



SOLAR ENERGY ASSOCIATION OF MAINE

Testimony in Support of L.D. 1830

An Act to Advance Maine's Clean Energy Goals

Steven L. Weems, Board Member

Solar Energy Association of Maine

To the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology

May 9, 2023

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and other distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology: my name is Steve Weems, Board Member of the Solar Energy Association of Maine (SEAM); also founder and President of Dirigo Community Solar Group (Dirigo CSG), a nonprofit association of 14 small, member-owned community solar farms. SEAM and Dirigo CSG strongly support LD 1830. We think it is necessary and important to have additional procurement of larger solar energy resources, for multiple reasons including their economies of scale and the need to stay on a track that will result in achievement of Maine's renewable portfolio standards (RPS). We also think it is appropriate to steer development toward compromised land, in part to determine how feasible this may be. We offer a limited number of suggested potential changes and note a few areas that may deserve further consideration of the committee. These do not dampen our enthusiasm for the bill.

Sec. 1. 35-A MRSA Section 3209-C. Under both Sections B(1) and B(2) defining "Contaminated land," we think the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) should be included to make a joint determination, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF).

In Section B(2), we wonder whether there should be a some reference requiring DEP and DACF to consider the degree of contamination required to label land “contaminated.” An absolute zero criterion (as we read it) may be too low for the purposes of this bill.

In Section 2. Competitive procurement, we note a participating utility shall enter into one or more contracts for energy or renewable energy credits (RECs). (Emphasis mine) We believe this is similar language to what has been used before in competitive procurements. It may be time to examine its significance more closely, specifically as it relates to the disposition of the RECs. This is a nuanced subject relating to the character of the energy being purchased by the utilities, with ramifications relating to how these purchases should be viewed vis-a-vis Maine’s RPS requirements. We don’t express any further opinion here other than to flag this for possible further consideration, since it has come up in relation to other renewable energy activities.

We like the requirement for the commission to void awarded contracts if and when the commission determines the entity awarded the contract is not making sufficient progress toward its fulfillment.

In the last paragraph of **Section 2. Competitive procurement**, we note the test that the bid price must less than applicable standard-offer service rate at the time the contract is executed. (Emphasis mine) It may be worthwhile to give the commission the flexibility of using a longer-term historical price series of the applicable standard-offer rate, as well as a future projection, to accomplish the stated goal of this section – to benefit ratepayers.

Sec. 2 35-A MRSA Section 3210, sub-section 11. Finally, it may be advisable to shorten the reporting cycle of 5 years. The stakes are sufficiently high and events are evolving at an accelerating pace. A two or three-year reporting cycle would seem more functional.

Thank you for your service and consideration.