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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

**An Act To Accelerate Weatherization Efforts in the State
L.D. 551**

**GOVERNOR'S ENERGY OFFICE
March 16, 2021**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology (EUT): My name is Melissa Winne and I am the Energy Policy Analyst with the Governor's Energy Office.

The GEO testifies neither for nor against L.D. 551.

The proposed L.D. 551 would allow Efficiency Maine Trust to utilize funds for conservation programs to go towards weatherization efforts. These efforts would work to advance the state in meeting targets established in the Maine Climate Council's Climate Action Plan. The legislation includes weatherizing 17,500 homes and businesses by 2025 and 35,000 homes and businesses by 2030, including at least 1,000 units of housing for low-income individuals or households per year. Additionally, the legislation would define the term 'low-income' within Efficiency Maine's governing statute.

The Maine Climate Council's Climate Action Plan, Strategy B proposes a number of strategies to modernize Maine's buildings to establish energy-efficient, smart, and cost-effective homes and businesses in the state. One proposed strategy within the recommendation is to accelerate efficiency improvements to existing buildings by 'doubling the current pace of home weatherization so that at least 17,500 *additional* homes and businesses are weatherized by 2025, including at least 1,000 low-income units per year, and weatherize at least 35,000 homes and businesses by 2030.' The plan recognizes that actions related to energy efficiency, including weatherization, are among the most cost-effective ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and that "Maine already has incentive programs for efficiency measures such as heat pumps and weatherization that can be further expanded to achieve our goals."

The GEO is supportive of aligning Efficiency Maine programs and efforts with the weatherization strategies and targets identified in Maine's Climate Action Plan in an effort to achieve Maine's greenhouse gas reduction requirements. As the Climate Action Plan describes, much of Maine's existing housing stock are aging and inefficient, with more than half of owned and two-thirds of rented housing units having been built in 1960 or earlier. Weatherization of these homes, in addition to businesses, would help to improve living conditions, save home and business owners money on their utility bills by improving insulation and reducing air leakage, and reducing emissions. For clarity, the GEO recommends a small edit to the language by adding the word 'additional' to specify weatherization of 17,500

additional homes and businesses by 2025. This would more accurately represent the target established in the Climate Action Plan.

Given Efficiency Maine's limited funding, the GEO wants to ensure that these proposed adjustments to EMT's funding allocation do not inadvertently negatively impact other programs offered by EMT or create any unintended consequences. The GEO wants to better understand the impacts this legislation would have on EMT programming as a whole. Additionally, the GEO is supportive of EMT's continued efforts to expand the reach of their programs and ensure access to low-income households. In terms of defining low-income in EMT statute, the GEO would, again, want to better understand how this may impact existing and future programs and access to those programs before making this change.

Thank you for your consideration and I welcome any questions.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melissa Winne".

Melissa Winne
Energy Policy Analyst, Governor's Energy Office