

Testimony of Scott Vlaun, neither in favor or opposition to:

**LD 1936
SP754: An Act to Provide Greater Equity in and Reduce Costs Related to the State's Net Energy Billing Program**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs and members of the Committee.

My name is Scott Vlaun, I'm the Executive Director for the Center for an Ecology-Based Economy in Norway, and board president of the recently incorporated Maine Community Power Cooperative. I am testifying neither in favor, or against this bill as drafted.

Clearly we need Net Energy Billing reform, and I appreciate the nuanced approach represented here.

"An Act to Provide Greater Equity in and Reduce Costs Related to the State's Net Energy Billing Program" could move Maine toward more equitable and efficient solar deployment, and in fact, echoes the goals and business model of Maine Community Power Cooperative, a highly innovative project recently launched after years of development and over 5M in federal DOE and state funding.

We are breaking ground on our first two projects later this month and have more under development.

By design, our consumer-owned model reduces and stabilizes energy costs for members, with increased benefits for those with low-incomes, and provides generous lease income to landowners, keeping scarce energy dollars in our rural economies.

It also enhances farmland for innovative agrivoltaic models and provides good jobs and internships for Mainers.

While we appreciate the spirit of this bill, we see some issues with the language, especially Sec.7. Again, we appreciate the intent, but as written this may or may not exclude our project since all of our disturbed generation resources will be collectively owned by the cooperative, and offtake assignments will be flexible as the transition to beneficial electrification accelerates. It also implies that each small project would need PUC approval

Section 7 could also restrict various financing options for the cooperative as it scales to meet demand

We are also concerned about Sec.4. It is a little-known fact that existing community solar models can actually result in higher utility bills for subscribers with low energy demands, on top tying billing to generation rather than demand, which can result in prohibitively expensive electricity bills in summer. Our "whole of bill" discount model solves for this, **providing** a simple 20% savings for those with low incomes.

Furthermore, our network of small projects of just under 200 kW DC utilizes existing space on single phase power lines, allowing for more widely distributed siting. And our use of dual axis trackers will bolster grid resilience by generating power during peak demand periods.

So yes, We are in favor of this kind of nuanced reform, but see some red flags. We'd be happy to work with the committee to develop the best possible outcome for Maine's energy burdened households, and our collective renewable energy future.

Thank You! Happy to answer any questions