

Testimony of Ashley Luszczeni
Before the Joint Standing Committees on Energy, Utilities and Technology
Neither for nor Against L.D. 1936, An Act to Provide Greater Equity in and Reduce Costs
Related to the State's Net Energy Billing Program
May 13, 2025

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Ashley Luszczeni. I am testifying on behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, representing a network of more than 5,000 businesses. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony neither for nor against L.D. 1936, An Act to Provide Greater Equity in and Reduce Costs Related to the State's Net Energy Billing Program.

As we have stated, Maine's Net Energy Billing (NEB) program — while originally well-intentioned — requires changes as its broad impacts on ratepayers and business competitiveness become clearer.

The NEB program has brought momentum to solar development in Maine through new investments, economic opportunities, and advancing the state's clean energy goals. For many commercial users participating in the program, it has offered lower energy costs — benefits that align with a forward-looking energy strategy. However, the cost-shifting effects are now creating significant burdens for businesses — particularly large commercial and industrial users who are not part of NEB projects but are helping to subsidize them. In part, this dynamic is contributing to increased electricity rates that are making it harder for some Maine employers to compete, invest, and grow.

L.D. 1936 takes steps to address these concerns by limiting contract length and providing a clear endpoint. Additionally, reducing compensation rates for one of the more generous programs and requiring the Public Utilities Commission to set the rates going forward. Separately, the legislation would end the use of the program for larger projects while containing the inclusion of a "good cause" exemption, which recognizes investments and real-world complexities for existing projects.

Measured reforms — like some of those in L.D. 1936 — represent a practical path forward to a challenging issue. They acknowledge the value of renewable energy investment while working to ensure cost equity across the business community. We do have concerns about the workability of Section 4 that while well-intended raises some logistical challenges. We would recommend separating this provision from the legislation and addressing the central NEB issues of costs for ratepayers this session.

The Chamber supports efforts to make changes to the NEB program in a way that controls long-

term ratepayer costs, preserves economic opportunity, and provides a stable foundation for Maine's clean energy transition. Thank you for your consideration.