



# SOLAR ENERGY ASSOCIATION OF MAINE

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**In Support of L.D. 347**

**An Act to Facilitate Maine's Climate Goals by Encouraging Use of  
Electric Vehicles**

**Testimony of Steven L. Weems, Executive Director**

**Solar Energy Association of Maine**

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

February 25, 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 (SEAM). We enthusiastically support LD 347, specifically its thoughtful and balanced approach to the critically important issue of creating incentives for electric vehicle charging station installation and use. We thank Representative Grohoski for bringing this forward, and including a requirement that the design and evaluation of electricity rates for this purpose must take into account a range of costs and benefits.

SEAM is a broad coalition of solar advocates. We are an all-volunteer Maine not-for-profit corporation that exists to **promote the development of solar electricity of all project sizes and ownership models, for the benefit of all Maine people.**

SEAM is not an expert witness on the intricacies of utility rate schedules, but we know that widespread, rapid conversion of Maine's transportation sector to electric vehicles ("EVs") is essential to meet the state's climate de-carbonization goals. This conversion must be solar powered, alongside other renewable energy sources. We know the cost of electricity used at EV charging stations, particularly in locations where high demand (fixed) charges are assessed,

is a problem hindering rapid deployment of EV charging stations, particularly fast chargers.

Perhaps what is the best way to incentivize the installation and use of a robust network of EV chargers, especially for travelers on a trip in a vehicle whose battery needs a boost (from a Level 3, or so-called Fast Charger), can be debated. SEAM thinks a special tariff (rate structure) is justified by this unpostponable travel need, since a strong network of strategically-located charging stations is essential infrastructure to facilitate the widespread conversion to EVs that is necessary. We conclude building a special incentive to facilitate this objective into electricity rates is justified, provided the need for such a targeted incentive is reviewed periodically and discontinued when and if it is not necessary.

Consistent with this basic premise, SEAM thinks LD 347 has positive features.

- While the bill recognizes an essential need and mandates a type of solution, it does not specify the parameters of the solution, leaving this to the Maine Public Utilities Commission (“PUC”), consistent with the PUC’s established regulatory role. Yes.
- The transmission and distribution utilities (“T&D utilities”) are “charged” to design the incentive rate schedules; the PUC is in the role of evaluating said schedules. Yes.
- LD 340 specifies that in evaluating a proposed EV charging station rate schedule, the PUC shall consider a broad array of costs and benefits, including both direct and indirect costs and benefits. Yes.
- The PUC must account for varying scenarios of EV technology (range and charging rate), adoption and use. Yes.
- If it is not satisfied with the EV rate schedule proposed by a T&D utility, the PUC can order the utility back to the drawing board, or the PUC can order the implementation of an incentive rate schedule established by the commission. Yes.

- There will be a periodic review every three years of any EV charging station incentive rate schedule to make sure it still is needed and it is structured to meet the public interest evaluation test specified in the legislation. Yes.

In sum, LD 347 identifies a real problem and specifies a thoughtful and clear solution, without being prescriptive of the actual rate schedules. It deserves the enthusiastic support of the Committee, after refinements may be added in work session to “tune it up” further, if and as necessary.

Thank you for your service and the opportunity to provide our views on this solid piece of legislation.