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February 25, 2026

Testimony of Jim Boyle in support of
**LD 2174 (as amended), An Act to Increase Predictability in the Permitting of
Renewable Energy Development**

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and distinguished members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Jim Boyle, and I live in Gorham. I am testifying in support of LD 2174. I believe all of you know me, some of you from my time serving as Senate Chair of this committee in 2013-14, and some of you from my service in the House from 2022 through 2024.

I support the proposed amendment to LD 2174 because it introduces significant and necessary changes to streamline the permitting process for renewable energy developments, including solar energy, energy storage systems, wind energy, and high-impact electric transmission lines. I strongly believe that these changes will foster the growth of renewable energy projects in Maine and ensure a more predictable and efficient regulatory process. Here are key reasons to support the proposed changes:

Improved Permitting Timelines: The amendment establishes clear and reasonable processing time limits for permit applications under various laws, including the site location of development law, the Natural Resources Protection Act, and the stormwater management law. By setting specific deadlines—180 days for site law permits, 150 days for Natural Resources Protection Act permits, and 90 days for stormwater law permits—the amendment ensures timely decisions, reducing delays that can hinder renewable energy projects.

Deemed Approval for Delayed Decisions: The provision that deems applications approved if the commissioner fails to issue a decision within the specified time frame is a critical step toward reducing permitting delays. This ensures that projects are not unnecessarily delayed due to administrative inefficiencies, providing applicants with greater certainty and encouraging investment in renewable energy.

Local Control Limitations: The amendment prohibits municipalities from enacting or enforcing local ordinances or standards that are more stringent than state laws for renewable energy projects. This creates a consistent regulatory environment across the state, preventing overly restrictive local regulations that could stifle renewable energy projects.

Support for Solar Energy Development: The amendment directs the Department of Environmental Protection to establish a permit-by-rule process for smaller solar energy developments (up to 100 acres) by December 31, 2026. This will simplify the permitting process for smaller projects, making it easier for developers to contribute to Maine's renewable energy goals.

Alignment with State Goals: These changes align with Maine's commitment to expanding renewable energy infrastructure and reducing reliance on fossil fuels. By creating a more predictable and streamlined permitting process, the amendment supports the state's efforts to combat climate change and transition to clean energy sources.

Collaboration Across Departments: The amendment emphasizes collaboration between the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Energy Resources, the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. This ensures that the rulemaking process for solar energy developments considers environmental, agricultural, and energy-related factors comprehensively.

In conclusion, LD 2174 and the proposed changes are a forward-thinking approach to addressing the challenges faced by renewable energy projects in Maine. By establishing clear timelines, reducing regulatory barriers, and promoting consistency across municipalities, this amendment will help accelerate the development of renewable energy projects, support Maine's environmental goals, and foster economic growth in the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support.