



# SOLAR ENERGY ASSOCIATION OF MAINE

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## Testimony in Support of L.D. 82

### Resolve, To Provide for Participation of the State in the Planning and Negotiations for the Atlantic Loop Energy Project

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Solar Energy Association of Maine

To the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology

February 18, 2021

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and other distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology: my name is Steve Weems, Executive Director of the Solar Energy Association of Maine. We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 82. This resolve contains common-sense provisions relating to a potential regional project that could have substantial ramifications affecting the availability of renewable energy as Maine strives to electrify its economy and lives of its residents.

The Solar Energy Association of Maine (SEAM) is a Maine not-for-profit corporation that exists to advocate for the development of solar electricity of **all project sizes and ownership models**, for the **benefit of all Maine people**.

Although the Atlantic Loop project is not a solar project *per se*, it has major ramifications for the international transmission line network, the potential availability of renewable energy in northern and eastern Maine, and potential markets for renewable energy, particularly offshore wind. We would simply note that in general the greatest impediment to decarbonizing Maine's economy by encouraging the process of "beneficial electrification" is the capacity and flexibility of the electric transmission and distribution system – the "grid."

It seems axiomatic it would be desirable to participate actively in any

process that is relevant to our grid, particularly in the planning and evaluation of a project that would affect Maine's more remote areas. At this stage it may not be apparent how or whether this project would benefit Maine, or how it could be planned and executed to maximize the benefits to Maine. What better way could there be to pursue Maine's interests than to participate in the Atlantic Loop planning and negotiating process?

This is exactly the purpose of this resolve, without committing Maine to any particular outcome. The resolve would create an impetus for Maine's active participation in the Atlantic Loop planning and negotiating process, as a full participant on an equal footing with the five eastern Canadian provinces that would be affected were the line built. This just seems like the best way to look out for Maine's interests, know what is going on, and position Maine to benefit from this project.

The Atlantic Loop could be a key component of the "grid of the future" we need, with the potential of creating a pathway through which to move large quantities of renewable energy into Maine. For this reason alone the resolves enunciated in LR 82 make sense.

SEAM urges your support of this resolve, particularly due to its potential to benefit rural parts of our state. This is meant to advocate for Maine's active participation in the planning of this project, so as, among other things, to facilitate an evaluation of its potential benefits and costs to the people of Maine. It is not to minimize or discount the potential environmental impacts of any major transmission line project, nor to commit SEAM to either support or oppose any concrete proposal that emerges from the planning process. It is meant to advocate for Maine's active participation in the process to improve the prospect of the project benefitting Maine, and provide the insights that would facilitate a knowledgeable evaluation of any specific project proposal that results from the planning process.

Thank you for your service and consideration of these comments.

