

LD 336 - An Act To Encourage Research To Support the Maine Offshore Wind Industry

Jeff Marks – Maine Director & Senior Policy Advocate

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Honorable Committee Chairs Senator Lawrence & Representative Berry and Members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on *LD 336– An Act To Encourage Research To Support the Maine Offshore Wind Industry*.

Acadia Center is a non-profit, research and advocacy organization incorporated in Maine and committed to advancing the clean energy future by offering real-world solutions to the climate crisis. Acadia Center tackles complex problems, identifies clear recommendations for reforms, and advocates to create significant change that supports a low-carbon economy across the Northeast which can then be a model for application elsewhere. Acadia Center identifies regional, state, and local improvements that will dramatically reduce carbon pollution and improve quality of life throughout the Northeastern United States.

Acadia Center Supports LD 336

A February 2018 NREL (National Renewable Energy Laboratory) Report, *Offshore Wind Resource, Cost, and Economic Potential in the State of Maine*, finds the following: 1) Maine has a world-class offshore wind resource. It has high average wind speeds and a large quantity of offshore wind resources. In principle, Maine could use its offshore wind resource to supply offshore wind power to serve its in-state electric load as well as electricity markets in adjacent states such as New Hampshire and Massachusetts. 2) To use its most economically viable offshore wind resource sites, Maine would need to deploy floating offshore wind technologies which, although they are advancing rapidly around the globe, are currently in a pre-commercial stage of development.¹

The expected technological, environmental, economic, and workforce development benefits of Maine's offshore wind sector are incredibly compelling. The State is taking a measured and balanced approach to this nascent industry development. LD 336 supports a research array to test and research floating offshore wind technology with coordination with critical stakeholders to study potential economic and environmental impacts and how the State can best benefit from its ample wind resources offshore. L.D. 336 is necessary to move a research array forward to establish sound data, research, and a framework for the Maine Public Utilities Commission to make an informed decisions on the merits of a future research array proposal and whether it is in Maine's interest to proceed.

If Maine is to research, develop, and deploy innovative renewable energy technologies and compete on a global scale, the State must make commitments to attract financial investment, improve the environment, and achieve energy security. Maine's offshore wind industry is emerging as a potential competitive market advantage in the energy sector, with the possibility of developing skilled labor, new technologies, new product lines, and new projects. The Maine Aqua Ventus (MAV) project is an example of an innovative energy technology project that has invested years

¹ Musial, Walter, National Renewable Energy Laboratory, *Offshore Wind Resource, Cost, and Economic Potential in the State of Maine*, February 2018.

and millions of dollars to research, develop, and deploy this technology. The MAV project has competed for limited federal research dollars against other states and projects and won.

Maine has incredible natural energy resources that are and can be an engine of its economy. The State and Federal governments have developed policies and programs that have delivered financial research investment to this industry. Floating offshore wind has the potential to provide reliable, sustainable jobs for years to come. The State should continue to support the development of the offshore wind industry in Maine and ensure that the rules of offshore wind development are consistent and supportive – and predictable – to help build a strong and competitive Maine-based offshore wind industry and supply chain. Other Northeast states that do not have anywhere close to Maine’s offshore wind potential are moving forward quickly to capitalize on potential jobs and clean energy. Projects contemplated along the eastern seaboard will allow for this new, burgeoning industry to develop and offer opportunities for states to roll out their offshore procurements and construction in a coordinated way. Based on performance shown to this point, costs will continue to decline as the industry grows. For example, turbines are getting larger, producing more electricity, and resulting in lower and lower prices per megawatt-hour.

In addition to the economic benefits of offshore wind, the environmental imperative to move forward with this research is persuasive. Climate change is the most serious threat to Maine’s economy and environment and harnessing offshore wind is critical to addressing it and protecting our State for generations to come. By harnessing the wind power from a very small fraction of the vast ocean waters, we can power Maine’s economy and enable the clean electrification of heating and transportation. The Gulf of Maine is warming faster than 99% of the world’s oceans. If we don’t act now, the environmental conditions in the Gulf of Maine will do more harm.

Offshore wind is on a track to succeed in Maine, given the surge of state and national interest. However, the future success of this resource depends on its research, development, deployment, and implementation, which must be accomplished to reap the economic and environmental benefits. Projects must also proceed in ways that set a good precedent for the U.S. industry. Project selection, siting, and transmission must all be considered with an eye toward ensuring that labor, environmental, and economic justice issues are central to planning. Acadia Center will continue to work closely with the states, advocates, and other stakeholders on these issues, bringing its independent analytic, advocacy, and coalition-building expertise to ensure the successful deployment and continued expansion of offshore wind in the region.

Acadia Center looks forward to working with the Committee to help fulfil the promise of offshore wind energy in Maine.

For more information:

Jeff Marks, jmarks@acadiacenter.org, 207.236.6470 x340