

TO: Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

RE: LD 2174 – Testimony in **OPPOSITION**

DATE: February 25, 2023

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

My name is Eric Rolfson, and I am the Chair of the Albion Transmission Committee. I testify today in **opposition** to LD 2174 as currently written and amended.

In 1988, the Maine Legislature passed the Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act. This landmark law was successful precisely because it didn't dictate *how* towns should grow; instead, it empowered communities to answer ten fundamental questions based on their unique local visions. In Albion, a dedicated group of volunteers spent three years on this process. We emerged with a plan that reflects our community's deep respect for its natural resources and a commitment to preserving our rural character and economic base.

More recently, Albion joined a dozen other towns along the proposed *LS Power Renewable Gateway* corridor to address the inevitable expansion of energy infrastructure. We recognize the importance of renewable energy goals and have spent the past three years drafting ordinances to ensure that development is conducted in ways that protects the health, safety, and property rights of our residents.

My family was motivated to participate by the threat, and resulting stress, of having 140 ft. towers bisect our 120-acre maple syrup operation and thereby negate 50 years of hard work, dreams, and investment.

These resulting town ordinances are not "anti-renewable"—they are reasonable, best-practice standards for the construction, operation, and decommissioning of energy facilities.

The proposed amendments to this bill represent a significant retreat from the Home Rule authority established by the 1969 Amendment to Maine's Constitution. By

stripping municipalities of their right to govern local affairs, this bill reverts to the era of "Dillon's Rule," where towns were mere subsidiaries of state power.

Maine's Town Meeting tradition is the purest form of direct democracy in our country. Our ordinances were not drafted by lobbyists or developers; they were researched and debated by local volunteers and vetted by town attorneys. In many ways, this reflects the same citizen legislature tradition that you represent here today—a system where ordinary people step away from their jobs and families to serve the public good. To discard the years of work our volunteers have contributed is to dismiss the very civic spirit that defines Maine's local and state government.

Albion is not Portland or Bangor—nor are our neighbors in Palermo, Freedom, Unity, or Thorndike. A "one-size-fits-all" approach to energy generation, transmission, and storage ignores local conditions and erodes the civic trust of those who have invested their time and taxes into local governance. We urge your committee not to centralize this authority at the expense of Maine's town-led democracy.

Thank you for your time and your service to the State. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.