



Natural Resources Council of Maine

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Testimony in Support of LD 1818, An Act Regarding Port Facilities Relating to Offshore Wind Power Projects

**To the Committee on Labor and Housing
by Jack Shapiro, Climate and Clean Energy Program Director
May 9, 2023**

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Labor and Housing Committee, my name is Jack Shapiro, and I am the Climate and Clean Energy Director at the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM). NRCM has been working for more than 60 years to protect, restore, and conserve Maine's environment. I'm here today on behalf of our 25,000 members and supporters to testify in support of LD 1818, An Act Regarding Port Facilities Relating to Offshore Wind Power Projects.¹

Offshore wind presents Maine with a rare opportunity. Offshore wind is essential to meeting Maine's climate and clean energy goals, but it also represents one of the largest economic development opportunities we will see this century.²

Maine's comprehensive climate action plan, "Maine Won't Wait," came out in 2020,³ and it clearly identifies electrification as Maine's central strategy for shifting our energy use away from expensive and outdated fossil fuels toward clean and affordable energy technologies. We have the ability to meet most of our climate goals with technologies that exist right now, today: Renewable energy, electrified vehicles, heat pumps, battery storage, and flexible grid technologies. Critically, we need to source all of that new electricity demand for how we heat our homes and businesses, and how we fuel our cars and trucks from renewable sources at reasonable costs. This is where offshore wind comes in.

Years of work have gone into setting the stage for offshore wind development in Maine, including developing cutting-edge technologies at the University of Maine,⁴ and a multi-year Offshore Wind Roadmap strategy developed by the Governor's Energy Office.⁵ The federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is planning lease sales in the Gulf of Maine as early as next year.⁶ There is offshore wind procurement legislation up for consideration this legislative session as well.

¹ <https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=SP0733&item=1&snum=131>

² <https://www.pressherald.com/2023/03/01/commentary-offshore-wind-is-maines-opportunity-of-a-century/>

³ https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/inline-files/MaineWontWait_December2020.pdf

⁴ <https://composites.umaine.edu/>

⁵ https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov/energy/files/inline-files/Maine_Offshore_Wind_Roadmap_February_2023.pdf

⁶ https://www.boem.gov/sites/default/files/documents/renewable-energy/state-activities/BOEM_GoME_InformationExchangeMtg.pdf. Page 20.

This bill advances the construction of an offshore wind port designed to support the construction of floating offshore wind platforms and turbines — the only kind suitable for the deep waters of the Gulf of Maine.

The importance of constructing a floating offshore wind port in Maine can't be overstated. Without a port, the economic benefits of offshore wind largely would not be realized in Maine. A report developed to support the Offshore Wind Roadmap estimated that Maine could experience up to 33,000 short-term and 13,000 long-term jobs from the development of an offshore wind industry. But those estimates rely on modeling a significant “local share” of economic benefits, workforce development, and supply chain participation. Without a port, that local share happens somewhere else. The same study estimated the economic impact of offshore wind development with a significant local share — consistent with having a Maine offshore wind port — as being more than triple that without it.⁷

It is also safe to assume that without a Maine floating offshore wind port, floating offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine — with all of its climate, price stabilization, economic, and jobs benefits — could be delayed by a decade. While other states are building port facilities, they are expected to be occupied with the construction of the many projects already planned and, in some cases, already under construction in southern New England. Without a port the state's research array timeline could be seriously impacted, and commercial development could be thrown into uncertainty as well.

We specifically appreciate and support three further elements of this bill.

First, **high labor standards for Maine's offshore wind ports**. Building renewable energy at this scale is critical to meeting our climate goals, but it is also difficult, and requires a broad coalition of interests, from environmental advocates to economic development interests to workers. By ensuring that the work at an offshore wind port includes these standards, we're building the long-term support we need to be successful in bringing these projects to fruition.

Next, the **provisions around zero-emissions port infrastructure**. Not only will these provisions limit the climate and health impacts of port operations, they will also lower any local impacts like sound or air quality.

Finally, this bill sets aside the question of siting. The Offshore Wind Port Advisory Group (OSWPAG), led by the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT), has been charged with evaluating the multiple technical, environmental, and economic considerations for recommending a site for an offshore wind port and are happy to see that this bill does not seek to pre-empt that process.⁸

Offshore wind is moving forward in the Gulf of Maine, and we should build what we need to capture that energy, in both the literal and metaphorical senses. Federal funding is available

⁷ <https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/inline-files/Maine%20OSW%20DNV%20Socioeconomic%20Analysis%20of%20Offshore%20Wind%20in%20the%20Gulf%20of%20Maine%20Final%20Report.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.maine.gov/mdot/ofps/oswpag/>

specifically for these purposes, and we should set ourselves up to successfully pursue that funding. The timing and the substance of this bill is right.

We urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on this important legislation, and I would be happy to answer any questions you have.

Thank you.