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***Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology***

***RE: LD 810—An Act Regarding the Approval of Transmission Lines***

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, my name is Karen Blakelock and I work as the climate and energy policy advisor for the Nature Conservancy in Maine. **I appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of LD 810.**

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 both nature and people can thrive. We work in more than 70 countries, and use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners.

TNC strives to address the dual crises of biodiversity loss and climate change, and understands that well-sited transmission infrastructure that avoids, minimizes, and mitigates impacts to habitat while enabling well-sited renewable generation to make it onto the grid and into our homes is the key to addressing both.

While a thorough stakeholder process that invites and incorporates input from communities that might be impacted by proposed transmission infrastructure is essential, the timing of repeated need to legislative approval of previously authorized projects adds confusion and creates unnecessary inefficiency for all parties, not least of all the public.

TNC believes that a proposed route must be shared publicly to allow for input from the impacted communities and other interested stakeholders but that streamlining the process to reduce duplicative and confusing steps has benefits. Last session our Director of Government Affairs, Kaitlyn Nuzzo, worked closely with Sen. Chip Curry on a stakeholder group within LD 2087, which this committee unanimously passed. We are proud that that legislation bettered the process by elevating the importance of community engagement and landowner relations when siting transmission.

TNC maintains a strong preference for projects that are sited in ways that seek to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to wildlife habitat and frontline communities.

We look forward to continuing to engage on the topic of transmission with this committee, the PUC, and other stakeholders to promote the use of renewable energy and well-sited transmission and generation infrastructure, for the benefit of both the people and nature of Maine.