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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

An Act to Increase Adoption of Solar Power in Maine
L.D. 780

GOVERNOR'S ENERGY OFFICE
April 4, 2023

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology (EUT): My name is Caroline Colan, and I am the Legislative Liaison for the Governor's Energy Office (GEO).

The GEO testifies neither for nor against L.D. 780.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this legislation. Section 1 of L.D. 780 defines a "solar-ready building" and requires new buildings 25,000 square feet or greater to reserve 40 percent of roof space for the future installation of a solar energy system. The GEO is interested in efforts to support the development of solar on rooftops as proposed here, in addition to on previously disturbed sites, as well as to promote new building design and construction that takes into consideration factors that may facilitate interconnection in the future. Cost-effective distributed generation developed in close proximity to load can reduce transmission and distribution needs while providing resiliency benefits to a building and its operations, among other benefits.

There are several building design and technical considerations that can be leveraged during construction to ensure a building is well positioned to integrate a solar installation in the future. These considerations may include building orientation, shading, climate, roof design and warranty constraints, electrical system design preparations as well as local zoning and permitting requirements. Awareness of these considerations prior to and during construction would likely reduce barriers and costs to development later. Many of these factors will be site specific though, meaning the suitability of each rooftop for solar will vary.

The GEO has a few questions regarding this provision though, and would like to better understand how a suitable solar-ready zone is to be determined, if specific electrical infrastructure is required, as well as the feasibility of reserving 40 percent of roof space on the identified building types.

Regarding Section 2 of L.D. 780, the Commission currently has an open docket (No. 2022-00345) to gather input from interested parties on potential changes to Chapter 324 which establishes procedures and protocols for interconnection to transmission and distribution systems for small generators. In a prior docket, the Commission engaged the Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) to evaluate Maine's interconnection processes for solar and storage projects in response to LD 1100, "An Act To Support the Continued Access to Solar Energy and Battery Storage by Maine Homes and Businesses." In doing so, IREC conducted an evaluation of the efficiency, cost, and transparency of the state's interconnection procedures and practices, and delivered a report containing its recommendations.

The GEO is closely monitoring Docket No. 2022-00345 and submitted comments in response to the Notice of Inquiry encouraging the Commission to make several rule changes in the upcoming rulemaking. Specifically, the GEO supports enhancing dispute resolution processes particularly for small and on-site interconnecting customers, adoption of a table-based screening approach for expedited interconnection applications, and adoption of IEEE 1547-2018 standards. Additionally, the GEO encourages the PUC to use this Chapter 324 Inquiry to solicit specific interconnection related performance metrics, as required by P.L. 2021, Chapter 702 (LD 1959). We will remain engaged in these proceedings as they progress.

Thank you for your consideration.

Caroline Colan

Caroline Colan, Legislative Liaison
Governor's Energy Office