



**Testimony Neither For Nor Against LD 1317,
An Act to Promote Responsible, Cost-effective Energy in Maine by Amending the Tariff
Rates Applicable to the Commercial and Institutional Net Energy Billing Program**

**To the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
by Rebecca Schultz
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Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee, my name is Rebecca Schultz, and I am a Senior Advocate for Climate and Clean Energy with the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM). NRCM is a nonpartisan membership organization that has been working for more than 65 years to protect, restore, and conserve Maine's environment, now and for future generations.

On behalf of our nearly 20,000 members and supporters, NRCM testifies neither for nor against LD 1317, An Act to Promote Responsible, Cost-effective Energy in Maine by Amending the Tariff Rates Applicable to the Commercial and Institutional Net Energy Billing Program.

NRCM supports Maine's community and rooftop solar programs. The 2019 program expansion was intended to spur investment in Maine's solar industry, and it has been successful, providing myriad benefits across the state's transmission and distribution system while reducing emissions and putting our state on track to meet its climate goals.

However, we share the sponsor's interest in reducing ratepayer costs and believe the framework put forth by LD 1317 could provide a starting point for a workable solution. By focusing on the tariff rate program, while preserving the kilowatt-hour program that includes residential rooftop, the bill takes a succinct and pragmatic approach, targeting the subset of projects with higher costs vs. benefits.

This Committee has heard many times that any retroactive changes to the terms of existing, operational projects could trigger project bankruptcies and ultimately jeopardize thousands of Maine off-takers, including municipalities, schools, businesses, and nonprofits that are under contract for that energy. Therefore, any proposed changes cannot be made lightly. Proposals must be evaluated carefully in order to minimize market disruptions while achieving meaningful cost savings for ratepayers.

Whether twelve cents is the appropriate level, whether projects should be treated the same across CMP and Versant service territories and across the original and alternative rate programs, or whether an annual escalator should be retained to reflect the reality of projects' financial obligations—these are some of the crucial details the Committee should examine judiciously.

Because retroactive changes to project financials will risk undermining Maine's nascent clean energy industry and the reputation of our state as a place to invest, if the Committee is to support any proposals related to operational projects, the Committee must only support them in conjunction with proposals to improve solar customer experience and establish a successor program that creates a participatory and cost-effective pathway for solar energy in Maine moving forward. No proposal, including LD 1317, should be evaluated in isolation from those other components.

For these reasons, we testify **Neither For Nor Against** LD 1317, but would be happy to work with the sponsor, the Committee, and other stakeholders on amendment language.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments, and I would be happy to answer any questions that the Committee has.