



April 19, 2021

The Honorable Senator Mark Lawrence, Chair  
The Honorable Representative Seth Berry, Chair  
And esteemed members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: **LD 1350**, 'An Act to Expand Maine's Clean Energy Economy'.

Dear Members of the Committee on Energy Utilities and Technology,

I represent the Aroostook Partnership, a unique private-public partnership of nearly 100 businesses, the Northern Maine Development Commission and the four colleges in Aroostook County. The mission of the Partnership is, essentially, to grow Aroostook County's economy and support our residents, communities and our quality of life.

I submit this testimony neither for nor against LD 1350 but, rather, for your consideration as the Committee contemplates next steps on renewable energy procurements this session. AP supports the intent of this bill, which is to advance the development of the most cost effective and economically beneficial renewable energy resources required to meet Maine's 2030 and 2050 RPS goals. We are grateful to Senator Vitelli and the sponsors for your leadership in working toward the best balance of these issues.

As your Committee weighs the facts and assess the equity of further procurements AP wishes to raise some suggestions for your consideration:

1. The structure of this bill closely follows LD 1494 from 2019. Although Tranche 1 of that solicitation *did* award cost-effective projects, it fell short in two ways:
  - a. First, nearly every new project was a solar farm, which raises concerns about resource diversity and grid reliability; and
  - b. Second, not a single project awarded was in Aroostook County or anywhere in Northern Maine.
2. Regarding the first, on the awarding of mostly solar farms, we would note that solar farms have the greatest energy output during summer afternoons, when it is hot and sunny. However, Maine's energy system peaks in the winter, where the greatest and most expensive energy needs are in the depth of winter in the evenings. By prioritizing resources that can deliver energy during winter nights and address peak energy costs, this legislation could reduce costs and bolster grid reliability, particularly with the state pursuing more beneficial electrification in the future.



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3. And for the second, on the lack of awarded projects in Northern Maine, I would note that much of Aroostook County is economically depressed. Our county and towns could really use the tax revenues, jobs and economic development that renewable energy projects bring – and locating awarded projects in the County will have much greater impact than building more solar farms in Southern Maine, where the tax base is more stable and stronger. Realizing the PUC selects winning projects, bill language to add further weight to awarding projects in economically depressed areas is recommended.

Unfortunately, as it stands now, Aroostook County ratepayers will pay a portion to develop all those solar farms awarded in Tranche 1 without receiving the economic benefits realized by those solar communities. The Aroostook Partnership would urge any renewable energy procurement legislation advanced this year to address these two issues and bring more balance – both in terms of the type of renewable energy technology as well as the geographic diversity of projects.

I appreciate your time and effort to pursue the second phase of renewable procurements. As you do, I sincerely hope you consider bill language more conducive to the larger load-balancing projects which could be built in Northern Maine where land is more available and developers stand ready to invest.

Respectfully,

**Paul Towle**  
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