



STATE OF MAINE  
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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**Testimony of the Maine Public Utilities Commission**

**Neither for Nor Against**

**LD 1227, An Act to Balance Renewable Energy Development with Natural and Working Lands Conservation**

April 10, 2023

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (Committee) my name is Deirdre Schneider, testifying neither for nor against the sponsor's amendment to section 4 of LD 1227, An Act to Balance Renewable Energy Development with Natural and Working Lands Conservation on behalf of the Maine Public Utilities Commission (Commission).

Section 4 of the bill, as well as the sponsor's amendment requires the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) in collaboration with the Governor's Energy Office (GEO), the Commission and others to develop a plan to implement a dual-use energy pilot program. The amendment also specifies that the DACF and GEO may implement this pilot program. While the Commission is supportive of examining ways to encourage combining the agricultural use of land with solar energy production, we find that there is a lack of specificity regarding the implementation of a pilot program such as this. The Commission would recommend that further consideration be given to how the projects will be procured for this pilot program and how this program will be funded. Clarification from the Legislature on these details is critical to development of the program envisioned in LD 1227. Alternatively, the authority of the DACF and GEO to implement the pilot program could be removed, and implementation can be considered after the submittal of the report in 2025.

The Commission is also concerned that this pilot program will be funded in whole or in part by ratepayers. Any additional financial incentives for solar projects, possibly at the expense of ratepayers should be considered in the broader context of the many initiatives underway to support renewable energy development in Maine with ratepayer funds.

I would be happy to answer any questions or provide additional information for the work session.