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Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

RE: LD 2087, An Act to Protect Property Owners by Preventing the Use of Eminent Domain to Build Transmission Lines Under the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Kaitlyn Nuzzo and I am the Government Relations Director for The Nature Conservancy in Maine. **I appreciate this opportunity to testify neither for nor against LD 2087, An Act to Protect Property Owners by Preventing the Use of Eminent Domain to Build Transmission Lines Under the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program.**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. We use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners.

Our organization is dedicated to the interconnected crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. Our vision is for a clean, green, and equitable energy future. We support the rapid transition to renewable energy, but we are focused on how to do it right from the start. We must deploy renewable energy and transmission infrastructure in ways that consider communities, conservation, and climate.

Maine can get this right. Because the most recent proposal for a Northern Maine Transmission Line is no longer on the table, we now have the opportunity to pause and explore better ways to structure the process. We can learn from the work that has been done so far and actively engage additional voices and perspectives. If we can think creatively and intentionally as we reapproach this challenge, we have the potential to create an innovative model for the rest of the country in how to plan for, solicit, and develop well-sited transmission infrastructure.

How can we work together to improve the RFP and bid process to ensure the best possible outcomes for individuals, communities, conservation, and climate? What tools and mechanisms already exist to review this type of infrastructure? The most recent proposal was early in the development process and did not get to additional review phases from the Maine PUC, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Land Use Planning Commission, and any federal review. We believe that a collective approach that encourages transparency and community ownership in the process is necessary to learn from the previous iteration and achieve a mutually beneficial outcome. This means refocusing the RFP and bid process in a way that values benefit sharing and charts a path towards collaboration.

TNC is committed to supporting a careful and coordinated approach to transmission planning in Maine. We have been engaged in the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program through the legislative and PUC processes. We have consistently emphasized the importance of comparing the environmental, land-use, and community impacts of proposed transmission and generation projects. We encouraged the Maine PUC to give strong preference

to transmission projects co-located with existing linear infrastructure, while considering the potential impacts of these projects on overburdened and underserved communities. We believe there is absolutely a solution to be found here, and we are committed to helping you find it.

We hope LD 2087 and the conversation today creates an opportunity for Maine to develop a new approach to transmission siting that balances communities, climate, and conservation. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.