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April 11, 2025

**Testimony of Meghan Russo
Maine Department of Transportation
Before the 132nd Legislature, Joint Standing Committee on Transportation**

In Opposition to LD 1242

*An Act to Incentivize the Construction of Solar Carport Canopies and Solar Chargers at
Highway Picnic Areas*

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, I am Meghan Russo, Director of Government Affairs at MaineDOT. MaineDOT is in opposition to LD 1242.

MaineDOT has a well-developed plan for expanding the state's electric vehicle (EV) charging network. This plan, created in collaboration with Efficiency Maine Trust and other state agencies, outlines how federal funds will be used to strategically grow our EV infrastructure. Our *Recharge Maine* strategy was carefully designed to maximize available funding while meeting diverse program requirements and identifying the most effective locations for charger placement. Unfortunately, rest areas did not meet the criteria for ideal siting based on usage potential and site suitability.

Our goal is to install public EV chargers at the lowest cost and in the most practical, high-demand locations. While solar canopies may be viable in select rest areas, they are generally less suitable due to site limitations. Many rural rest areas are small, heavily shaded, and not designed for long stays. Tree removal to accommodate solar panels would likely be controversial and could conflict with the character of these areas. Additionally, most state-owned rest areas lack reliable internet access and amenities that support long stops. Since EV charging can take 2-6 hours, usage would likely be low, making it difficult to attract private partners willing to invest under lease agreements.

We respectfully urge the Committee to support MaineDOT in staying the course with our current EV charging strategy. For these reasons, we oppose LD 1242 and recommend an "ought not to pass" vote.

Thank you.

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