

BLUEWAVE

May 24, 2023

Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology

BlueWave Testimony in Support of LD 1986 – An Act Relating to Net Energy Billing and Distributed Solar and Energy Storage Systems

Good afternoon Senator Lawrence, Representative Ziegler, and members of the Committee. My name is Liz Curran and I am testifying today on behalf of BlueWave in support of LD 1986, which would direct the Governor's Energy Office to apply for federal funds to support the Distributed Solar and Energy Storage Program and would make important reforms to the way Net Energy Billing (NEB) costs are calculated and recovered. Thank you for your consideration of this important piece of legislation.

BlueWave is a solar and energy storage developer and a leading innovator of dual-use, or agrivoltaic, projects in the Northeast. We have over 70 MW of community solar projects under development in Maine, which will provide savings to hundreds of residents and small and medium business across the state. BlueWave is also proud to have developed the first dual-use project in Maine on a wild blueberry farm in Rockport, which was completed in 2021 and provides community solar bill credits to customers through the NEB program. We are currently partnering with the University of Maine to study the impact of differing construction techniques on the blueberry crop and are committed to finding innovative ways to bring the benefits of solar to farmers and landowners.

With the passage of the federal Inflation Reduction Act, Maine has the opportunity to access federal funds to support distributed solar and energy storage projects and help the state reach its clean energy goals. LD 1986 directs the Governor's Energy Office to leverage these federal funds to create a program for solar plus storage projects that is consistent with the recommendations of the Distributed Generation (DG) Stakeholder Group's Report. The DG Stakeholder Group was convened by the Governor's Energy Office and included members of the solar industry, the Public Utilities Commission, the Office of the Public Advocate, and the Industrial Energy Consumers Group, among others. The DG Stakeholder Group's recommendations, which would be implemented by this bill, are the result of months of discussions and were carefully designed to ensure the program is cost-effective. We urge the Committee to pass LD 1986 to ensure that Maine can take advantage of federal funds to implement the recommendations of this robust stakeholder process.

LD 1986 would also make important changes to how NEB costs are calculated and recovered by the utilities. The bill would remove NEB from the utilities' Stranded Costs proceedings and require the PUC to calculate and allocate NEB costs and benefits annually based on actual costs or avoided costs over the previous year. This is an important change from the current structure, under which the utilities' NEB cost calculations are speculative and based on three-year forecasts of the number of MWs that will be online, the amount of energy those projects will produce, future electric rates, and future wholesale market costs.

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Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to testify in support of LD 1986. We look forward to continuing to work with the legislature to help Maine meet its clean energy goals.

Sincerely,

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