



# Natural Resources Council of Maine

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## **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 the Committee on State and Local Government  
by Sarah Nichols, on behalf of the Natural Resources Council of Maine  
March 24, 2025**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Joint Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Sarah Nichols, and I am testifying in opposition to LD 556 on behalf of the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) and our nearly 24,000 members and supporters.

This bill is not about protecting energy choice—it's about taking it away. It would strip Maine's towns and cities of their ability to set policies that work best for their residents, preempting local decision-making in favor of the clear self-interest of the fossil fuel industry.

If the fossil fuel industry has concerns about local energy policies, they are free to make their case—directly to municipal officials—just as any other business or resident would. Instead, this bill is part of a national campaign to rig the system in their favor in dozens of states,<sup>1</sup> cutting off local decision-making before it can even happen.

Municipalities are motivated to shift toward clean energy policy for various reasons, including limiting air pollution, protecting public health, improving efficiency, reducing energy burdens and cost savings for low-income residents, among many other reasons. We see this every day in Maine, where our neighbors have installed nearly 144,000 high-efficiency heat pumps to save money on heating costs.<sup>2</sup> A new study released earlier this month confirmed this, finding that

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<sup>1</sup> Natural Resources Defense Council. *Gas Interests Threaten Local Authority*. Updated June 12, 2023. <https://www.nrdc.org/bio/alejandra-mejia-cunningham/gas-interests-threaten-local-authority>

<sup>2</sup> Governor's Energy Office. *Maine Energy Plan*. January 2025.

<https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/2025-01/Maine%20Energy%20Plan%20January%202025.pdf>

Mainers switching from oil or propane could save as much as 60% on their heating bills by switching to heat pumps.<sup>3</sup>

But more than half of Maine households are still tied to expensive and unpredictable oil and propane. If fossil fuel companies truly believed in the superiority and cost advantages of their products, they would trust the debates to bear that out. Instead, they're seeking to shut down local options before communities even get a say, and give themselves a foothold to sue if they can't hold onto their market share.

Maine has a long tradition of home rule, allowing local governments to make decisions that reflect the needs and values of their residents. LD 556 would upend that tradition, preemptively blocking cities and towns from setting their own course on common-sense energy efficiency, public health, pollution reduction, or cost-saving measures.

I'd like to end by saying that putting a *prohibition* on *prohibition* in the name of preserving choice doesn't make sense. Let's be clear: if LD 556 passes, Maine towns and cities will have fewer choices, not more. But if this bill fails—as I hope it does—we will be preserving choice, keeping local decision-making where it belongs: in the hands of Maine communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<sup>3</sup> Bangor Daily News. *Heat pumps save Mainers up to 60 percent on energy bills, study finds*. March 13, 2025. <https://www.bangordailynews.com/2025/03/11/mainefocus/mainefocus-environment/heat-pumps-save-mainers-up-to-60-percent-on-energy-bills-study-finds/>