

Peter Drown
Veazie

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Peter Drown. I currently live in Veazie with my wife and two little girls, and I work at the University of Maine Advanced Structures and Composites Center. Both of us are UMaine black bears. When we graduated in 2013, we were both excited to leave Maine and see what the rest of the world had to offer a young, driven couple, particularly the city lifestyle. When I drove across the Piscataqua Bridge in to start a new life in Washington D.C., it never occurred to me that just six years later I would be crossing that same bridge with a packed car and young family in tow and moving back to Maine. As our careers were advancing very rapidly in the D.C. area during that time, it wasn't an easy decision to make. One of the first things I did when I was considering the move back, was to see if Maine had caught up to the reality faced by a changing climate. I had decided while I was still an undergraduate student that the climate crisis, and the corresponding economic opportunities afforded by the transition to clean energy, was where I wanted to stake my career and I had spent the previous 8 years building that career in D.C.

My story is similar to many other "boomerangs" who leave the state and return, drawn by the pace and quality of life, family, good schools and relatively low cost of living. But there is a critical ingredient to getting us back – good-paying jobs doing something we believe in. The job market is hyper-competitive, and unfortunately Maine still faces daunting demographic challenges. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, by 2030, Maine's residents 65 and older are expected to reach 28% of the state population, highest among all U.S. states. Maine is in a global competition as it attempts to replace this expertise and bring in new talent to the state, with companies pulling out all the stops to lure young people to their states. Both my wife and I have been heavily recruited. However, I didn't want to work in a job I couldn't get excited about – and the opportunity to help build an entirely new industry that creates thousands of good paying jobs and fights climate change – is exactly the kind of job that gets you out of bed in the morning.

For those of you who haven't read it, I would urge you to read the column written by Mr. Dana Connors who is the President of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce in MaineBiz on February 10th. He lays out the case for floating offshore wind, and he hones in on the strong first-mover advantage of the University of Maine's patented floating offshore wind concept, drawing insightful historical parallels to previous Maine heritage industries while pointing to the need to have technology developed here in Maine vs. simply importing it at a later time.

"The patented VoltturnUS floating offshore wind technology created by the University of Maine puts Maine in a potential technological and manufacturing position of dominance unequalled since Maine built most of the nation's clipper ships in the 1850's, and the creation of the paper industry in Maine in the early 20th century. Maine's floating offshore wind opportunity draws on the lessons taught by these predecessors, which shaped Maine life for decades. Maine can leverage advantages like those that propelled Maine with clipper ships and paper: plentiful indigenous materials at low cost, a strong workforce, a winning technology, a coastline with deep water ports and a culture wed to the sea. Earlier industries like shoes and textiles, now almost all gone, lacked access to plentiful essential natural resources to construct, launch and ship the product at low cost, and most importantly, lacked ownership of the intellectual property, the true source of long-term wealth. The University of Maine patents will be licensed where contracted with the fees benefitting Maine. This is how a society creates wealth to sustain future generations."

I hope it is with future generations in mind that you vote yes on LD336.

Floating offshore wind is an area that both business interest and environmental interests agree is the right decision for Maine. The technology will be developed and the industry will flourish – the decision is up to you on whether you want to fight to make that happen here in Maine or somewhere else.

Thank you,

Peter Drown
Senior Operations Manager
Advanced Structures and Composites Center