

**Testimony of Ashley Luszczi**  
**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology**  
**Neither for nor Against L.D. 839, An Act to Lower Consumer Electricity Costs by**  
**Prohibiting the Recovery Through Rates of Costs Attributable to Net Energy Billing**  
**March 27, 2025**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Ashley Luszczi. I am here on behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, representing a network of 5,000+ small to large businesses. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony neither for nor against L.D. 839, An Act to Lower Consumer Electricity Costs by Prohibiting the Recovery Through Rates of Costs Attributable to Net Energy Billing.

Many of the benefits of the Net-Energy billing program, including employment, greenhouse gas reductions, and investment to our state are core state public policy goals. However, currently, kilowatt-hour credit costs and costs under Maine's Net-energy Billing (NEB) program are recoverable through transmission and distribution utility rates. As a result, the costs impact manufacturers that may be struggling to be profitable as well as low-income households. We would never design an economic strategy or greenhouse gas mitigation effort that would regressively impact our low-income households or undermine our employers, but that is how the NEB program is structured. That is not to say that some programs that are beneficial to ratepayer bills should be ratepayer funded, including energy efficiency programs that are reviewed by the Public Utilities Commission.

L.D. 839 proposes shifting these costs to be funded through the General Fund and would task the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to establish rules for the distribution of funds from the Net-energy Billing Cost Stabilization Fund. We think this is a creative approach that would more accurately assign the costs to the policy goals, which are societal.

There are a few considerations with this approach. First, by shifting NEB costs from utility rates to the General Fund, L.D. 839 would alleviate direct charges on electricity consumers, but the scale of the funding required is significant. While this approach could lead to more predictable and potentially lower electricity bills, the financial responsibility is not absolved but rather shifted to taxpayers. We would strongly recommend that this legislation be paired with efforts to lower the overall costs of the program.

Furthermore, NEB has been instrumental in promoting the adoption of solar by allowing consumers to offset their electricity costs through self-generation. Changes in the funding

structure could influence participation rates - without certainty of compensation, it could send mixed signals to investors and developers.

Again, the Chamber believes it could be beneficial to restructure the financial framework of the NEB programs to reduce consumer electricity costs and our efforts for meeting our greenhouse gas mitigation goals should be done through regressive means. We encourage the Committee to do a serious analysis of the potential effects on all stakeholders involved.