



TESTIMONY of Charles E. Summers, Jr.
President & CEO
Maine Energy Marketers Association

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
Energy, Utilities and Technology
In Opposition to LD 2077
An Act Regarding Customer Costs and the Environmental and Health Effects of Natural Gas**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler and members of the Joint Standing Committee of Energy, Utilities and Technology, I am Charlie Summers, I am the President and CEO of the Maine Energy Marketers Association (MEMA).

MEMA is a trade association composed of approximately 300-member companies and over 5,000 direct and 5,000 indirect people working in energy delivery and servicing businesses delivering heating oil, biofuels, motor fuels, propane, pellets and kerosene and offering service and installations on the equipment that operates these fuels. MEMA members sell more than one billion gallons of gasoline and diesel fuel each year as well as more than 90% of all the heating oil and propane sold in our state every year.

I am not before you today to promote any particular type of fuel, or heating equipment. MEMA believes in an "all of the above" approach to Maine's energy needs, to include solar, wind, electric, oil, propane, and natural gas. Preserving and promoting Energy Choice is critical to Maine's future.

Singling out and limiting the availability of fossil fuels as it applies to home heating choice is not in the best interest of our state. In an uncertain world, Maine consumers need that "all of the above" approach to heating their homes and businesses and they need it to be easily accessible. What may look like the best, least expensive, or most versatile energy option today may not be the best solution tomorrow. **Energy Choice** is critical to addressing the long-term needs of Maine.

Energy Choice also ensures that we do not set ourselves up for a single point of failure should, for example, our electric grid go down or become compromised. We all remember the Ice Storm of 1998, when Maine's power grid was brought down and people across the state went without power, some for over a month. More recently, the December 18, 2023 storm which forced Governor Mills to declare a State of Civil Emergency for 14 Maine counties after that storm left "**hundreds of thousands of people without power.**"¹

¹ Governor Mills Declares State of Civil Emergency Following Heavy Damage from Wind & Rain Storm (<https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/news/governor-mills-declares-state-civil-emergency-following-heavy-damage-wind-rain-storm-2023-12>)

In fact, in her request to President Biden for a Presidential Disaster Declaration, Governor Mills stated:

*“Power outages affected approximately **443,475** properties as a result of the severe storm and flood event, leaving nearly a third of Maine’s population and infrastructure without power. Due to high floodwaters and damaged roads, large portions of the state remained inaccessible to utility crews resulting in a further prolonging of power outages for thousands. Severely damaged power lines further added to the complexity of power restoration efforts during one of Maine’s coldest months of the year. Utility companies reported staying in storm response and recovery mode for a total of seven days after the event, although many secondary and seasonal homes remain without power at this time.”²*

But weather alone is not the only consideration when it comes to avoiding a single point of failure. In May of 2021 the Colonial Pipeline was the victim of a ransomware attack which infected the pipeline's digital systems, shutting it down for several days and wreaking havoc on consumers and airlines along the East Coast. The hack was even deemed a national security threat causing President Biden to declare a state of emergency.

Finally, for your consideration, I would like to remind the committee of one of the strongest responses to the Spring 2023 Omnibus survey conducted by Critical Insights³, in which **91% of Maine voters** surveyed believe Mainers should have **the right to choose** how they heat their homes and businesses.

We live in one of the coldest states in the nation. To make it through the winter most of us rely on several sources of heat for our homes and businesses such as: wood, oil, natural gas, heat pumps, propane, and electricity. This is how we get by – our “backup plan” if you will. Preserving **Energy Choice** is good policy. It affords Mainers the flexibility we need - today and in the future.

I strongly urge the committee to vote Ought not to Pass on LD 2077.

² State of Maine Declaration Request Cover Letter: Severe Storm and Flood
(https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/sites/maine.gov.governor.mills/files/inline-files/%281%29%20State%20of%20Maine%20Declaration%20Request%20Cover%20Letter_Severe%20Storm%20and%20Flood%20Dec%202023.pdf)

³ CRITICAL INSIGHTS ON MAINE™ SURVEY Spring 2023