



Testimony Neither for Nor Against LD 1726
An Act to Enhance the Coordination and Effectiveness of Integrated Distribution Grid Planning
April 29, 2025

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the committee, my name is James Cote, and I am here today on behalf of Versant Power to testify neither for nor against LD 1675.

First, Versant Power appreciates the sponsor's thoughtful approach to ensuring our state's various and interrelated energy planning processes are complementary and provide the maximum value to policymakers, regulators, utilities, ratepayers, and other stakeholders.

We offer the following comments regarding several specific provisions in the bill and would be happy to work with the committee and provide information as you consider this legislation:

Section 3 (Grid plan alignment with procurements)- As we have said previously, Versant Power agrees that the strategic location of energy assets (e.g. generation or storage systems) on the electrical grid is critical to ensuring that the value of such assets is maximized and that the ratepayer-funded infrastructure investments necessary for interconnection and operations is minimized. This will only become more important as grid capacity becomes more constrained. Utilizing grid plans to optimize grid capacity and avoid particularly congested locations on the grid as Maine adds additional generation to the system could increase the efficiency and ratepayer value of these projects.

Section 4 (Integration of distributed energy resources)- Versant Power understands that the cost-effective integration of additional distributed energy resources (DER) is a key goal of the integrated grid planning (IGP) process. We seek additional clarity on the language in the bill that would require the Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) to develop "clear technical standards for covered utilities" for the integration of DERs within the IGP process and how such standards would interact with (or may be distinct from) existing relevant requirements (e.g. the MPUC's Chapter 324 rules governing interconnection).

Section 5 (Standardization of method; energy supply and demand forecasting)- At a high-level, Versant Power agrees that ensuring various energy planning processes complement one another is a worthy goal. However, as Maine's utilities are still currently in the process of developing their first integrated grid plans under 35-A MRSA §3147 we believe it may be premature to mandate the use of a single specific method for energy supply and demand forecasting in future IGP proceedings.

Additionally, while we agree that the utilities' IGP should consider and, where practicable, interact with the Governor's Energy Office (GEO) comprehensive state energy plan, the focus of and level of detail contained within these plans is distinct in meaningful ways, and a single forecasting method may not be prove to be the best solution in both cases.



We note that the current language of LD 1726 could unnecessarily limit a utility's ability to consider a range of methodologies that, with the input of the MPUC and various stakeholders, it believes are the most appropriate to project future energy supply and demand. We believe that utilities and regulators should retain discretion in selecting the most appropriate forecasting methodology or methodologies, especially during the first iterations of integrated grid plan development.

Section 6-2 (Transmission and energy planning)- Regarding subpart A, we would propose adding additional clarity about how the MPUC should "integrate" utility grid plans in future transmission and energy planning activities to maximize the value and efficiency of each process and avoid any unnecessary duplication of effort.

Regarding B and C, we note that Versant Power currently utilizes various technologies to gather data, monitor and control our system and continues to actively evaluate the use of emerging technologies, including several named in these subparts.

We believe that further clarity around the requirement that the MPUC incentive the use of low voltage sensors would be beneficial, especially as utilities may find (either currently or in the future) that alternative individual technologies (or operational techniques) are better suited to accomplishing the same goals, potentially at lower cost. Additionally, we would request clarity, regarding subpart C, how the installation of such technologies would be treated by the MPUC (e.g. is the intent for utilities to install these sensors as capital investments) and how (and by whom) the resulting data is expected to be utilized.

Section 9 (Consistency in method)- We would echo the considerations we identify in Section 5, above.

Section 10 (Assessment of nonwires alternative process)- Versant Power believes that this proposal could provide valuable information and recommendations about how to best leverage and integrate the NWA process with integrated grid planning and other energy planning efforts. We defer to the Public Utilities Commission, Office of the Public Advocate, and Efficiency Maine Trust as to the time and resources necessary to accomplish such an evaluation.

Thank you for your consideration, and we would be pleased to provide additional information for the work session upon your request.