

**Testimony of Ashley Luszczki**  
**Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government**  
**In Support of L.D. 556, An Act to Preserve Heating and Energy Choice**  
**March 24, 2025**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salsbury, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Ashley Luszczki. I am here on behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, representing a network of more than 5,000 businesses across all sectors. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of L.D. 556, An Act to Preserve Heating and Energy Choice.

Maine businesses, particularly those in manufacturing and energy-intensive industries, rely on affordable and reliable energy sources to remain competitive. However, rising energy costs are increasingly putting pressure on businesses. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), Maine has the highest energy consumption per dollar of GDP in New England and exceeds the national average. These costs directly impact our businesses, particularly in manufacturing, food processing, and transportation.

L.D. 556 is essential to ensuring that consumers, individuals and businesses alike, can choose the heating and energy sources that best meet their needs. Without this legislation, municipalities could implement restrictive policies that create a patchwork of regulations, making it difficult for businesses to operate across multiple locations. Restrictions could result in higher costs, uncertainty, and unintended economic consequences.

As one of Maine's largest heritage industries, the forest products industry relies on affordable energy to power pulp and paper mills, sawmills, and biomass facilities. Rising costs or restrictions could jeopardize these operations, leading to reduced output, layoffs, or even closures. Similarly, businesses such as seafood processors and dairy producers depend on consistent and cost-effective energy to refrigerate, process, and ship perishable goods efficiently. Limiting fuel choice would also impact Maine's transportation sector, making it more costly to move goods in and out of the state.

Beyond affordability, reliability is critical for businesses that operate around the clock, including hospitals and manufacturing plants. Maine's unpredictable weather underscores the need for dependable baseload energy sources. If municipalities prohibit certain heating or energy sources, businesses may be forced into costlier and less reliable alternatives, increasing their vulnerability to supply chain disruptions.

We recognize and support efforts to transition toward cleaner energy, and Maine businesses have already made significant investments in energy efficiency and renewable sources. However, these transition must be guided by market realities and allow for a range of energy solutions rather than prohibitions that would limit choice, increase costs, and cause economic disruptions.

L.D. 556 will ensure that businesses and individuals retain the ability to select the energy solutions that best suit their needs - based on affordability, reliability, and availability. For these reasons, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce supports this legislation and asks you to do so as well. Thank you for your consideration.