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THE MAINE SENATE
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LD 204, "An Act to Reduce the Cost of Electricity by Removing the 100-megawatt Limit on Renewable Resources of Energy"
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology
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Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology:

My name is Senator Jeff Timberlake; and I represent Senate District 17. I am here today to present LD 204, "An Act to Reduce the Cost of Electricity by Removing the 100-megawatt Limit on Renewable Resources of Energy."

Maine has a long history of tapping renewable sources for energy, especially river hydropower that mechanically operated many of our earliest mills. Our ancestors determined that our state's hydropower resources are clean, reliable and abundant in our state; and the earliest electricity generation took place in Oakland in 1899 when the first hydropower generator went online on the upper Kennebec River. The company that installed it, Oakland Electric Company, would soon be renamed a decade later as Central Maine Power, which is still around today.

Before Maine's first Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) law was introduced in 1999 under Governor Angus King, we were already generating a significant portion of our electricity from renewable sources, including hydropower. The original RPS law set the goal of having 30% of retail electricity come from renewables. This was later increased in 2006 and again in 2019. Yet despite these efforts, the law to this day still excludes hydropower resources over 100 megawatts from being counted as renewable resource energy.

Why is this cap necessary? This cap has limited our ability to harness more of the affordable hydropower we already have, preventing us from lowering electricity prices for consumers and businesses alike. By lifting this cap, we can use more of our own clean energy, helping to reduce electricity costs significantly. It's a simple fix with a big potential impact; and it allows hydropower to rightly increase our state's share of renewable energy credits to reach carbon neutrality.

Governor Paul LePage tried to remove this cap in the past, recognizing that low-cost hydropower could help us meet our renewable energy goals without raising prices. However, the Legislature couldn't come to an agreement on how best to move forward and that opportunity was lost. We have the chance to get this right and unlock the full potential of Maine's renewable energy resources by supporting this bill.

We also have to consider the Governor's recent push for a 100% clean energy standard by 2040, including reducing renewables down to 90% and introducing a 10% clean energy portfolio standard to achieve that last stretch. Even she realizes that solar and wind can only take us so far. Grid-scale hydropower and, yes, even nuclear, will have to be part of the future baseload as fossil fuel generation goes offline in the future. Lifting this cap works toward that 10% clean energy standard goal.

Maine is already a leader in renewable resource energy with more than half of our electricity coming from renewable sources; but we can do better without sacrificing affordability. Lifting this 100-megawatt cap is an easy way to reduce costs, support local jobs keep our state's energy future strong, and help us to sustainably reach and maintain our climate goals.

I urge you to support this bill as it is a smart, practical step toward reducing electricity costs for everyone in Maine while making sure our renewable energy future remains affordable and reliable.

Thank you for your time and consideration.