



**Testimony Neither for Nor Against LD 952
Resolve, To Create a 21st-Century Electric Grid
April 13, 2023**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler and members of the committee, my name is James Cote and I am here on behalf of Versant Power to testify neither for nor against LD 952.

This bill raises many of the major issues implicated by the current and future energy transitions, which collectively will transform the way our energy systems work. In the coming years, our energy supply will be decarbonized, the deployment of emerging energy storage technologies will be widespread, small distributed resources will be an important and powerful aspect of the system, load will increase due to accelerated electrification of the transportation and home heating sectors, and the electric grid will need to evolve to enable all of these developments.

Versant Power believes that Maine is well situated to meet these coming challenges, due in part to recently enacted policies that will result in stakeholder-led, strategic, and holistic long-term planning for our energy future on a 10-year time horizon. The grid planning process is in its early stages at the Commission, as stakeholders work to develop priorities and the forecasts, assumptions and evaluation criteria that will ultimately underpin the planning process over the next several years.

We would caution that the creation of a Distribution System Operator (DSO) would necessarily and fundamentally change the way Maine's electric grid is operated and planned, requiring, among other major transitions, a wholesale reevaluation of the grid planning process now underway (as a DSO would take on important roles in the energy ecosystem currently played by other entities including the Efficiency Maine Trust, PUC, Governor's Energy Office, as well as the utilities) and a reconfigured operations center at significant expense to ratepayers.

At the same time, there are numerous consequential, yet currently unanswered questions about Maine's energy landscape. Examples include, but are not limited to, the future structure of the net energy billing program, the way Maine will procure energy supply for residential and business customers, potential major procurements for grid-scale and/or distributed generation and/or storage resources, and not inconsequentially, the ownership model of the grid itself.

Given these dynamics, Versant Power believes that, before the State moves forward with such a far-reaching change to the operation and management of energy systems in Maine, additional conversation and clarity about our collective plans and priorities for our energy future are warranted. Such conversations – whether they occur within the ongoing legislatively authorized holistic grid planning process currently unfolding under the auspices of the PUC, among relevant stakeholders in front of this committee, and/or elsewhere – will help us answer the more fundamental questions of how we want our



resources, our load, and our grid to meet our future needs, and whether additional tools like a DSO are the best and most cost-effective way to accomplish those goals.

Thank you for your consideration.