



State of Maine
Office of the Public Advocate
112 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333-0112
(207) 624-3687 (voice) 711 (TTY) www.Maine.gov/meopa

Hobbins

Janet T. Mills
GOVERNOR

Barry J.
PUBLIC ADVOCATE

April 15, 2021

Chairman Lawrence, Chairman Berry and Members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee,

My name is Barry Hobbins and I am the Public Advocate with the Office of the Public Advocate and I am here today to testify neither for nor against LD 1202 “An Act To Establish a Wood-fired Combined Heat and Power Program.”

The OPA would like to thank Representative Wadsworth for submitting this legislation. Combined heat and power is a useful technology for achieving the efficient production of energy, and using biomass for this purpose is likely preferable to the use of oil or other fossil fuels.

However, supporting wood as a fuel for electric generation has been a contentious issue in past legislatures due to issues regarding whether it is designed merely as a subsidy for the forest harvesting industry or whether it serves another state policy goal. It also raises the issue of how the fuel is harvested – using waste wood is viewed by many as carbon neutral, however the carbon neutrality of whole tree chipping for this purpose is disputed.

That said, because the program is limited to combined heat and power, an efficient technology, projects granted contracts under this program may be capable of achieving some level of carbon reductions even with whole tree chipping.

The OPA would also like to highlight the portion of the bill assuring ratepayer protection at the discretion of the commission and appreciates the sponsor including this in the bill.

Thank you for your time, attention and consideration of this testimony. The Office of the Public Advocate looks forward to working with the Committee on LD 1202, and will be present at the work session to assist the Committee in its consideration of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry J. Hobbins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Barry J. Hobbins
Public Advocate