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Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
LD 342—An Act to Include Nuclear Power in the State’s Renewable Portfolio Standard

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Karen Blakelock, and I am the climate and energy policy advisor for The Nature Conservancy in Maine. **I appreciate this opportunity to testify in opposition to LD 342, An Act to Include Nuclear Power in the State’s Renewable Portfolio Standard.**

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.

The Nature Conservancy seeks to address the dual crisis of biodiversity loss and climate change, and we recognize that as we strive for a future built with carbon-free energy, existing nuclear capacity will realistically be a part of that solution somewhere on the grid. Over the next decade, retiring nuclear plants that currently provide zero carbon energy to the electric grid would most likely be replaced with natural gas generation, resulting in a net increase in greenhouse gas emissions at exactly the moment when we most need to be making big reductions.¹

TNC strongly believes that the primary focus of the clean energy transition should be the well-planned deployment of renewable energy resources, like solar and wind, and on the development and use of storage technology. For this reason, TNC is advocating against including nuclear in our RPS—nuclear might have a place in our energy portfolio, but ideally not under the definitions of our thoughtfully developed renewable portfolio standard.²

Nuclear can be considered “clean” in that it does not produce emissions, but it is not renewable, and incorporating nuclear energy generation as part of a statewide emission reduction strategy should require a broader “clean energy standard” or “zero-emissions standard.”

TNC also recognizes that there are significant problems posed by uranium’s extraction for use as nuclear fuel. In instances where nuclear is included in our broader energy mix, Maine must ensure that we apply the mitigation hierarchy that seeks to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the

¹ <https://www.iso-ne.com/about/where-we-are-going/power-plant-retirements>

² <https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/35-a/title35-Asec3210.html>

negative impacts, and that we are taking the necessary steps to ensure the externalities of extracting uranium and then storing spent nuclear fuel do not disproportionately impact frontline communities.

I ask that you **vote no on LD 342** on the basis that while Maine may soon find that nuclear has a place in our future energy portfolio as an emissions-free source of electricity, it is not “renewable”. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.