



Testimony in Support of LD 551: An Act to Accelerate Weatherization Efforts from the State

Anya Fetcher, Environment Maine State Director, March 16, 2021

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony today.

I am writing on behalf of Environment Maine and our thousands of members across the state in favor of LD 551. This bill would give citizens of Maine the opportunity to vote on whether to create a \$20 million bond to reduce energy use in our state's buildings. If passed, this investment would reduce carbon pollution and put us on the path to meet our climate goals while also lowering energy bills across Maine.

All people who live in Maine need clean air to breathe, clean water to drink, and a liveable climate. In a greener, healthier world, we would conserve more, use the energy we have more wisely and efficiently and rely only on sources of energy that are clean, renewable, and leave less environmental damage in their wake.

In Maine, [one-third](#) of our carbon pollution comes from heating, cooling, and lighting our buildings. Additionally, our older and inefficient buildings use energy wastefully, hurting the planet, our health and our pocketbooks.

Meanwhile, the urgency of using our energy more efficiently to reduce pollution and its devastating impacts has only intensified each year. Last year tied with 2016 for the [hottest year on record](#). These temperatures contributed to extreme heat, more frequent and intense storms, flooding, and sea-level rise. We experienced record droughts last summer, and fishing industries are already having to adjust to changes in marine populations as the Gulf of Maine warms.

The environmental impacts of carbon pollution are paired with equally dangerous threats to our health. A [new study](#) by researchers at Harvard University and University of College London found that almost one-fifth of deaths worldwide are associated with breathing air pollution from fossil fuel combustion -- which is much higher than scientists previously thought.

Reducing energy waste is one of our best weapons in the fight against climate change. LD 551 would increase energy efficiency by giving voters the opportunity to decide whether to create a \$20 million bond to weatherize municipal buildings, schools and homes across the state. Half of the bond would fund energy efficiency projects for seniors and low-income residents, resulting in the weatherization of more

than 1,500 homes and reducing [105 million pounds of carbon pollution](#) -- which is equal to taking over [37,000 cars](#) off the road. It would save homeowners around \$300 a year on energy bills.

The other half of the bond would go to weatherizing Maine's schools and municipal buildings to further lower emissions for improved public health and environmental protections. Together, these weatherization projects would create \$45 million in lifetime energy savings for residents of Maine.

This bill is part of a broader shift in Maine to save energy and make buildings more efficient. It accelerates our progress to meet the goals laid out in Maine's Climate Action Plan, including reducing carbon emissions in our state by 80% by 2045 and moving towards 100% renewable energy by 2050.

We respectfully ask you to pass this bill to protect our planet, public health and our pocketbooks. We hope that Maine will continue to take advantage of the cleanest form of energy there is: the energy we never use in the first place.

Thank you.