



**Testimony before the
Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee
Sean Mahoney
Conservation Law Foundation
February 25, 2021**

Re: LD 170 – An Act Pertaining to Transmission Lines Not Needed for Reliability or Local Generation

Good morning Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee. My name is Sean Mahoney, Executive Vice President for Conservation Law Foundation, testifying neither for nor against An Act Pertaining to Transmission Lines Not Needed for Reliability or Local Generation. CLF uses the law, science, and economics to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the climate crisis here in Maine and across New England.

As Maine's Climate Action Plan makes clear, meeting the climate crisis here in Maine will require moving away from oil and methane gas not only as a source for electricity but also as the sources for both heating and cooling our buildings and for transporting people and goods. Doing so will require a transformation of our current electric system, in terms of how we generate that electricity as well as how it is transmitted and stored. And it will also require taking a regional approach that extends beyond our state borders.

LD 170 is clearly intended to serve the best interests of Maine ratepayers who have over many years paid for much of the Maine transmission grid through their electric bills.¹ As much as CLF agrees with that premise, LD 170 raises a number of questions and the potential for unintended consequences that could adversely impact those very interests as well as Maine's ability to meet the goals of the Climate Action Plan. In particular, we are interested in learning more about the following:

1. What impact will LD 170 have on off-shore wind projects located in the Gulf of Maine whose underwater transmission cables come to shore in Maine and then transmit the electricity to markets outside of Maine, whether by long-term out of market contracts or through the ISO New England auction-based market mechanism?

¹ Of course, not all investment in transmission infrastructure has been paid for by Maine ratepayers. For example, 92% of the \$1.4 billion Maine Power Reliability Project was paid for by ratepayers located in the 5 other New England states that make up the ISO New England regional grid.

2. How will transmission projects built to serve long term contracts be treated after the long term contract is over?
3. What impact will LD 170 have on regional cost sharing arrangements under the ISO New England framework?
4. What impact will LD 170 have on investment in, and development of, renewable energy resources in northern Maine, particularly if those resources are developed to provide electricity beyond Maine's borders?
5. How will LD 170 impact the current planning and permitting process by Maine state agencies such as the Public Utilities Commission and the Department of Environmental Protection?
6. How are past investments in transmission infrastructure valued?
7. What class of ratepayers is intended to benefit and are there any qualifications that must first be met (e.g., ratepayer at time of investment?) as a threshold to eligibility?

There is no question that the current design for planning, financing and developing transmission lines needs to be overhauled and Conservation Law Foundation appreciates that this bill is an effort to address one aspect of that design. We urge the Committee to consider the implications of LD 170 on other important goals and obligations here in Maine that we share with our neighbors to the North, West and South.

Thank you.