



May 7, 2021

Senator Stacy Brenner, Chair
Representative Ralph Tucker, Chair
Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Testimony in opposition to LD 1595, “An Act To Address Waste Associated with Solar Energy Equipment”

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Jeremy Payne and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Renewable Energy Association (MREA). MREA is a not-for-profit association of renewable energy producers, suppliers of goods and services to those producers, and other supporters of the industry. MREA members sustainably manufacture electricity from hydro, biomass, wind, tidal, and solar.

The MREA testifies in opposition to LD 1595 – the bill would impose a \$125 fee per solar panel in order to fund a recycling program, and require the state to track, trace, and potentially inspect every single panel that enters the state. This is an enormous administrative undertaking for the Department of Environmental Protection, and may also create a disincentive for residential homeowners and businesses to consider investing in solar for their roof or property.

It is important to be aware of the cost this program would impose on even so-called “Distributed Generation” solar projects (those 5 megawatts (MW) and under) – for example, Madison Electric Co-op’s 5MW solar farm, which was energized in 2017, consists of 26,000 panels. This project helps meet approximately 20% of Madison’s electric needs; and had LD 1595 been law at that time, the co-op would have been required to pay \$3,250,000. It is a safe assumption that adding more than \$3million to the project’s costs would have caused this one utility’s ratepayers to consider other, less clean options.

Further, the \$125 fee is pretty close to the average cost of a single panel itself – and this means at the exact moment we are committing to a clean energy future we would be nearly doubling the price for any homeowner, business, or municipality that wishes to pursue solar.

Today’s panels are crystalline silicon photovoltaic modules and are made of glass, aluminum, and silicon. It is our understanding these materials are relatively clear-cut to recycle; however, it is important to note many of the other consumer goods which contain far more heavy metals than an average solar panel – e.g. an iPhone, a car or truck battery, and even simple AA or AAA batteries. There is no current statute telling consumers they must pay an exorbitant fee, and

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asking DEP to track, trace, and inspect every AA battery or cell phone that is sold in Maine – so why solar?

We applaud the Governor for her commitment to clean energy and her full-throated statement that “Maine Won’t Wait” regarding climate change’s harmful impacts on our economy, environment, and public health. But if LD 1595 becomes law and imposes its astronomical costs on Mainers, it is quite clear many homeowners and businesses will in fact choose to ‘wait’ rather than pay twice the cost to make the transition to clean, Maine-made solar power.

We respectfully urge the committee to vote ought not to pass.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Payne", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Jeremy N. Payne
Executive Director