



Maine Conservation Voters

Inform. Vote. Protect.

Testimony of Maine Conservation Voters

Neither For Nor Against LD 170:

An Act Pertaining to Transmission Lines

Not Needed for Reliability or Local Generation

Before the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee

February 25, 2021

Good morning Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee. My name is Kathleen Meil, Director of Policy & Partnerships for Maine Conservation Voters, testifying neither for nor against *An Act Pertaining to Transmission Lines Not Needed for Reliability or Local Generation*. MCV protects Maine's environment and our democracy by making conservation, equity, and voting rights political priorities.

Transmission infrastructure is critical to transforming our electricity system and meeting the decarbonization goals required by climate science and enshrined in Maine statute. Accelerating energy efficiency will reduce demand on the electric grid, but the electrification of new sectors, including transportation, buildings, and industry, will require rapid expansion of transmission and storage. At the same time, [extreme weather events threaten the resilience of the grid](#) and highlight the [urgency of improving reliability and connectivity](#). We must decarbonize and modernize the power grid—and fast.

We are appropriately focused today on how transmission infrastructure expansion will unfold in Maine. Our treasured natural resources promote health, boost our economy, sequester carbon pollution, and inspire so many of us to action. It is tempting to emphasize conservation of our natural assets as we modernize our infrastructure. Yet as we plan for Maine's clean energy future, we must put our decisions in a regional, national, and even global context:

- Maine is part of a regional electric grid. Although each of the six New England states set our own energy policies and renewable energy targets, we share electrons—and the benefits of clean energy—freely. MCV urges the Committee to consider how designating some transmission as “non-essential” might impact this regional frame.

- Maine's clean energy resources, including wind power in the Gulf of Maine, could play a significant role in helping other states meet their clean energy and energy resilience goals. Our climate, humanitarian, and economic interests require cleaner, more reliable energy, nationwide. MCV encourages the Committee to consider whether LD 170 could have an unintentional chilling effect on our clean energy economy.

Our commitment to a cleaner, more modern and resilient electric grid should not imply automatic approval of transmission infrastructure upgrades or expansion. The Public Utilities Commission and Department of Environmental Protection play an important role in determining whether proposed projects are necessary, appropriately sited, and beneficial to Maine people, and stipulation agreements often enhance those benefits. LD 170 suggests that the decision-making process should be fundamentally different based not on the merits of the project, but on the ultimate destination of the transmission line.

Maine Conservation Voters appreciates the intentions of this bill and urges you to consider its implications carefully. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to you and I am happy to answer any questions.