

## Testimony in support of LD 556

### Mark Gallagher, Summit Natural Gas of Maine

Good morning, Senate Chair Baldacci, House Chair Salisbury and members of the Joint Select Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Mark Gallagher. I am before you on behalf of Summit Natural Gas of Maine to testify in support of **LD556 An Act to Preserve Heating and Energy Choice by Prohibiting a Municipality from Prohibiting a Particular Energy System or Energy Distributor**.

Summit Natural Gas of Maine is a natural gas utility company headquartered in Portland with the mission of delivering clean, safe, affordable, and reliable energy solutions to our customers every day through exceptional service and a strong commitment to our communities.

Maine needs all available energy options to ensure an affordable clean energy future. Mainers are fiercely independent about being able to make their own heating choice. Fuel choice, or the ability for customers to choose how they heat their homes or businesses, is preferred by 87% of Mainers according to a survey undertaken in the spring of 2022\*. The decision to use natural gas, or another source of energy, to heat homes and businesses should be left to individuals; it should not be forced on them by restrictive ordinances.

Maine should continue to embrace a diversity of resources. Our state is still moving towards a more renewable generation, but we must not reduce options while working towards statutory goals. Energy policy is complicated and there are tradeoffs between price, reliability, emissions, and many other factors. Municipalities shouldn't be choosing winners and losers with energy suppliers and developers doing business in the state. Individuals should be allowed to weigh these factors and decide what choice is right for themselves.

Additionally, it's clear that renewable generation has encountered various development barriers. Creating a self-inflicted shortfall of potential energy distributed in Maine places additional risks on consumers. Responsible policies always consider the needs of consumers while leveraging and supporting the development of state-of-the-art technologies to improve our environmental stewardship, aiding in the continued reductions of all emissions.

The unintended consequences of hodge-podge energy policies across municipalities and even within counties deprives industry, commerce or residents of alternative choices, will prove detrimental by handicapping development efforts of Maine communities, while creating additional roadblocks and obstacles to doing business in Maine. For example, hospitals must have a reliable source of energy to meet the critical needs of their patients and that is why many of them rely on natural gas as a back-up energy source for electric generation.

Maine's energy needs continue to grow and the well-intended efforts to develop more solar and wind cannot alone meet the need and which, at least for the time being, are largely only available when the wind blows and the sun shines. And it is not an "either-or" choice – it is a "yes, please" situation. LD556 will not hamper the development of renewables.

- Critical Insights Survey, Spring 2022

The energy needs of all Mainers and families throughout the region must continue to be met reliably with the tools we have at hand and natural gas is a resource that provides 24-7 value to residents and businesses.

The intention of LD556 is to ensure that Mainers no matter where they live have access to an energy source that is reliable, resilient, and affordable. We want a clean future with lower emissions. We need to foster innovation. However, that shouldn't come at the expense of Mainers' ability to choose the appliances and energy systems that work best for them. Attempts to ban fuels will lead to higher costs for Maine's consumers, a less reliable electric grid and an impaired energy delivery system.

LD556 places the future in perspective. There are more technological solutions to come. Let's take an all the above approach to innovations as we all work for the safest, cleanest and most reliable energy sources for Maine.

In conclusion, we encourage you to protect the rights of families and businesses to make their own decisions as to how they heat and cool their homes, cook their food, and power their businesses. It is simply inappropriate for any local government to limit consumers' access to an affordable, reliable and resilient source of energy. I encourage you to vote ought to pass for LD556.

Thank you for your consideration.