

**Testimony of Suzanne Watson in Support of L.D. 1270:
An Act to Establish the Department of Energy Resources
Referred to the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee**

Tuesday, April 8, 1:00 PM
Energy Utilities and Technology Committee
Cross Building, Room 211

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and Members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Suzanne Watson, and I am here today representing myself.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in favor of LD 1270: An Act to Establish the Department of Energy Resources. Establishing the Maine Department of Energy Resources outside of the Governor's Office as a cabinet level position will allow for a more integrated, comprehensive, and consistent approach to the planning and management of Maine's energy system, helping Maine more effectively prioritize affordable and reliable energy for all Maine people and businesses.

I have extensive experience at the national, regional, state and local energy policy levels working with government, legal, business, as well as multiple non-profits for over 35 years. I believe I have a strong foundation to comment on this particular piece of legislation. In fact, I strongly supported this same recommendation back in the days of the Baldacci administration.

My thirty-five years of experience includes over eleven years from 2008 to 2019 as Policy Director for the nationally known think tank, the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) located in downtown Washington, DC. There I oversaw the work of over 60 full-time analysts and economists serving the energy policy needs of the various states, the US Congress and the White House. From 2004 to 2006, I served as the Senior Energy & Climate Policy Advisor with the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM), a well-respected Northeast Regional non-profit serving the northeast states as they dealt with energy, climate, air quality, and environmental policy and program needs. In addition, in 2006, I was appointed by Governor Baldacci as the Director of Innovation with the Maine DEP working under Commissioner David Littell. In 1998, I founded the Maine Energy & Environment Center (E2 Center) affiliated with the Maine State Chamber of Commerce in partnership with then Chamber president Dana Connors. Even today I still hold an active contract as a consultant with the US Dept. of Energy working with New England manufacturers and large energy end-users to help them convert their operations to more efficient and clean energy technologies.

From this vantage point, I hope you will see that I have seen the functioning of multiple energy offices across the country. From this vantage point, I list a number of reasons to elevate Maine's energy office to a full cabinet-level department:

1. **Centralized and Coordinated Energy Policy:** Having an energy office at the cabinet level ensures that energy policies are more coordinated and aligned with the overall

goals of the administration. This makes it easier to create comprehensive and long-term strategies for energy production, conservation, and sustainability.

2. **Increased Focus on Energy Issues:** Elevating energy to a cabinet-level position underscores the importance of energy in economic growth, and environmental sustainability. It signals that energy is a high priority for the state.
3. **Greater Influence and Authority:** A cabinet-level energy office would have more clout in negotiations with other states, government agencies, and the private sector. This can help to push through important energy-related legislation, facilitate innovation in energy technologies, and drive investment into the best energy sources.
4. **Integration of Climate and Energy Goals:** Given the growing importance of climate change, an energy office at the cabinet level could help integrate clean energy goals with climate policy, ensuring a holistic approach to addressing both energy needs and environmental concerns.
5. **Economic Growth and Job Creation:** A cabinet-level office can better advocate for investments in the high growth energy sector, creating jobs and fostering innovation in energy industries. It would have the authority to craft policies that promote innovative energy programs, energy efficiency measures, and new cost-effective technologies.
6. **Address Critical Housing Needs:** A cabinet-level energy office can infuse the need to build new, affordable housing in the state from a smarter construction approach. A large part of what constitutes affordable housing is the cost of energy to its future occupants. Building smart, efficient housing serves long-term needs and not just short-term ones.
7. **Strategic Planning for Future Energy Needs:** A cabinet-level energy office can focus on long-term planning for the state's energy needs, including transitioning to affordable energy sources, modernizing the energy grid, and addressing future challenges such as energy storage, electrification of transportation, and climate adaptation.
8. **Public Engagement and Awareness:** With more prominence, the energy office will also play a key role in educating the public about energy efficiency, sustainability, and the transition to cleaner technologies, fostering a broader societal shift towards responsible energy consumption – and improving our state's economy in the process.
9. **Streamlined Decision-Making:** Energy-related decisions often require collaboration across multiple government departments (e.g., environmental, economic, housing). A cabinet-level position ensures quicker decision-making by consolidating authority, improving the efficiency of cross-agency coordination.
10. **This is a revenue-neutral change.**

Overall, a cabinet-level energy office would bring the state's energy agenda to the forefront of government decision-making, allowing for more effective policy and program development and implementation.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.