



**Testimony in Support of LD 1350, An Act to Expand Maine's Clean Energy Economy  
by David Costello, Climate & Clean Energy Program Director  
April 20, 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 support of LD 1350, An Act to Expand Maine's Clean Energy Economy.

**Clean Energy Transition Vital**

Strengthening and accelerating our transition to a future powered by clean energy is key to Maine's efforts to address climate change and to ensuring a healthier, more prosperous, and resilient future for all Maine residents. LD 1350 would help in advancing this essential work by amending the state's renewable portfolio standard (RPS) and authorizing the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to issue two competitive solicitations for the procurement of *new* renewable energy resources equal to 15% of Maine's retail electricity sales in 2019. These added procurements would build on the PUC's highly successful approval of 17 Maine-based renewable energy projects in September 2020 that are expected to generate more than 535 MW of electricity, support 450 construction and 30 permanent jobs, and reduce the state's greenhouse gas emissions by more than 500,000 tons per year.

**Vast Benefits**

LD 1350 will ensure that Maine meets its statutory requirement that 80 percent of electricity sold in Maine is renewable by 2030. Importantly, it will also help in accelerating Maine's broadly beneficial clean energy transition. A transition that will:

- Significantly reduce Maine's carbon emissions and other air pollutants - contributing to substantial public health and environmental gains and savings;
- Decrease our reliance on out-of-state and out-of-country energy sources. Maine households and businesses currently send more than \$4 billion out-of-state annually to pay for the energy that we consume. Imagine the increase in economic output and jobs if we were to invest and spend these energy dollars in Maine;
- Add millions of dollars in increased revenues for Maine businesses and communities;
- Aid in constructing a more modern, reliable, and secure electric grid; and
- Utilize energy sources that are inexhaustible, and, unlike fossil fuels, are likely to decrease in cost over time.

## **Positive Adjustments**

Additionally, LD 1350 would improve upon the State's previous RPS related procurements by requiring the PUC, in conducting its solicitation and selection, to give special consideration to the selection of renewable energy projects in economically depressed areas of Maine and to consider information, submitted by the competing developers, regarding the projects' viability.

To extend the benefits of renewable energy development in Maine even further, NRCM supports amending LD 1350 to include project siting considerations to ensure that the projects are located in places that are likely to prove the least impactful from an environmental perspective and optimally beneficial from a grid strengthening and economic perspective.

Specifically, NRCM supports the proposed amendment to LD 1350 – developed by Maine Audubon, The Nature Conservancy, and Maine Farmland Trust – that would direct the PUC to incorporate site location into its bid evaluation criteria and give added weight to projects that are likely to have less of an impact on Maine's natural resources. The details of which would be worked out by the PUC in consultation Maine's Departments of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry (DACF).

NRCM believes that Maine can rapidly deploy affordable clean energy in ways that augment; not diminish the environmental and economic benefits of Maine's natural and working lands.

For this reason and the reasons mentioned earlier NRCM urges the Committee to join us in supporting this important climate and clean energy initiative. Thank you for your consideration, and I welcome any questions that you may have.