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STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



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COMMISSIONER

**TESTIMONY OF
ROB WOOD, DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF LAND RESOURCES
MAINE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

SPEAKING IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 830

**AN ACT TO PROTECT MAINE'S SCENIC BEAUTY BY REQUIRING SOLAR PANEL
FIELDS TO BE HIDDEN FROM VIEW**

PRESENTED BY SEN. HAGGAN

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE
ON
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

DATE OF HEARING:

MARCH 17, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Committee, my name is Rob Wood and I am the Director of the Bureau of Land Resources at the Department of Environmental Protection. I am speaking in opposition to L.D. 830.

The Department opposes L.D. 830 because it presumes that solar developments have an unreasonable scenic impact any time they can be viewed from an abutting property. This further presumes that solar developments have an inherently greater scenic impact than any other type of development. The Department does not believe this to be the case. Like most types of large developments permitted under the Site Law, the scenic impacts from solar arrays are site- and context-specific. A solar project in a developed

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area may fit into the existing development pattern with minimal scenic concerns, and a solar project in a less developed area may need to take additional steps to ensure the project will fit harmoniously into the environment.

The Site Law and the Department's Chapter 375 rules provide adequate authority and flexibility to address scenic impacts from solar arrays and other developments across a wide range of circumstances. Section 484, subsection 3 of the Site Law requires that a development will not adversely affect existing uses and scenic character. Chapter 375, section 14 of the Department's rules elaborates on this standard by, among other things, requiring that, "A development which is not in keeping with the surrounding scenic character will be located, designed and landscaped to minimize its visual impact to the fullest extent possible," and that, "Structures will be designed and landscaped to minimize their visual impact on the surrounding area." The rule also states that the Department may require as a condition of approval that vegetative screens be established for any development.

In sum, the Department does not believe that solar developments have an inherently greater scenic impact than other types of development reviewed under the Site Law, and we believe the Site Law and associated Department rules provide adequate flexibility to address any scenic concerns that may arise with a specific solar development.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee, both now and at the work session.