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Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

RE: LD 1868—An Act to Advance a Clean Energy Economy by Updating Renewable and Clean Resource Procurement Laws

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, my name is Karen Blakelock and I work as the climate and energy policy advisor for the Nature Conservancy in Maine. I appreciate this opportunity to comment in support of LD 1868.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that both nature and people can thrive. We work in more than 70 countries, and use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners.

TNC supports this bill as it establishes a clean energy standard in addition to the preexisting renewable energy standard. While TNC maintains a strong preference for well-sited sources of renewable energy, such as wind and solar, we understand that it is necessary to drastically reduce our carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels as rapidly as possible, and that we must ensure Maine maintains a reliable and affordable baseload of power as we transition more and more of our systems to electricity.

Where nuclear and hydro power are included in the definition of what constitutes "clean energy" under this bill, TNC understands that all energy sources have impacts and tradeoffs, but we do have concerns with language that describes all hydropower facilities as sources of clean energy. Hydropower may be lower carbon than other sources, but dams have major impacts on rivers and freshwater ecosystems.

Since 1970, freshwater biodiversity worldwide has declined by 84%. Dams are a major factor in this decline, as they disrupt fish migration, damage floodplains and wetlands, and affect freshwater sediment and temperature regimes. As with all energy siting issues, TNC approaches hydropower using the avoid, minimize, mitigate framework: Avoid impacts by preventing new dams from being built in critical aquatic systems; minimize impacts of existing infrastructure with fish passage structures and more sustainable operating plans; and mitigate biodiversity losses by removing the most detrimental dams and deploying on-site or off-site environmental restoration.

We feel similarly about the impacts of nuclear—that it may have a place in our power supply but should be done thoughtfully and carefully. We ask that the committee consider the tradeoffs of these power supply options in their support of this bill.

Additionally, the bill allows for interstate coordination to procure transmission and resource capacity. As Maine is part of a regional grid and the impacts of emissions from fossil fuels are not confined within state borders, increased coordination between states on a shared grid is both appropriate and necessary to both meet emissions reduction targets and ensure cost effectiveness for Maine ratepayers. The amended version of the bill also includes language on energy storage system procurement, which TNC supports as energy storage can help get more renewable generation onto the grid by shifting peak supply to match peak demand.

Overall, TNC appreciated that LD 1868 considers both emissions reduction needs as well as the cost of achieving 100% clean energy on Maine ratepayers and seeks to balance the two. I ask that you **vote Ought to Pass on LD 1868**. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments, I am happy to answer any questions now or in the future.