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Testimony of Representative Gary Friedmann in support of

**LD 1730, An Act to Make Small, Plug-in Solar Generation Devices Accessible
for All Maine Residents to Address the Energy Affordability Crisis**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Technology and Utilities

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Technology and Utilities, my name is Gary Friedmann, and I represent House District 14, which includes Bar Harbor, Cranberry Isles, Lamoine and Mount Desert. I am here to testify in support of **LD 1730, An Act to Make Small, Plug-in Solar Generation Devices Accessible for All Maine Residents to Address the Energy Affordability Crisis**.

With the sudden loss of federal support for renewable energy, this legislation is a critical step in addressing Maine's energy affordability crisis. Between May 2024 and May 2025, Maine saw a 36.3% electricity price increase – the largest in the country. The number of households facing unaffordable home energy burdens is staggering. Even before the latest electricity price increase, low-income households in Maine were facing an electricity burden of 8%, which is double the Public Advocate's 4% target, according to a report given to the Maine Electric Ratepayer Advisory Council in December of 2024.

Much of this increase is tied to wholesale natural gas prices, which are projected to continue rising in 2026. Our state and ratepayers need far more distributed, onsite generation to help combat the growing energy affordability crisis.

Plug-in solar kits are small (1,200 watts or less) compact systems that comply with U.S. electrical standards and can plug into a standard outdoor outlet.

- Requiring no rooftop construction, can be installed with the help of an electrician almost anywhere.
- Are low-cost (\$600-\$5,000) and can be installed for less than half the cost per watt of traditional residential solar, making them far more accessible for low-income Mainers, elders, renters, apartment dwellers, and people who own homes with unsuitable roofs.

District 14: Bar Harbor, Cranberry Isles, Lamoine and Mount Desert

- Are designed to offset electricity use behind the meter and would not participate in Maine's Net Energy Billing program.

This bill, which is modeled after legislation passed in Utah last year, eliminates interconnection requirements and establishes basic safety requirements, creating a pathway for economic relief for families struggling with high energy bills.