



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Agriculture, Conservation, and

Forestry Committee

From: Marina Melo de Miranda, Sierra Club Maine Volunteer

Date: 04/10/2023

Re: **Testimony in Support of LD 1227: An Act to Balance Renewable Energy Development with Natural and Working Lands Conservation**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Representative Pluecker, and members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee, I am testifying on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nation-wide as we work towards combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable economy. To that end, we urge you to pass LD 1227: An Act to Balance Renewable Energy Development with Natural and Working Lands Conservation.

LD 1227 advances critical recommendations of the Agricultural Solar Stakeholder Group, including planning the creation of the dual-use pilot program, creating a centralized database of energy projects and their key characteristics, and increasing participation of agricultural stakeholders in solar energy working groups. These are all essential steps toward a more balanced and transparent solar energy future in Maine.

One of the best ways to build trust between the public, policymakers, and project developers is transparency. Transparency is critical to creating a clean energy economy, particularly with future sitting. This database that LD 1227 creates will allow proper public oversight and participation in this significant energy transition.

It would also allow search for suitable land such as farmlands that are currently being used for growing crops, bringing benefits to landowners who are contemplating solar panels to be installed on their lands. Solar panels on farmlands could not only reduce the load on the grid, but it could also bring income diversification and economic viability for local communities. However, solar panels would not have to be installed necessarily on farmlands. Solar panels could also be installed on buildings, car ports, and brown fields.

This legislation also seeks to provide a pilot program for dual use. Dual use is defined as the simultaneous use of land to provide solar energy and growth of crops whether it is land or aquatic sites. Dual use could not only benefit Maine in terms of reducing the carbon footprint by renewable energy generation, but also increase locally produced food for Mainers, a source of pride for our state. Food produced by Maine farmers from dual use lands could also benefit Maine's economy by selling produce to other states. Even though this legislation is only calling for a pilot program for the short-term, we believe it is in Maine's best interest to run these programs to see the benefits and decide to develop a long-term program of dual use of the land. A long-term program for dual use

land can help prevent loss of farmlands that have been caused by residential and commercial developments¹.

For the transparency of renewable energy projects and potential benefits of pilot programs on dual land use, we urge you to write an ought to pass report on LD 1227: An Act to Balance Renewable Energy Development with Natural and Working Lands Conservation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Marina Melo de Miranda
Sierra Club Maine

¹https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/inline-files/FINAL%20Report%20of%20the%20Agricultural%20Solar%20Stakeholder%20Group_Jan%202022%20with%20Appendices.pdf