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Testimony in Support of:

LD 1595, "An Act to Address Waste Associated with Solar Energy Equipment"
Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Senator Brenner and Representative Tucker and fellow members of the Environment and Natural Resource Committee, for hearing my testimony on **LD 1595, "An Act To Address Waste Associated with Solar Energy Equipment."**

As many of you know I have been skeptical and a vocal foe of the expansion of solar energy since I began serving in this legislature. That being acknowledged I know it is here in Maine to stay and it is expanding at break neck speed. The stark reality is the equipment will need to be disposed of properly and a responsible program must be in place to ensure the health of Maine's people and her pristine environment. The following quotes were made by a 40-year veteran of the U.S. solar industry; I would think we should be paying attention.

"The problem of solar panel disposal "will explode with full force in two or three decades and wreck the environment" because it "is a huge amount of waste and they are not easy to recycle."

"The reality is that there is a problem now, and it's only going to get larger, expanding as rapidly as the PV industry expanded 10 years ago."

"Contrary to previous assumptions, pollutants such as lead or carcinogenic cadmium can be almost completely washed out of the fragments of solar modules over a period of several months, for example by rainwater.

The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) in 2016 estimated there were about 250,000 metric tons of solar panel waste in the world and by 2050 there could be 78 million metric tons. This bill is a way to get a jump on controlling that waste here in the state of Maine.

The summary of this bill states: in lines 11 through 32

This bill provides for the stewardship of solar panel waste. It amends the Maine Solar Energy Act to provide for the prevention or minimization of the potential damage from solar panel deterioration and for a tracking system for solar panels. It provides that property with solar panels must be insured to pay the full costs of recycling the solar panels damaged in any form of catastrophe and that these insurance costs be paid first from any distributions of insurance proceeds. It provides for state grant funding for the development of a recycling process that recycles 95% of solar panels and the design and construction of recycling equipment and a recycling facility, using funds from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Trust Fund and, if needed, funds from the Maine Solid Waste Management Fund, the Maine Solid Waste Diversion Grant Program and the Maine Technology Institute. It provides for penalties for improper disposal of solar energy equipment, for failure to register solar energy equipment and for refusal to permit inspection of solar energy equipment. It replaces the term "solar energy device" with the term "solar energy equipment," which is defined under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 10, section 1492, 25 subsection 1. It corrects cross-references in the provision of law allowing the Commissioner of Administrative and Financial Services to establish an energy infrastructure benefits fund. It amends the Energy Conservation in Buildings Act provision regarding life-cycle costs to provide that Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Bureau of General Services rules include the costs of recycling in determining the effect of insulation incorporated into a facility design and the effect on solar utilization to the properties of external surfaces and the cost-effectiveness of integrating wind or solar electricity-generating equipment into the design and construction of a facility.

This bill is relatively comprehensive and I hope that we can give it due diligence. I will answer any questions you may have, but I assure you they will likely be better answered by those that will follow me in testimony.

Thank you for listening.

Representative Beth A. O'Connor