



Maine Conservation Voters

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Testimony of Maine Conservation Voters

In Support of LD 336

“An Act To Encourage Research To Support the Maine Offshore Wind Industry”

Before the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee

May 11th, 2021

Good Morning Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry and members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee.

My name is Beth Ahearn, Director of Government Affairs at Maine Conservation Voters (MCV). MCV is a statewide environmental advocacy organization that represents more than 8,500 members and supporters dedicated to protecting Maine’s environment and our democracy by prioritizing conservation, climate, equity, and voting rights. We support policies that chart a fair and equitable clean energy transition for Maine.

Today, that means supporting L.D. 336 “An Act To Encourage Research To Support the Maine Offshore Wind Industry.”

We do so because Maine’s new Climate Action Plan, *Maine Won’t Wait*, challenges us to rapidly reduce carbon pollution, ramp up renewable energy production, and decarbonize our economy.

Last week, Dr. Richard Silkman, PhD noted in his testimony in opposition to L.D. 101 that if the Legislature were not going to support offshore wind, “then it should be honest with Maine people and simultaneously strike all emission targets and related state policy.”

A future where we do not meet the goals of the Climate Action Plan is too bleak to consider. We must use every tool in the toolbox, including thoughtfully sited offshore wind, to rise to the challenge.

We are at an important juncture for the State in that we can control the tempo of the development of Offshore Wind in the Gulf of Maine or we can let the tempo be dictated by others. That, however, still does not answer the important question of: why is this bill necessary *at this time*?

Different waters are handled in different ways, depending on where they are situated. Maine's jurisdiction ends three nautical miles off our coastline. Beyond three nautical miles, decisions are made by the federal government. Offshore wind leasing decisions are made by the U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and the leasing for commercial offshore wind projects is mostly done by auction.

But BOEM can also grant research leases to states for those states to conduct renewable energy research on *our* outer continental shelf. Research that is then used to improve both the leasing process and future lease decisions. Importantly, this is the type of lease sought by Maine for its proposed research array and we applaud the Mills' administration for taking this approach to ensure the best outcome for the people of Maine *and* the Gulf of Maine.

The State's proposed research array has signaled to the offshore wind business community and to the federal government and BOEM that Maine is in the driver's seat when it comes to the Gulf of Maine and, as a result, BOEM has not signaled plans for any additional wind energy leases in the Gulf of Maine.

L.D. 336 proposes to establish a framework that will allow Maine's Public Utilities Commission to determine whether a proposal to sell power generated by the Research Array is in the best interest of Maine.

Like the BOEM leasing process, the course of action proposed by L.D. 336 represents one piece of a very large puzzle and both represent necessary concurrent action to bringing affordable clean energy online. Or, to put it more cleanly, this is not a simple, linear process. The development of offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine will take many years with many opportunities for stakeholders to be heard in a wide spectrum of forums and will, importantly, include a full federal environmental review.

We are committed to ensuring that offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine is based on sound data and research, is done right for the people of Maine, and that it prioritizes co-existence with fishing and other current uses.

Maine Conservation Voters celebrates the Mills' administration's wise approach towards offshore wind, including their robust stakeholder engagement, and we urge you to vote "ought to pass" on L.D. 336. This is an important step forward.