



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Committee on Environment, Utilities and Technology

From: Matt Cannon, Sierra Club Maine

Date: March 4, 2021

Re: Testimony for LD 9- Neither For Nor Against

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and Members of the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology. My name is Matt Cannon and I write on behalf of Sierra Club Maine's over 20,000 members and supporters. 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. I would like to offer some comments on LD 9, which we are neither for nor against. We are not opposed to this concept, but it depends on the type of fuel that is used. We think you should place some limitations on the fuel created.

As currently written, this bill would include "syngas" or synthetic methane, which the Sierra Club opposes. If it was focused only on hydrogen (which is also not a silver bullet) we would likely be supportive. One option would be to amend this bill to exclude synthetic methane and "renewable natural gas," except for hydrogen.

Basically, syngas does not scale and is far too expensive to be a real solution; the Sierra Club mostly views it as an impediment to electrification. Plus, there are still the same concerns as regular methane (pipeline leaks, emissions when burned, etc).

From a recent study from the Energy and Environmental Economics (E3) study on the 'Future of Gas', contrary to what we hear from the gas industry, so-called "renewable natural gas" is not an alternative to electrification.¹ E3 unequivocally finds that biomethane, synthetic gas, and hydrogen are too expensive and also face significant supply limits, noting that these fuels would be better used in sectors that are harder to electrify. Biomethane and synthetic gas also have identical safety risks and produce the same hazardous air pollution as fossil gas. Let's put the nail in the coffin here, so we can all focus our time and energy on real, affordable, and scalable clean energy solutions.

¹ Transitioning Off Gas Article:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/articles/2019/06/study-transitioning-california-gas-could-lower-costs-and-prioritize-low-income>

From a recent Sierra Club report, given the limited supply and scalability, prohibitively high cost, and potential for creating methane and having harmful environmental and air-quality impacts, biomethane, synthetic gas, and hydrogen are not a realistic alternative to building electrification and must be strategically reserved for sectors that are more difficult to electrify.²

For the above reasons, we hope limitations could be placed on how LD 9 might be implemented, focusing only on hydrogen at this time.

Respectfully,

Matt Cannon
Campaign & Policy Associate Director
Sierra Club Maine

² Building Electrification Action Plan, pages 14-16:
<https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/Building%20Electrification%20Action%20Plan%20for%20Climate%20Leaders.pdf>