



**Testimony in Support of LD 336, *An Act to Encourage Research to Support the Maine Offshore Wind Industry***

**by David Costello, Climate & Clean Energy Program Director**

**May 11, 2021**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and distinguished members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee. My name is David Costello. I am the Climate and Clean Energy Program Director at the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM), and I am testifying today in support of LD 336, *An Act to Encourage Research to Support the Maine Offshore Wind Industry*.

**Offshore Wind Energy Key to Maine's Climate-Protective, Clean Energy Future**

Harnessing a very small portion of the Gulf of Maine's vast offshore wind energy resources (OSW) is essential for meeting the state's statutorily required climate goals and for diminishing the most harmful health, economic, and environmental impacts of climate change. The harmful effects of climate change – including rising seas, warming temperatures, and more extreme storms, flooding, and wildfires – have already begun to have profound implications. We need to accelerate our actions to build a clean energy economy and ensure the resiliency of Maine's communities. The threats are real and immediate, and our response, including offshore wind energy development, must be pursued with increasing urgency.

Tapping into Maine's vast offshore wind power potential is also key to maximizing the **tremendous** employment, community, and economic development opportunities associated with Maine's clean energy transition. A transition that is already supporting hundreds of local jobs and businesses; lowering electricity bills; increasing state and local revenues; and helping to build a more reliable and resilient electric grid.

**Balanced Approach, Minimizing Impacts, Maximizing Benefits**

NRCM recognizes that offshore wind development may have impacts on existing uses of the Gulf of Maine, but we also believe that the Gulf is large enough to support multiple uses, including power generation. We strongly support efforts by the Mills Administration, University of Maine, and others to avoid, minimize, and mitigate potentially harmful impacts and ensure that OSW is developed in a way that works for all Maine families and communities. Importantly, we share a commitment to a future where clean energy, fishing, lobstering, and many other uses coexist and flourish in the Gulf of Maine.

LD 336 will bolster the Mills Administration's already measured approach to responsibly developing Maine's offshore wind energy potential by requiring the Public Utilities Commission to negotiate and enter into the power purchase contracts needed to advance the development

of a small-scale research array in the Gulf of Maine. Because floating offshore technology is still in the development phase, the state's research-first approach is appropriate and fundamental to understanding the potential impacts of offshore wind energy development on Gulf habitats, fish, and wildlife and on how floating offshore wind can co-exist with all marine resource users.

### **Maine Can't Wait**

Additionally, because Maine has stepped forward to prudently manage the Gulf's offshore wind energy resources the U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is holding back on plans to auction commercial wind energy development leases in the Gulf of Maine. However, BOEM will not hold off indefinitely. Maine can either lead or participate as just another stakeholder. Governor Mills has chosen to lead, and LD 366 will aid in the Administration's efforts to put Maine's interests and priorities at the forefront.

NRCM appreciates the Mill Administration's deliberative approach to offshore wind power development and urges the Committee to join us in supporting this important climate and economic development initiative. Thank you for your consideration, and I welcome any questions that you may have.