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Testimony of Representative Melanie Sachs introducing
LD 307, Resolve, to Establish the Maine Artificial Intelligence Data Center Coordination Council
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

Senator Lawrence and esteemed colleagues on the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Melanie Sachs, and I am honored to represent the community of Freeport in the Maine Legislature. I am pleased to sponsor this resolve establishing the Maine Artificial Intelligence Data Center Coordination Council.

Artificial intelligence (AI) data centers represent a complex policy challenge for Maine. These facilities are increasingly drawn to locations with available land and strong connectivity—qualities that Maine is well positioned to provide. At the same time, if not thoughtfully planned and coordinated, AI data centers can place extraordinary demands on electric infrastructure, natural resources and host communities. This resolve takes a proactive, responsible approach to meet this challenge in a collaborative manner.

The proposed council is not about accelerating or discouraging development. Rather, it is about coordination, transparency and foresight. By bringing together energy, environmental, economic development, municipal, consumer, labor and utility perspectives, the council provides a structured forum to evaluate how AI data centers may affect ratepayers, grid reliability, natural resources and local communities—before decisions are made and commitments are locked in.

I am particularly encouraged by the resolve's clear focus on protecting ratepayers and maintaining grid reliability. The scale and load profile of AI data centers can be unlike traditional commercial or industrial customers. Evaluating cost-allocation approaches, rate design, demand response and energy supply obligations in advance is essential to ensuring that existing customers are not unfairly burdened and that the electric system remains reliable during periods of peak demand or grid stress.

Equally important is the council's charge to assess environmental and community impacts, including water use, land use and emissions. Maine has strong statutory commitments to renewable energy, greenhouse gas reductions and the protection of natural resources. This resolve ensures that any potential AI data center development is evaluated in alignment with those commitments, rather than in isolation from them.

The resolve also appropriately emphasizes data sharing and interagency coordination. State agencies, utilities, municipalities and grid operators need timely, accurate information to plan effectively. Establishing clear expectations around information sharing, as well as evaluating factors such as use or prohibition of nondisclosure agreements, will help avoid surprises and enable better decision-making at all levels of government.

Finally, I want to highlight the value of providing guidance to municipalities. Local officials are often the first to receive inquiries about large-scale development projects, yet they may lack the technical resources needed to fully assess impacts on infrastructure, housing, water or local services. The council's work can help ensure that municipalities are better equipped to engage thoughtfully and confidently when proposals arise.

In short, this resolve positions Maine to respond deliberately and responsibly to a rapidly evolving industry. Its goal is to protect ratepayers, support local communities, respect our environmental values, evaluate grid capacity and reliability, review best practices and allow the state to consider economic opportunities in a thoughtful, collaborative manner.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.