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Testimony in Support
LD 1730, “An Act Regarding the Beneficial Electrification Policy of the State”
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Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology,

My name is Heather Sanborn, here today as Public Advocate, to testify in support of LD 1730, “An Act Regarding the Beneficial Electrification Policy of the State.”

Low-cost plug-in solar systems with storage are an energy option that Maine residents should be able to access. LD 1730 would enable homeowners and renters to incorporate small, up to 1,200-watt solar generators—commonly referred to as “plug-in” or “balcony” solar—into their households. Because these systems are designed to be plugged into a standard outlet, they can be self-installed, and therefore used by a wide range of residents, including those who cannot install traditional rooftop solar.

Plug-in solar systems provide meaningful benefits. Under normal conditions, they allow households to offset a portion of their monthly electricity consumption, helping to reduce energy costs. During an electrical outage, the battery that is often part of these systems can be used to provide some small measure of back-up power. In a state where many homeowners and camp owners already rely on stand-by or portable, “behind the meter” generators, plug-in solar offers a clean, quiet, and modern alternative at a comparatively affordable price point.

For many Maine families, traditional rooftop solar is not a viable option due to high upfront costs, roof condition limitations, or rental status. Plug-in solar offers a market-driven alternative that does not rely on public subsidies or tax credits. These systems have been widely adopted in Germany and are now permitted in states such as Utah, providing a growing body of evidence that they can be deployed safely and effectively. In Europe, these systems are sold at IKEA and Costco. They generally cost between \$1,000 and \$3,500, as compared to \$20,000 or \$30,000 for rooftop solar.

By enacting the regulatory reforms in LD 1730, Maine would join other jurisdictions that are recognizing and enabling this opportunity. As adoption expands, economies of scale are expected to drive costs down further, increasing accessibility for households across the state. We estimate that an 800W solar system with a battery could save the average Maine household something like \$350 a year. That means that the system could pay for itself in 3-4 years. If system prices decline further, as they are likely to do in a competitive market for consumer goods, the return on investment period could be even shorter.

To be clear, these systems would not be eligible for net energy billing. And they are very small, which means that the benefits and savings that could flow from them are very modest. Nonetheless, we should modernize our regulations to allow this technology in an “all of the above” approach to affordability.

I welcome your questions and would be pleased to provide additional information for the work session.

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Sanborn
Public Advocate