



Committee on State and Local Government
% Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

March 24, 2025

RE: LD 556, An Act to Preserve Heating and Energy Choice by Prohibiting a Municipality from Prohibiting a Particular Energy System or Energy Distributor

Dear Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Salisbury, and Members of the SLG Committee:

My name is Ania Wright and I am Maine Audubon's Policy Advocate. Maine Audubon is a wildlife conservation non-profit – we fulfill our mission to “conserve Maine wildlife and wildlife habitat” by engaging people of all ages in nature through a science-based approach to education, conservation, and advocacy. On behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members, supporters, and volunteers, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to LD 556, *An Act to Preserve Heating and Energy Choice by Prohibiting a Municipality from Prohibiting a Particular Energy System or Energy Distributor*.

To protect wildlife and their habitat, Maine Audubon is committed to reducing the need for energy powered by fossil fuels, the largest contributor to climate change. Maine Audubon supports and promotes policies that facilitate production of clean and sustainable energy. Municipalities are uniquely poised to determine the energy policies that best fit their communities needs, and Maine Audubon is supportive of maintaining their authority.

LD 556 would take away municipalities rights for energy self-determination by prohibiting policies that would set standards for efficiency, health, and safety. The bill is nearly identical to the failed LD 894 from the 131st session, and is part of a growing national effort headed by the fossil fuel industry to prevent cities and towns from passing local policies to reduce pollution and energy costs¹.

Heating and cooling of residential and commercial buildings currently contributes to 31% of Maine's greenhouse gas emissions. In addition to increasing building efficiency, switching from cost volatile oil and propane heating to climate-friendly alternatives such as heat pumps is a critical path forward to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and saving Mainers money.

¹ Walker & Malmuth (2024), *The natural gas industry, the Republican Party, and state preemption of local building decarbonization*. www.nature.com/articles/s44168-024-00176-4



In addition to the goals for building electrification established in the Maine Won't Wait Climate Action Plan, many municipalities have passed their own climate and clean energy goals. The Cities of Portland and South Portland, for example, have jointly adopted the 'One Climate Future Plan,' which sets forth the goal of reducing community greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2050². One Climate Future is part of a growing trend among Maine municipalities choosing to pass similar climate action plans as they identify opportunities and threats specific to their communities³. The passage of LD 556 would limit the ability of these towns and cities to implement community supported initiatives to meet the goals of the plan.

In order to support the essential adoption of policies to increase efficiency, reduce pollution, and lower energy costs, as well as honoring the long tradition of home rule in the State of Maine, Maine Audubon encourages the committee to reject LD 556. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ania Wright
Policy Advocate

² www.oneclimatefuture.org

³ Overton, P (2024) *Local climate action planning on the rise in communities across Maine*. Portland Press Herald. www.pressherald.com/2024/11/30/local-climate-action-planning-on-the-rise/