

January 23, 2024

## Testimony 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 on Energy, Utilities, and Technology:

My name is Nathan Gould. I am a resident of Winterport. I am submitting this testimony in opposition to LD 2077, "An Act Regarding Customer Costs and the Environmental and Health Effects of Natural Gas."

At the frigid beginning of the 131<sup>st</sup> Legislature, an emergency bill<sup>1</sup> was put forth to meet the challenge of "high heating costs." The bill's proponents communicated such an urgency to throw half a billion of the taxpayers' dollars at the problem that the bill almost didn't have a public hearing, but for a few State Senators.

A year has passed since then, and geopolitical, economic, and bureaucratic conditions have not become more favorable to low energy prices. Why, then, should we limit the People of Maine's access to energy? Considering the cleaner<sup>2</sup> and more accessible nature of natural gas, it makes little sense to preempt citizens from making the energy choices that suit them.

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1 LD 3 "An Act to Establish the Winter Energy Relief Payment Program to Aid Residents with High Heating Costs and to Finalize the COVID Pandemic Relief Payment Program." (Originally LD 1)

2 *Natural gas and the environment* - U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). (2022, November 7). U.S Energy Information Administration (EIA). Retrieved January 22, 2024, from <https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/natural-gas/natural-gas-and-the-environment.php>

Even more fundamental is how this infringes on businesses' ability to operate and individuals' rights to property. The government has already reached too far regarding energy, with hydropower limits and burdens on ratepayers.

Legislation cannot change hearts, but it can try to beat those under it into submission. It is not this government's job to shape behavior, but to protect citizen's rights while obeying the Constitution. In our unstable energy market, it is unwise to hobble gas utilities. Solar and wind must stand on their own feet if they are to be efficient and competitive; let the free market work instead of tilting the scales and thereby laying an unsteady, untested foundation on unrealized promises of technological breakthroughs. Energy diversification is needed to meet the demand and heating challenges present in Maine, and I place more trust the public and the hand of the free market than legislative strong-arming.

Finally, there are better uses of resources than to hold a taxpayer-funded study for the purpose of justifying a conclusion decided beforehand.

I ask the Committee to vote Ought Not to Pass. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Nathan C Gould

Winterport