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***Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and  
Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology***

***RE: LD 210 - An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund  
and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain  
Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the  
Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027***

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, my name is Karen Blakelock, and I am a policy advisor with The Nature Conservancy in Maine. **I appreciate this opportunity to offer written comments in support of the biennial budget proposal for the Department of Energy Resources.**

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. The Nature Conservancy has been leading conservation in Maine for more than 60 years and is the 12th largest landowner in the state, owning and managing roughly 300,000 acres.

TNC supports three main priorities from the Governor's Energy Office: 1. Establishing the Department of Energy Resources, 2. Continued funding of one million dollars annually for the next two years to support the Clean Energy Partnership (CEP) program, and 3. Continued and increased support for the Offshore Wind (OSW) Research Consortium.

The Governor's Energy Office is an invaluable resource for the people of Maine. This office remains committed to reaching the renewable energy targets of the state in a way that prioritizes affordable and reliable energy for all Maine people and businesses. Their efforts in planning and managing the clean energy transition for all of us in Maine is invaluable and we're lucky to have such thoughtful and hardworking employees in state government. A cabinet-level department outside of the governor's office will allow this important work to continue beyond the next election cycle.

Additionally, TNC supports the request of funding for the Clean Energy Partnership program. Partnerships such as this one work across government agencies and with colleges and community groups to equip workers with relevant skills to advance clean technology in Maine. Supporting initiatives such as CEP, that result in workforce development *and* positive environmental outcomes are exactly the type of innovative and community centered initiatives Maine is known for.

Lastly, the increased funding for the OSW research consortium. TNC Maine has been part of the Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium since its inception, and we deeply

appreciate the legislature's creation of an advisory body to identify the most pressing research needs for floating offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine. TNC Maine has been a part of shaping the research priorities and we have supported specific proposals to accomplish that research. Because of the investments from the legislature and the priorities identified by the Offshore Wind Research Consortium, the Maine Department of Marine Resources was able to map 342 square nautical miles of seafloor in areas where we previously had no information. TNC believes this work to be so pressing, that we've contributed \$100,000 over two years to this effort.

Research being done through the Consortium is answering the most pressing questions that the public and key parties have about floating offshore wind, including better understanding potential interactions between marine mammals and offshore wind. Continued support of floating offshore wind research is critical to support the research questions that the Maine Research Array is trying to answer.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the allocations for these programs and I am happy to answer questions at any time.