

Testimony of Industrial Energy Consumer Group
In Support of
LD 1270, *An Act to Establish the Department of Energy Resources*
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

April 8, 2024

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology; I am Tony Buxton with the law firm of Preti Flaherty, to provide testimony on behalf of Industrial Energy Consumer Group (IECG) in support of LD 1270 "An Act to Establish the Department of Energy Resources."

IECG is an association of large energy consumers in Maine that advocates for rapid and efficient climate mitigation while assuring energy reliability and low costs for consumers.

IECG strongly supports the creation of a cabinet-level Department of Energy, with the understanding that there will be a thorough Legislative and stakeholder discussion of the department's powers and acquisition authority.

The Governor's Energy Office has reached out to stakeholders on these other issues. IECG has responded in detail. This is a rare chance to recalibrate how Maine gets to zero carbon rapidly and at lowest cost. IECG doubts, for example, that we know whether Maine is overpaying by the combination of the RPS, RGGI, planned renewable purchases and "goals" mandates, such as those for batteries. Ratepayers need to know; the Department must know. Maine should choose its signal priority; is it zero carbon, more renewables or energy equity?

Maine should institutionalize the enormous, perhaps existential, importance of energy. In the Climate crisis, energy is both the metric of the cause and the tool to mitigate global temperature increases. Around the world, and in provinces and states surrounding Maine, energy is a paramount concern of responsible sovereign governments. When New Brunswick agreed to sell its provincial generation to Hydro Quebec, for example, the New Brunswick government fell. No advanced digital society will prosper without intense government focus on providing abundant energy consistent with climate mitigation. The private sector is key but not acting alone. Maine needs this Department of Energy, now.

The successes and failures of the Mills Administration in energy also prove the need for the Department. We all make mistakes; let's move on and do better. But the greatest mistake is to do nothing or too little to control our future, nothing at all, especially when need and opportunity rhyme. Today, the Mills Administration, led by the Dan Burgess, Newport, Maine's second most famous son, Celina Cunningham and GEO's growing team have found their cadence and are "doing good" for our future. IECG testified years ago that the GEO had fewer employees than did some Portland parking lots, and that was a failing. Today, GEO takes at least part of a parking lot. We are seeing successes.

This committee knows well how serious energy and climate are to Maine. IECG urges approval of the Department and subsequent in-depth discussion of its proper powers and responsibilities.

We would be pleased to answer any questions.