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Testimony of Ashley Luszczki
On behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce
Supporting L.D. 2266, An Act Regarding Offshore Wind Terminals Located in Coastal Sand Dune Systems
Before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee
March 18, 2024

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources: My name is Ashley Luszczki, and I am before you today on behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce testifying in support of L.D. 2266, An Act Regarding Offshore Wind Terminals Located in Coastal Sand Dune Systems.

The Chamber has a history of supporting innovative, forward-thinking projects that will strengthen the Maine economy and it has been vocal in the belief that developing offshore wind in Maine will yield impactful results as we look to broaden our renewable energy portfolio and reduce overreliance on fossil fuels.

It's no secret that the Gulf of Maine has some of the strongest sustained winds in the world. Just shy of two decades ago, the Gulf of Maine Research Institute convened a group of individuals from across the country to explore the potential for offshore wind (OSW) off the coast of Maine. With the region being a prime location, the University of Maine initiated their research in OSW technologies with financial support from the U.S. Department of Energy in 2008. The work that UMaine has conducted over the years, including their patented VolturnUS design, is a testament to Maine ingenuity. As wind technologies continue to develop, Maine can be an innovative leader in this growing and impactful industry.

The Chamber believes the development of OSW in the Gulf of Maine presents a tremendous opportunity economically and will breathe new life into local communities.

From planning to engineering and construction, and ultimately deployment and maintenance, a myriad of employment opportunities will be created. According to the February 2023 Maine Offshore Roadmap, the OSW industry in the U.S. has realized $13.5 billion in investments and is anticipated to become a $70 billion industry over the next ten years. The May 2022 Maine Offshore Wind Talent Analysis stated in its findings that 117 occupations will be critical to the development and operation of OSW projects.

With the ongoing work by the University of Maine and the technical programs offered by our community colleges and secondary career and technical programs, Maine can be a leader in

developing a skilled OSW workforce. In 2020, Maine had a wind-related workforce of more than 1,300 and with the advancement of OSW, that number will grow exponentially.

Finally, as the state seeks to achieve the Mills Administration's ambitious goals of 80 percent renewable energy by 2030 and 100 percent by 2040, it is imperative that we incorporate this renewable source. As demand for greater electrification increases, more clean energy will be required. Tapping into OSW will help slow down changes in our climate.

Knowing the economic and climate benefits that will come, the next question is how we turn the conversation of OSW into a reality. Significant work has been conducted in terms of where a terminal should be located and last month Governor Mills announced the site selection of Sears Island. The island's location and expansive acreage will be necessary to support the manufacturing and deployment of large wind turbines. As Maine signals momentum for OSW development through its site selection, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management announced last week it's designation of a Wined Energy Area in the Gulf of Maine. The Chamber submitted comments to BOEM last fall encouraging this.

The energy transition needs to work for businesses and homeowners, ensuring affordability. While the Chamber sees opportunity in OSW, we caution the development of it at unaffordable electric rates. That's why we feel a terminal on state-owned land, such as Sears Island, will be significantly more feasible in meeting regulator's goals to reduce energy costs for consumers.

In closing, the Chamber encourages this Committee to support L.D. 2266 and allow the DEP to grant a permit under the Natural Resources Protection Act for an OSW terminal located in a coastal sand dune system. The ability for DEP to do so will be a necessary step for continued OSW innovation, economic growth, and Maine to meet its climate and clean energy goals. With your support, Maine can pave the way in OSW development, leading to a cleaner and more prosperous future for generations to come.