



**Testimony in Opposition to LD 838**  
**An Act to Establish the Maine Clean Energy Authority**  
**January 20, 2026**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the committee, my name is James Cote, and I am here today on behalf of Versant Power to testify in respectful opposition to LD 838.

Versant Power (“Versant”) is committed to working with the legislature and state agencies to achieve Maine’s clean energy goals, including the transmission infrastructure necessary to meet those objectives. As electricity demands increase over the coming decades due to beneficial electrification, Versant agrees that more work must be done to ensure reliable renewable energy resources can be planned, permitted and built, and necessary transmission projects developed, in a way that prioritizes affordability for customers.

However, we believe that the establishment of a clean energy authority as proposed in this amendment may be premature and duplicative of existing state capacity for the following reasons:

1. Typically, governmental authorities (e.g., the Maine Turnpike Authority, Finance Authority of Maine, Maine Connectivity Authority, etc.) are established to fulfill a need that has not been adequately satisfied by traditional markets, or as a public instrument to receive and disperse monies into traditional markets, to achieve public objectives.

Absent a clear market failure and/or need for a public entity to take on duties ill-suited for private entities, market-based solutions have been favored for a number of reasons including their ability to shift cost and risk from Maine taxpayers or ratepayers onto private entities in exchange for an opportunity to earn a return on investment.

Regarding the building of renewable energy resources and associated transmission infrastructure, there is strong evidence to suggest that these markets and access to development capital are functioning well in Maine and across the New England region. Maine has seen some of the nation’s fastest growth rates of renewable energy development in the country and is in the midst of competitively procuring additional grid-scale renewable resources and transmission to meet state climate goals.

2. The existing authorities of various state and quasi-state entities including the Department of Energy Resources, Public Utilities Commission, Department of Environmental Protection, Efficiency Maine Trust provide significant opportunity to engage in coordinated planning for future transmission and clean energy development and may offer pathways to finance certain projects where beneficial.

To the extent that additional authority may be necessary to achieve the goal of this legislation, we encourage the committee to explore ways to augment the enabling legislation of these agencies and/or enhance coordination and focus on specific policy objectives, rather than stand up a new government agency.



Existing agencies have the benefit of tested statutory frameworks, legal precedents, and established processes (e.g., around permitting, public participation, etc.) that may allow them to act more quickly than a new government entity. Such existing entities and their processes are well understood by developers and investors who seek clarity and predictability before committing capital, and by stakeholders and the public seeking to voice its perspective around costs, siting, safety, and other issues associated with major infrastructure projects.

3. We are concerned that the establishment of this authority could require Maine taxpayers and/or ratepayers to absorb most or all of the costs of major projects that provide significant benefit to other New England States.

Several southern New England states are actively working to procure large amounts of clean energy to satisfy their state energy policy requirements. Maine, with its significant potential to host large-scale renewable energy projects, will likely continue to be a competitive option for such state procurements or programs.

Delivering large amounts of new energy to southern New England markets will require significant upgrades to the transmission system and the costs of those projects should be borne commensurately by their direct beneficiaries. As proposed, the Clean Energy Authority could assume significant costs solely on behalf of Maine taxpayers or ratepayers even though significant project benefits will flow to other states.

Recently, other existing state agencies including the MPUC and DOER have been working to ensure the costs of future projects or procurements (e.g., the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program) are shared fairly across beneficiaries in other states and jurisdictions.

For these reasons, we encourage the committee to explore other potential strategies to achieve the objectives set forth by this amendment, including by leveraging the capacity of existing state agencies and processes. Thank you for your consideration and we would be happy to answer any questions for the work session.