

Testimony of Ashley Luszczki
On Behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce
In Support of L.D. 1963, An Act Regarding the Future of Renewable Energy
Transmission in Northern Maine
Before the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee
January 11, 2024

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and members of the committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology: My name is Ashley Luszczki, I reside in Rome, and I am before you today representing the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, a statewide organization consisting of more than 5,000 small and large businesses.

Aroostook County has long been viewed as a region with significant potential to generate clean energy and benefit from the construction and development of what could be one of the largest onshore renewable projects in New England. Furthermore, with the volatility of natural gas pricing and high production of wind in the winter, there is potential opportunity to reduce electricity costs with more development of renewables in the state. As a result, the Chamber strongly supports efforts to develop renewable energy transmission in Northern Maine. In doing so, the project will:

- Make a multi-million dollar investment in Maine-made renewable power;
- Create and support thousands of jobs, bolstering the need for workers in the construction, forestry, and hospitality industries;
- Provide businesses with rate predictability through long-term contracts;
- Increase property tax revenue for municipalities; and
- Help the State to achieve its clean energy and climate goals.

For those reasons, the Chamber supported the passage of L.D. 1710 (130th Legislature) that gave initial approval for a Northern Maine transmission project and L.D. 924 (131st Legislature), which gave legislative approval allowing for the construction and operation of a high-impact electric transmission line.

The Chamber acknowledges the reasons for the Public Utilities Commission recent decision that has created a setback in moving this project forward and that is why we are before you today to support President Jackson's bill, L.D. 1963, *An Act Regarding the Future of Renewable Energy Transmission in Northern Maine*. Regardless of the specific project, there is often room for improvement, and we agree that this is true with the initial procurement process that took place for the Northern Maine Renewable Energy project. The Chamber supports this legislation as we believe it:

- Encourages collaboration between decision makers, specifically the PUC and other states;
- Allows greater flexibility for the PUC to determine the scope of the project and how to best connect to the maximum megawatts needed; and
- Provides for a more robust and well thought-out procurement process moving forward.

The Maine State Chamber of Commerce sees great value in a renewable energy transmission project and encourages the committee to pass L.D. 1963 so it may come to fruition.