



**Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on
Energy, Utilities, and Technology
Sean Mahoney
Conservation Law Foundation
April 20, 2021**

Re: LD 1350 – An Act to Expand Maine’s Clean Energy Economy

Good morning Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology. My name is Sean Mahoney, Executive Vice President for Conservation Law Foundation, testifying in support of LD 1350, An Act to Expand Maine’s Clean Energy Economy as well as a friendly amendment offered by the Nature Conservancy, Maine Farmland Trust and Maine Audubon that has already been presented to you this morning. CLF uses the law, science, and economics to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the climate crisis here in Maine and across New England.

LD 1350 builds on the successful renewable energy procurement authorized by the 2019 Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) legislation (LD 1494). The ensuing first round of RPS procurement executed term sheets for more than 450 MW of new solar energy and wind energy at prices in the same range as historic natural gas prices, a clear demonstration that renewable energy can compete with the fossil fuels that have created the climate crisis. This is good news for the public health and economic wellbeing of Maine, as we implement Maine’s Climate Action Plan.

LD 1350 would direct the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to initiate a new round of procurements starting later this year, for an amount of clean electricity equal to 15 percent of Maine’s electric load. Unlike the first round, 100 percent of this procured energy would come from new resources that begin commercial operation after June 30, 2021. If Maine is to meet its obligations to decarbonize our electric generation, housing and transportation sectors, the focus going forward must be on *new* clean energy resources to meet our greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

Specifically, LD 1350 would ensure that Maine is on track to meet its statutory requirement that 80 percent of electricity sold in Maine is renewable by 2030. As recently noted by the Governor’s Energy Office¹, Maine needs approximately 800-900 MW of new clean energy, beyond what is already expected to be built, to meet that statutory requirement, an amount that is

¹ https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/inline-files/GEO_State%20of%20Maine%20Renewable%20Energy%20Goals%20Market%20Assessment_Final_March%202021_1.pdf.

roughly the 15% called for by LD 1350. Requiring these procurements now ensures that the projects will be operational in time to meet the statutory requirements and will lock in favorable prices for electric customers.

LD 1350 also incorporates important lessons learned from the Fall 2020 procurement by requiring the PUC to give consideration to evidence of project viability, such as submission of preapplication materials to the relevant siting authority, and to give special consideration to projects located in economically depressed areas of the State.

As noted at the outset, CLF also supports the amendment to LD 1350 developed by TNC, MFT and MA. That amendment would add criteria to ensure that the PUC use the tools at its disposal to encourage renewable energy is that is sited to minimize impacts on our natural and working lands. Project sites that are closer to existing transmission facilities, already developed landscapes or that avoid or minimize habitat fragmentation or valuable agricultural soils are not only a means to reduce the footprint of a project but also likely to avoid protracted and contested permitting proceedings before Maine's natural resource agencies.

LD 1350 would continue to move Maine forward at a time when we truly cannot wait. Thank you.