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PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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**Testimony of the Maine Public Utilities Commission
In Support Of**

**LD 1240, An Act to Align the Schedules for Climate Change Protection Plans and
Grid-enhancing Technology Reviews with the Integrated Grid Planning Process**

April 3, 2025

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology (Committee), my name is Deirdre Schneider, testifying in support of LD 1240, An Act to Align the Schedules for Climate Change Protection Plans and Grid-enhancing Technology Reviews with the Integrated Grid Planning Process on behalf of the Public Utilities Commission (Commission).

LD 1240 aligns the timeframes for the initiation of review by the Commission of grid-enhancing technologies and the submission of climate change protection plans by all transmission and distribution with the integrated grid planning process.

Integrated grid planning process

Public Law 2021, chapter 702 requires the Commission, beginning November 1, 2022, then every five years thereafter, to initiate a proceeding to identify the priorities to be addressed in a filing by an investor-owned transmission and distribution utility regarding a grid plan that will assist with the cost-effective transition to a clean, affordable and reliable electric grid. It requires the Commission, at the conclusion of the proceeding, to issue an order directing the utilities to submit a filing within 18 months of the issuance of the order that addresses the priorities identified in the proceeding and includes the additional components identified in law.

On November 1, 2022, the Commission issued a "Notice of Proceeding" in Docket No. 2022- 00322 as required by the Act. On July 12, 2024, the Commission issued its Order identifying the priorities to be addressed in the utilities' initial grid plan. The utilities are required to file the grid plans with the Commission by January 12, 2026.¹

The next grid planning proceeding will be initiated on or before November 1, 2027.

¹ Details regarding the grid planning process are included in the "Final Report Regarding the Development of an Integrated Grid Plan Pursuant to Public Law, 2021, chapter 702" submitted to this Committee on July 15, 2024. <https://www.maine.gov/mpuc/sites/maine.gov/mpuc/files/inline-files/Integrated%20Grid%20Plan-Final%20Report%20-7.15.pdf>

Grid-enhancing technology review

Current law requires the Commission, beginning January 15, 2025, then every five years thereafter, to conduct a review or contract with a consultant to conduct a review of available grid-enhancing technology that could be implemented by investor-owned transmission and distribution utilities to reduce or defer the need for investment in grid infrastructure. The Commission has contracted with Energy + Environmental Economics to conduct this initial review.

LD 1240 resets the timing of this review by starting the five-year cycle for review on January 15, 2027, to align with the grid planning proceeding. It specifies that the 2027 review is an update of the 2025 review that is currently in process.

Climate change protection plans

35-A M.R.S. § 3146 requires all transmission and distribution utilities (COUs and IOUs) to submit, no later than December 31, 2023, then every three years thereafter, a ten-year plan that includes specific actions for addressing the expected effects of climate change on the utility's assets needed to transmit and distribute electricity to its customers. It also requires the Commission to provide a process to allow for input from interested parties on the submitted plans. This provision was enacted in the same Act that enacted the integrated grid planning requirements.

The first plans were filed in Docket No. 2023-00282. Public comments on the plans were required to be filed by January 25, 2024. The Commission engaged Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL) to provide assistance and resources related to the planning process. On August 6, 2024, the Commission held a workshop where Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and LBNL presented on work done in other states, potential best practices, and resources for utilities with an emphasis on assistance for consumer-owned utilities (COUs) who have limited resources. The GEO provided information regarding potential funding opportunities. The Commission continues to engage LBNL to develop tools to assist COUs with the planning process.

LD 1240 moves the next submission date for the climate change protection plans to May 1, 2027, and changes the cycle for submission from three years to five years. This change not only aligns the submission of these plans with the grid planning process but provides some relief to the COUs by changing the cycle for the submission of these plans to five years instead of 3 years.

Overview of LD 1240 – Alignment with the Integrated Grid Planning Process				
	Current Law		Proposed in LD 1240	
Grid-enhancing technology review	January 15, 2025	Every 5 years	<u>January 15, 2027</u> (update)	Every 5 years
Climate change protection plans	December 31, 2026	Every 3 years	<u>May 1, 2027</u>	Every 5 years
Integrated grid planning	<u>November 1, 2027</u> - Every 5 years			

The grid-enhancing technology review and climate action plan submissions are important actions that can inform the grid planning process. Aligning these actions with the initiation of the grid planning proceeding allows for more robust discussions during the proceeding, helps better inform the grid planning process and makes available more tools to both the Commission and the public when identifying the priorities for grid plan submissions.

I would be happy to answer any questions or provide additional information for the work session.