

Good Afternoon,
2.27.25

My name is Ted Rioux. I am originally from St. Francis, ME. My father was a Northern Maine Logger and both my grandfathers were Aroostook County Potato Farmers. I am a landowner, a deer hunter, I own guns, and, up until September of 2020, I was a small business owner. My business was based in Gorham, where I live with my wife and daughter. I lost my business to the pandemic.

Today, I'm employed by a solar developer. I've been a part of Maine's Solar Industry since early 2021. When Maine's economy was essentially at a standstill and there was no hiring anywhere, I found employment. Thousands of other Mainers, just like me...at a time when many of us really needed it, found an opportunity to make a decent living through the 2019 expansion of Net Energy Billing. Hundreds of Maine businesses have benefited from the economic impact these development projects have had, mostly on Maine's rural communities. I've seen it first-hand. I know it.

There have been a number of changes to NEB in the four years I've been a part of the industry. I've found these changes to be reasonable. I've agreed with some narrowing of the program. The industry has adapted to these changes, as well as to market responses to the program. Many of us know that more low-income Mainers need access to the benefits of solar. We're working to help make that happen. Many of us have heard Mainers' feedback about siting projects that require tree clearing, impact scenery, or occupy fertile agricultural land. NEB is THE tool we can use to site projects on commercial and institutional rooftops and on municipal brownfields. It's THE tool that municipalities can use to achieve electricity cost savings, assist their residents, including low-income households, and generate revenue. Public schools can better control and budget for their electricity costs, while saving significantly through NEB. Housing Authorities, Affordable Housing Providers, and Community Service Organizations can utilize NEB to achieve cost savings. The industry is working hard so that they can. I am working hard so that they can. I believe it is right.

The changes represented in these bills would prevent these things from being possible. The solar development that has happened over the last several years has mostly benefited big business, big institutions, and higher income households. I know this and it's not fair! But if you end the program now, we can't help our public schools, we can't help our municipalities and their residents, we can't help our non-profits, or our small businesses. That wouldn't be right.

They can control and decrease their electricity costs with solar, but Net Energy Billing is essential. Outside of residential, behind-the-meter projects can't work in Maine because too little delivery value is levied in kilowatt-hours.

I believe it would be a mistake for Maine to limit NEB any further. It would limit the market to residential, badly damage the industry, and cost a lot of jobs, including my own. I urge the committee to reject these bills.

Thank you,

Ted Rioux, Gorham, ME