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PO Box 370, Woolwich, ME 04579

May 14, 2025

Honorable Senator Lawrence, Chair
Honorable Representative Sachs, Chair
Distinguished Members of the Energy Committee

RE: LD 1949 An Act Regarding Energy Fairness

My name is Robin Wood, and I am Director of Human Resources at Woolwich-based, Reed & Reed, a 97-year-old Maine construction company that is 100% owned by its employees. Our team of employee-owners has built most of the renewable energy wind projects here in Maine.

I am here today to express my opposition to LD 1949, with particular focus on Part D, which introduces provisions related to "Environmental Justice" and the requirement for a "Community Engagement Plan," as well as proposed changes to apprentice ratios.

The concept of Environmental Justice, defined as "the equitable distribution of energy, health, economic, and environmental benefits and burdens," is broad in scope. While the intention behind this principle is commendable, its interpretation can be highly subjective, which may lead to increased regulatory obligations and associated costs for energy projects.

These added requirements inevitably drive up the cost of electricity—costs that are ultimately passed on to consumers. Many households in Maine are already facing financial strain, and every additional mandate contributes to rising energy bills. There is a growing concern about where these cumulative costs will end.

We believe it's important to consider the perspective of the average Maine ratepayer. It would be worthwhile to survey customers directly and ask whether they are willing—or able—to absorb the additional expenses tied to social justice initiatives and expanded labor provisions. Our expectation is

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that many would express that they simply cannot afford further increases to their monthly utility bills.

The implementation of a Community Engagement Plan will similarly result in added costs for the development of electricity-generating facilities. Once again, it's important to recognize that ratepayers are already stretched thin and do not have the capacity to absorb these additional financial burdens.

We recently completed the "Downeast Wind" project in Deblois, Maine—located in Washington County, which had a population of just 74 according to the 2020 U.S. Census. As part of our commitment to supporting renewable energy initiatives, we developed a comprehensive staffing plan aimed at engaging the local workforce and aligning with industry standards.

As part of our voluntary outreach efforts, we coordinated with Career Centers, Chambers of Commerce, correctional facilities, and various community organizations. We also hosted job fairs throughout the region, traveling more than 70 miles from the project site to attract potential candidates. Despite these efforts, turnout was consistently low—often just one or two attendees, and at times, none at all.

Recruiting in today's labor market presents significant challenges. While I'm not sure how involved you are in recruitment at your respective organizations, I can say firsthand that a tremendous amount of effort goes into the process. Unfortunately, despite our outreach, we were unable to meet our staffing needs locally. As a result, we had to source labor from out of state and even internationally.

I share this to highlight the very real difficulties companies face in securing a reliable workforce today—challenges many of you have likely encountered yourselves.

When reviewing the required apprentice ratios, it's difficult not to see a significant challenge—one that feels unsustainable under current conditions. Now more than ever, we have an opportunity to reassess and establish realistic, achievable goals.

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As it stands, both the current and proposed legislation exceed the Federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) requirements by approximately 60%. This raises a critical question: why not, at the very least, align state targets with federal standards to ensure consistency and practicality?

At our company we invest millions in the resources and skills necessary to build projects. We have both pre-apprentice and apprentice programs. The biggest issue with apprentices is travel. Many of these projects are built in remote locations, making them hard to get to and a very long travel from home.

On behalf of all the employee-owners at Reed & Reed, I respectfully urge you to vote *ought not to pass* on LD 1949, to ensure that our statewide investment in renewable energy remains on a path toward predictability and long-term sustainability.

Thank you,

Robin Wood