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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

**An Act To Support School Decarbonization
L.D. 815**

**GOVERNOR'S ENERGY OFFICE
April 6, 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 for the Governor's Energy Office (GEO).

The GEO testifies in support of L.D. 815.

The proposed legislation would change the school energy savings program to a school decarbonization program. The Efficiency Maine Trust would be required to provide technical and financial support, to the extent funds are available, to help kindergarten to grade 12 schools become carbon neutral. Additionally, the school solar energy program currently administered by Efficiency Maine Trust would be repealed.

Governor Mills' administration is committed to mitigate and prepare the state for the impacts of climate change. In June 2019, Governor Mills signed LD 1679 into law, with strong bipartisan support from the Maine Legislature, to create the Maine Climate Council. The Climate Council was charged with developing a four-year plan to put Maine on the path to decrease greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030 and 80% by 2050, and achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. On December 1, 2020 the Maine Climate Council released the four-year climate action plan, *Maine Won't Wait*¹, which details climate action steps to reduce Maine's greenhouse gas emissions, as well as strategies to ensure our economy and communities are better prepared for the increasing impacts of climate change.

Maine Won't Wait calls on numerous sectors and entities to work towards reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, including in publicly funded buildings such as schools. Maine's building sector is the second largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and was therefore a key focus area of the Maine Climate Council. Among other relevant recommendations, the report suggests enhancing programs to support efficiency and renewable energy programs for these buildings. Additionally, as directed by Governor Mills, the GEO and Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) released the first "Lead by Example" report² in March 2021, which outlines strategies to curb state agencies'

¹ https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/MaineWontWait_December2020.pdf

² <https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/news/governor-mills-welcomes-plan-maine-state-government-lead-example-sustainability-energy>

greenhouse gas emissions, transition state electricity use to 100 percent clean power by 2024, and purchase 100 percent electric vehicles for the state fleet by 2030.

As state government works hard to lead by example, it is vital for other public entities to also do what they can to lead the efforts to combat climate change, including schools and other publicly funded buildings. These strategies have the added benefit of reduced operating costs, resulting in savings to taxpayers. We've also seen tremendous support from students and youth leaders who have pushed the state to support efforts to reduce emissions, including in their schools.

On behalf of the Governor and Maine Climate Council, the GEO is supportive of the proposed legislation that would continue to establish resources for schools working to decarbonize and aid Maine in meeting its ambitious climate and clean energy goals.

With leadership and technical and financial assistance - to the extent funds are available - from Efficiency Maine Trust, schools will have access to the resources necessary to make cost-effective decisions that help them reduce their carbon footprint. As schools utilize this program and meet their goals, other schools across the state will be able to learn from their efforts. Additionally, the communities in which these school play a key role will also have the opportunity to gain knowledge that allows them to move forward with their own climate and clean energy efforts. All entities in the state will need to engage in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and this program would help schools navigate the complex processes necessary to accomplish their climate goals.

The GEO is supportive of the overall concept and objectives of L.D. 815 and would be willing to work with the sponsor, stakeholders, and Efficiency Maine Trust as needed to advance this program. 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