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*Testimony of Benjamin Dudley
To the Committee on Energy Utilities & Technology
In opposition to L.D. 1587, “An Act To Remove the Municipal Ordinance Exemption for the
Development of Nonessential Transmission Lines”
Tuesday, 4 May 2021*

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry and members of the Committee, my name is Benjamin Dudley; I am the director of Mainers for Clean Energy Jobs and I testify today in opposition to this bill.

Mainers for Clean Energy Jobs is a coalition of businesses, labor unions, trade associations, environmental leaders, noted economists and policy experts who support the New England Clean Energy Connect. The voices around our table are not always unified when it comes to public policy but we are now because the Clean Energy Connect . . .

- Is a billion-dollar investment in public infrastructure in Maine (at no cost to Mainers);
- It will suppress electricity prices in Maine and New England;
- It will annually deliver enough clean energy to displace 3 million tons of climate-changing carbon emissions (the equivalent of 700,000 cars); and
- Is required to place 40,000 acres of Maine forest into permanent conservation (a 40 to 1 ratio of conservation land to project footprint).

These are findings of fact and the consequence of orders by multiple, and impartial, regulatory agencies – state and federal.

We oppose this bill because, in its goal of killing one specific project, it distorts principles of local control beyond recognition and it carries unknowable and dangerous potential consequences for our energy transition.

As we testified on similar legislation in 2019, this bill turns Maine’s tradition of local control on its head. One of the key functions of state government is to set policies that resolve potential conflicts between local jurisdictions that might harm the larger public interest. Public infrastructure like roads, telecommunications, gas lines, water supply, and electricity transmission are great examples of vital services that routinely cross municipal boundaries. The state exercises broad authority with these services because there is a collective interest in them.

Under this legislation, however, any single municipality through which certain transmission lines might pass would be in a position to hold hostage benefits that could otherwise accrue to the entire state (e.g., economic benefits like jobs and electricity rate suppression, as well as environmental benefits like significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions). This legislation could give a single town control over the interests of every person in the state. That's not *local* control.

As we tackle this energy transition, the challenges we face are of a scale that is truly beyond imagining. By virtue of our shared grid, the New England region is bound together as we seek to decarbonize our existing electricity generation and then set about the task of beneficial electrification of the rest of the economy.

There is broad agreement among energy analysts that to achieve regional decarbonization via beneficial electrification, and to do so by mid-century, will require a doubling (at least) of regional loads and infrastructure.

The annual demand for electricity on New England's grid today is about 120 terawatt hours. About half of this load (58 TWH) is served by fossil fuel generation that decarbonization goals aim to retire. About a quarter of the load (29 TWH) is served by aging nuclear power plants with looming decommissioning

So, facing a future with at least 240 TWH of load (i.e., a doubling of the current 120 TWH) and the necessary retirement of oil, coal, natural gas and nuclear power plants, today's energy mix includes no more than 33 TWH that we can expect to still be available by mid-century. That's less than 14% of projected demand. It is difficult to overstate the scale of infrastructure, including transmission lines, needed to deliver 210 TWH of electricity. We also need to plan, permit and build it all in an alarmingly short period of time (~30 years).

New transmission lines will inevitably pass through many towns, no one of which should be allowed to frustrate statewide clean energy goals by the passage of a local ordinance.

In that context, can any of us claim to fully comprehend the harmful potential of legislation like this?

With respect for the sponsor and his sincerely-held concerns, we urge you to move this legislation ought not to pass.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective with you.

TABLE 1: CURRENT LOAD, LESS EXPECTED GENERATION RETIREMENTS (in TWH)

Current load	120
Retirement of fossil fuel plants	-58
Retirement of nuclear plants	-29
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TABLE 2: CONSERVATIVELY ESTIMATED LOAD ~2050 (in TWH)

Current load (in TWH)	120
<i>Minimum</i> additional future demand	120
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SUM	240

Benjamin Dudley
Mainers for Clean Energy Jobs

My written testimony (delivered verbally on the date of the hearing) is attached.
Thank you.