

Testimony to Joint Legislative Committee EUT

Shane Flynn, One North, Millinocket, April 3 2025 Re. LD 912

Chairman Lawrence, Chairwoman Sachs, Senators and Representatives.

My name is Shane Flynn, I work at One North in Millinocket and I am giving testimony in support of LD 912 as amended by Senator Curry.

In 2017, the Millinocket based non-profit, Our Katahdin purchased the former Great Northern Paper (GNP) mill site from a bankrupt Private Equity developer. Following a protracted period, during which time Our Katahdin settled multiple liens on the property, Our Katahdin renamed the site, One North and has been marketing the property to companies requiring, large acreage, access to vehicular and rail traffic, affordable power and seeking a reliable workforce. Emphasis has been placed on attracting companies seeking a connection to and focus on regional assets (timber and water) and sustainability of resources is an important consideration as to prospect suitability.

Two examples of companies with attractive profiles are, Great Northern Salmon (GNS) requiring +/- 50 acres, generating employment of 85 full time and in the process of deploying an investment of +/- \$300 million and EME a liquid biofuels company (from wood fiber) requiring +/- 30 acres, generating employment of 45 full time and an investment of +/- \$200 million. Both companies fit the mold of target companies attractive to a rural community. Both companies are seeking a wide expanse of skilled people, engineers, scientists, technicians, machine operators, skilled trades and semi-skilled and general operators. These two companies and others we are engaging with also seek substantial power, with a strong preference for renewable sourced power. Additionally, given that the above companies compete with global players, cost considerations are critical.

Within One North, GNS and EME can access affordable renewable power generated Behind the Meter and consumed on the same site where Great Northern produced paper for the world. The town of Millinocket directly benefits from incremental real and personal tax receipts, desperately needed in a community where the population has halved since 2008 and where real property valuation is well below 50% of pre 2008 levels.

Our Katahdin and the Katahdin region continues to seek out other prospective employers, targeting companies attracted to the region for its abundance of natural assets and seeking to employ people from the region.

In the past eighteen months, we have seen a significant increase in scouting activity from very large Data Center brokers and developers. We welcome any companies wishing to bring economic activity to the State and region but Data Center companies are attracted to the area for one asset, inexpensive, hydro power. As with all needy communities we want to encourage development but not to the exclusion of opportunities to attract industrial business seeking to engage fully with local abundant natural assets and the people of the region. Vulnerable rural communities need to avoid drifting into mono-industrial dependence, former mill towns understand the bitter taste of industrial concentration.

Many Data Center developers are seeking as much power as they can purchase in an area, particularly so in communities such as Millinocket. LD 912 would protect such communities from developers' intent on purchasing ALL power available on site to the exclusion of those companies employing a wider array of the local workforce, companies that will contribute across the spectrum, companies driving up local tax receipts by broadening the tax base, driving indirect employment e.g. forest dependent jobs and attaching themselves to the local array of natural assets.

The amended LD 912 would allow a continuation of the welcome we extend to all prospective employers including Data Centers but would limit dangerous concentration of development. Data Center companies may substantially increase tax receipts but fail to address the array of local needs and in particular to address depopulation of communities.

Thank you for your consideration of Senator Curry's Bill and I ask that you support this important economic development tool.