

Testimony of Ashley Luszczki
Before the Joint Standing Committees on Energy, Utilities and Technology
In Support of L.D. 1270, An Act to Establish the Department of Energy Resources
April 7, 2025

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Ashley Luszczki. I am here on behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, representing a network of 5,000+ small to large businesses. The Chamber appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in qualified support of L.D. 1270, An Act to Establish the Department of Energy Resources.

The Maine State Chamber of Commerce appreciates Governor Mills' recognition of the important and central role energy plays in shaping Maine's competitiveness, resilience, and long-term prosperity. Predictability in energy policy and project planning is critical for businesses looking to grow, invest, and create jobs in Maine. For these reasons, we support the broader effort to establish a Department of Energy Resources that will develop a professional staff who can support any future Administration successfully in long-term energy planning and executing an energy strategy.

Several states have an established Department of Energy or equivalent agency with authority to lead state energy policy, procure power, and coordinate with federal entities. Elevating the Governor's Energy Office to a cabinet-level department will ensure energy issues receive the attention they deserve and allow the state to be more responsive to emerging energy opportunities while aligning with best national practices.

Our support today is qualified, however. As drafted, L.D. 1270 would grant the new Department significant authority to conduct competitive solicitations to meet electric demand, ensure reliability, and fulfill Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) obligations. Procurements have been an essential tool for driving renewable investment, and we agree that Maine must be ready to act strategically.

However, as Maine looks to diversify its energy portfolio and potentially make large-scale procurements, it must do so in a way that is data-driven, transparent, and cost-effective for ratepayers. We have expressed this sentiment to the Governor's Energy Office, and we encourage the committee to give this section of the bill additional attention.

Specifically, we would urge the Committee to include language that provides a clear standard of review to guide how and when procurements are initiated, how they are evaluated, and how their impacts are measured. This is critical to ensure that decisions are made objectively and in the public interest, especially given the long-term cost and reliability implications for Maine residents and businesses.

If the Legislature decides to move forward with the creation of this new department, we recommend that the procurement section be either refined within this bill or explored further in another legislative vehicle to ensure robust public and stakeholder engagement.

Again, the Chamber supports the intent of L.D. 1270 and sees the formation of a Department of Energy Resources as a positive step toward ensuring long-term energy planning and coordination. With additional clarity around procurement authority, we would offer our full support of this legislation.