



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

From: Patricia Rubert-Nason, Sierra Club Maine

Date: April 25, 2021

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 1367- **An Act To Create a Grant Program To Promote Innovation in Municipal Carbon Reduction Initiatives**

Chairman Brenner, Chairman Tucker and Members of the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. My name is Patricia Rubert-Nason, and I write on behalf of Sierra Club and the over 20,000 members and supporters in Maine. 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 defend everyone's right to a healthy world. We urge you to vote "ought-to-pass" on LD 1367, An Act To Create a Grant Program To Promote Innovation in Municipal Carbon Reduction Initiatives.

The climate is changing due to human actions and the impacts are being felt here in Maine. The health of Mainers is already being impacted from high heat index days driving increased emergency room visits to an increase in ticks and lyme disease with warming winters.¹ Sea level rise also presents a major risk to Maine. Depending on the emissions scenario, Maine can anticipate 1.5-3.9 feet of sea level rise by mid-century and 3-8.8 feet of sea level rise by the end of the century. At the high end this would inundate virtually all of Maine's dry beaches and lead to a dramatic increase in nuisance flooding.² The severity of the impacts we see is directly impacted by how quickly emissions are reduced worldwide.

The need to rapidly decarbonize is clear and Maine has committed, in statute, to doing our part by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030 and 80% by 2050. To achieve this ambitious, but necessary goal, we will need to take a comprehensive approach to eliminating emissions across all sectors and in every area of the state.

Maine municipalities have significant influence over the emissions in their areas. They directly control schools and municipal buildings, where emissions can be reduced through efficiency, electrification and renewable energy projects. They also directly control municipal fleets, school buses and public transit where electrification can

¹ https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/GOPIF_STS_REPORT_092320.pdf

² <https://climatecouncil.maine.gov/maine-climate-science-dashboard>

dramatically reduce emissions, especially given Maine's relatively clean and rapidly improving grid electricity mix. The quality of public transit available can also have a major impact on emissions from private vehicle trips as can other planning and infrastructure choices made at the local level to create more walkable neighborhoods and provide alternatives to driving.

How municipalities manage waste is also important. Municipal water and wastewater treatment are major users of energy and produce carbon, methane and nitrous oxide emissions from the breakdown of organic waste, providing multiple opportunities for emission reductions.³ Finally food and yard waste sent to landfills are a significant source of methane, a greenhouse gas 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide.⁴ Programs to divert this organic waste can make a major impact in emissions and generate compost and other valuable products which can be used to enhance food production in the area.

While I have mentioned a number of opportunities for municipalities to reduce emissions, the list is by no means comprehensive. Helping municipalities to reduce emissions at the local level is also important because they have visibility into what is going on in their communities and can see problems and opportunities that might be missed if all of the decisions are made in Augusta. Maine is full of clever, resourceful people. By providing competitive grants to municipalities for carbon reduction initiatives, LD 1367 will help unleash the creativity of Mainers all over the state and generate a race to the top to find the best, most efficient and impactful solutions to our common challenge.

Many initiatives which reduce carbon emissions require significant capital but then reduce operating expenses on an ongoing basis. Grants to help unlock these opportunities can be particularly helpful for communities which are struggling financially, such as some of Maine's rural communities which are experiencing shrinking populations and declining tax bases.

I urge you to vote "ought-to-pass" on LD 1367 to unleash the energy and creativity of Mainers and help us reach our climate goals.

Respectfully,

Patricia Rubert-Nason
Legislative Team Volunteer and Resident of Fort Kent

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<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-04/documents/us-ghg-inventory-2019-chapter-7-waste.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.epa.gov/ghgreporting/ghgrp-waste>