

## LD 1270, An Act to Establish the Department of Energy Resources

Senator Lawrence

Representative Sachs

Members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee

My name is Debra Hart, and I am a resident of Manchester, Maine. I represent the Dirigo Electric Cooperative Companies, which include Van Buren Light & Power, Houlton Water Company, Eastern Maine Electric Cooperative, Kennebunk Light & Power District, Madison Electric Works, Brunswick Landing Electric Utility, Fox Island Electric Cooperative, and Isle Au Haut.

We are testifying today in support of LD 1270, which eliminates the current structure of the Governor's Energy Office and creates a cabinet-level Department of Energy Resources. This new department will be continuing the important work of the GEO, who will continue to be in front of this committee, but we believe in a more prominent and accountable role to the Legislature.

Their number one responsibility will continue to be to prepare the State's comprehensive energy plan, and a part of that plan will be to identify opportunities to lower and maintain 'reasonable total energy costs for consumers in the State", which is a primary focus of the COUs, and we were pleased to see that listed at the top of what the plan must include.

In closing, over the past years, the GEO has reached out to the COUs on occasion when they have identified programs or opportunities that the consumer-owned utilities can take advantage of. Most of these include some federal funds or tax credits that are available to municipal or rural electric utilities, and we appreciate the GEO's office reaching out to us with information on those proposals.

Thank you for your time and attention. I'd be happy to answer any questions or provide you with additional information you request.