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Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

RE: LD 597— An Act to Direct the Public Utilities Commission to Conduct Procurements for Energy of Renewable Energy Credits

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 submit comments in support of LD 597.

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.

As an organization committed to creating a future of healthy lands, waters, and communities, TNC understands the need to rapidly transition to a future powered by renewable energy. Our organization is dedicated to ensuring these projects are well-sited to minimize impacts to forests and prime habitat. TNC supported LD 1591,¹ a bill that this committee unanimously supported in 2023 to give preference to projects sited on contaminated lands and supports this bill as a continuation of that process.

Additionally, the bill directs utilities to procure energy from existing renewable resources. This makes use of the generation capacity that already exists throughout the state and minimizes the need to use more land for siting generation and transmission. Making use of preexisting renewable energy infrastructure across the state is both economically and environmentally responsible. However, all energy sources have impacts and tradeoffs and our organization would want to review each repowering proposal on a case-by-case basis to ensure Maine isn't doubling down on Class 1A projects that are no longer competitive or are otherwise problematic. TNC is NFNA on Section 6 of LD 597 for this reason.

TNC appreciates that the bill specifically highlights costs to ratepayers, as TNC's mission to protect lands and waters on which all life depends is based on the idea that both people and nature can thrive: renewable energy can and should benefit both communities and the natural environment, and this bill provides an opportunity to accomplish both.

Thank you for your past and present efforts to encourage using PFAS contaminated lands for siting renewable energy projects and thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of LD 597, I am happy to answer any questions at any time.

¹ <https://legislature.maine.gov/billtracker/#Paper/SP0622?legislature=131>