

*132<sup>nd</sup> Legislature*  
*Senate of*  
*Maine*  
*Senate District 2*

*Senator Harold 'Trey' Stewart, III*  
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**LD 556, "An Act to Preserve Heating and Energy Choice by Prohibiting a Municipality from Prohibiting a Particular Energy System or Energy Distributor"**

**Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government**  
**March 24, 2025**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government:

I am Senator Trey Stewart; I represent District 2, which includes several municipalities in Penobscot and Aroostook County.

As a co-sponsor, I am happy to be here and share my support for LD 556. Furthermore, I'd like to add that I was a proud signer of the Energy Choice Pledge this past fall.

Ensuring Mainers' safety and warmth during the winter season is important to me as I represent northern Maine and, some would say, the coldest part of the state. Making sure the people in my district have choices available to them remains critical.

The goal of LD 556 is in this same vein. This measure will make certain Mainers continue to have a choice in how they heat their homes and/or businesses by preserving their ability to choose the type of fuel and equipment that best suits their needs. As Senator Harrington mentioned, this bill does not promote any type of fuel over another. What it does do, though, is protect Mainers from "a single point of failure," which is likely to occur if we allow mandates of one particular type of energy. Who on this committee, or anywhere in Maine, doesn't recall the Ice Storm of 1998 when power lines across the state were downed and Mainers went without electricity for weeks? Were it not for alternate forms of fuel, I dare say that awful situation would have been even worse.

I should also note that while this legislation seeks to preserve an individual's right to choose their energy source for their home or business, it does not remove any municipal control with regard to safety or health. This bill would not affect a municipality's ability to regulate heating and energy installations based on safety, which is currently a part of the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code. It also does not remove the ability of municipalities to regulate the placement of utilities' pipes or wires in the public right-of-way based on the safety of the traveling public.

Municipalities also have some authority over the siting of commercial energy generating facilities and this legislation would not change that.

Mainers use a wide array of fuels when it comes to heating their homes. In my district it is common for many homeowners to use multiple sources to heat their homes. Many people in Maine use fuel oil, kerosene, wood, natural gas, electricity and solar. Mainers simply want affordable and reliable energy. We need to guarantee that all these options are available for individuals and businesses based on what is affordable to any given person in all parts of the state.

By taking an all-of-the-above approach to our state's energy needs and avoiding state or municipal policies that seek to limit or remove energy choice, we can avoid the path that will most certainly lead us to that "single point of failure."

LD 556 does not promote or benefit any particular type of fuel or heating equipment. It preserves the ability to install solar panels, heat pumps or propane heaters. Such diversification of resources is critical to addressing the long-term needs of our state and our businesses. What may be the most desirable or least expensive heating option one day may not be the best option in the coming months or years. Moreover, while Maine is working to electrify its heating sector, most reliable projections suggest that Maine and the region is a long way away from having enough renewable energy to electrify the heating sector, the transportation sector, and add enough renewable energy for the current uses of electricity. At the same time, new technologies in the natural gas arena allow for renewable natural gas that can make a significant dent in existing methane emissions. Given these very real challenges facing our energy sector, the best way to ensure affordable heating and sound environmental choices is to allow heating choice and vehicle choice. This all-of-the-above approach is the essence of LD 556.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this measure.