



SOLAR ENERGY ASSOCIATION OF MAINE

Testimony in Support of the Sponsor's Amendment to LD 1850

An Act Relating to Energy Storage and the State's Energy Goals

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

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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 support the Sponsor's Amendment to LD 1850 Our support is based on the basic reality that energy storage is a synergistic complement of energy supply from renewable sources, specifically solar and wind energy This is already recognized in Maine Statutes (35-A MRSA Section 3145, as amended by PL 2021, c. 676, Pt. A, Section 49)

We think the Sponsor's Amendment offers a thoughtful, balanced approach that takes into account the importance of energy storage, while recognizing the technology is emerging and changing rapidly It is appropriate to focus on energy storage, and pursue opportunities aggressively, but not get ahead of the technology, economics, and operational realities In other words, proceed with urgency and purpose, making sure to take into account all the factors that define workable, cost-effective solutions and their optimal timing

The Sponsor's Amendment appears to encompass such an approach. Specific megawatt targets are spelled out as goals, not mandates. As an emerging technology, the pace of favorable changes in performance and cost may accelerate, and the amendment provides flexibility for the Governor's Energy Office (GEO) to increase the stated goals, if warranted. The two-phase approach to proceeding with the development of incremental energy storage capacity seems sound, first with an initial evaluation and report by the GEO, followed by a review of the GEO's recommendations by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) before taking any action. The PUC properly would be empowered to proceed with one or more procurements only if it determines this would be beneficial.

We think similar statements of support are justified regarding the study of long-duration energy storage possibilities in Section 4. The potential operational advantage of long-duration energy storage is obvious but this clearly is an emerging technology that needs to be studied and properly qualified before proceeding. This is exactly what Section 4 specifies, with a justified sense of urgency.

Regarding Section 6 about the potential role investor-owned utilities could play in ownership and/or control of energy storage installations, we applaud the change in the Sponsor's Amendment that makes this a PUC inquiry instead of a rule-making proceeding. While it is important to look at all possibilities, we think it would be premature to assume this is a function that the utilities should perform.

Overall, we ask the committee to report LD 1850 out favorably, since it addresses an emerging, urgent issue thoughtfully with an appropriate emphasis on planning and evaluation, with a clear purpose of identifying the best approaches to achieve the stated goals, as they may be adjusted.