pass" on L.D. 1232 'An Act to Increase Adoption of Solar Power in Maine'.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.