



**Testimony in Opposition to LD 583, An Act to Repeal the Changes Made by Public Law 2019,
Chapter 478, "An Act to Promote Solar Energy Projects and
Distributed Generation Resources in Maine"
By David Costello, Climate & Clean Energy Program Director
March 16, 2021**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and distinguished members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee. My name is David Costello. I am the Climate and Clean Energy Program Director at the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM), and I am testifying today in opposition to LD 583, *An Act to Repeal the Changes Made by Public Law 2019, Chapter 478, "An Act to Promote Solar Energy Projects and Distributed Generation Resources in Maine."*

Addressing Climate Change and Bolstering Maine's Economy

Increasing Maine's in-state solar energy generation and distribution is central to our efforts to reduce the harmful health, economic, and environmental impacts of climate change. It is also key to maximizing the tremendous employment and economic opportunities associated with Maine's accelerating clean energy transition. A transition that is already begun supporting local jobs and businesses; lowering electricity bills; increasing state and local revenues; and helping to build a more reliable, and resilient electric grid. LD 583 would undermine this important transition and hamper Maine's employment and revenue growth at a critical time. It would also slow our urgent efforts to address climate change.

The landmark climate and clean energy bills passed in 2019 are doing exactly what they were supposed to do, make Maine an attractive location for solar energy development. An outcome that should be celebrated, not undermined.

Maine residents, businesses, and communities are benefitting extensively from the millions of dollars invested in Net Energy Billing (NEB) solar projects thus far and stand to benefit even further from the hundreds of millions that will go toward planned projects in the years ahead - if state policies remain welcoming.

Benefits of NEB and Distributed Solar Outweigh Costs

According to the recently published Daymark study Maine's Net Energy Billing (NEB) solar projects have already supported more than 540 jobs and 60 million dollars of economic activity within Maine. And, if the total pipeline of solar projects characterized in the Public Utilities Commission's November 2020 report are completed, NEB projects would support close to 7,000 jobs and 782 million dollars of economic activity in the state. NEB projects have also already:

- Contributed to Maine's climate goals by reducing thousands of tons of carbon pollution;
- Helped to lower electricity bills by reducing the amount paid for energy and energy generation capacity;
- Provided thousands of dollars in increased revenues for towns and cities throughout Maine; and
- Improved the resilience and reliability of Maine's electric grid by funding significant upgrades to grid infrastructure.

Some Program Adjustments May Be Welcome

While slight adjustments to Maine's NEB and distributed generation programs may be warranted, they should only be made after careful stakeholder examination and deliberation. To be clear, LDs 583 would not constructively "tweak" Maine's NEB program, but rather eliminate it and radically disrupt the growing employment and other benefits associated with its implementation.

For this reason and the reasons stated above, NRCM strongly opposes LD 583. Thank you for your consideration, and I welcome any questions that you may have.