



May 4, 2021

Good morning Chairmen, and Honorable Members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee,

My name is Sandra Howard, and I serve as director of Say NO to NECEC, which is based out of Caratunk, Maine. Say NO to NECEC is a grassroots 501c3 non-profit organization, which is an environmental, education and advocacy group opposed to large-scale industrial development in western Maine. Say NO to NECEC was founded in 2018 and comprises nearly 10,000 members.

We are a non-partisan and member-funded organization opposed to Central Maine Power's (CMP's) New England Clean Energy Connect (NECEC) project to build a 145-mile transmission line from the Québec-Maine border to Lewiston to fulfill a contract with Massachusetts' ratepayers. Our members have been engaged as citizen intervenors at the DEP and LUPC, submitted sworn testimonies at the Maine PUC, and have leveraged 25 town votes to rescind support or oppose the CMP corridor. Additionally, our volunteer members helped collect over 80,000 signatures during a global pandemic to leverage a referendum vote on the issue in November 2021.

I am here today to urge the EUT Committee to support [LD 1587](#), "An Act To Remove the Municipal Ordinance Exemption for the Development of Nonessential Transmission Lines."

The Public Utilities Commission currently has the authority to override the wishes of local municipalities to ensure that projects for the greater public good are feasible. However, the way the law currently stands, this same power is granted to the PUC even when transmission lines are elective and do not meet Maine's public need, like CMP's NECEC for-profit corridor. Maine currently exports more power than its residents use, and municipalities along the corridor route and beyond demand to have an active role in determining Maine's future, including its economic, scenic, environmental and natural resources, and state-generated renewable power.

We believe that if a transmission line is not proposed for the general welfare of the State of Maine that each impacted community should have a say on what is constructed within their borders. Maine communities should not be forced to serve as a pass through for for-profit transmission lines whose sole purpose is to line the pockets of foreign-owned businesses or governments. During the 2019 session, a similar bill, LD1383, aimed to eliminate the PUC's overreach of bypassing municipal permits for large-scale utility infrastructure. While it passed through the Legislature, it was vetoed by Governor Mills. And now, two years later, tens of thousands of Mainers have asserted they want to have a voice on the determining the fate of the largest infrastructure project in Maine since the Turnpike. Mainers want a voice, and that includes local autonomy.

While CMP has made non-binding promises of property tax benefits to towns along the corridor, it's important to note they have a history of overstating benefits, and when the project closes, only a fraction of the benefits are realized.

This very over-statement occurred during CMP's Maine Power Reliability Project and was documented in towns like Dixmont where \$24 million was promised with a declared value at project close in 2015 of \$4,256,181.03 (17.7% of estimated value); Detroit CMP permit estimate \$28.8 million with declared value at project close in 2015 of \$10,436,407.45 (36% of estimated value); and Windsor CMP permit estimate of \$138 million versus the declared value at project close in 2015 of \$71,455,266.88 (51.7% of estimated value). This dramatic difference in property taxes from MPRP had a negative impact on the towns.

Municipal leaders must be the decision makers who weigh all of the information if a project of this magnitude is going to impact municipal budgets, real estate values, and other permanent alterations to the town's unique characteristics and resources – not an appointed state agency. We urge you to pass LD1587 so local control can prevail instead of continuing the PUC's overreach to override municipal decisions.

As we *celebrate* Maine's 201st anniversary as becoming an independent state, it's important to remember that Mainers know best on how to make decisions that impact Maine – and that includes determining their interests at the local municipal level.

We ask the EUT Committee members to support LD1587.

We thank you for your service on this Legislative committee.

Sincerely,
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