



**Testimony before the**

**Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology**

**By Rob Wood, Director of Government Relations and Climate Policy**

**May 11, 2021**

**Re: LD 336 – An Act To Encourage Research To Support the Maine Offshore Wind Industry**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Rob Wood and I am the Director of Government Relations and Climate Policy for The Nature Conservancy in Maine. I appreciate this opportunity to testify **in support of LD 336**, An Act To Encourage Research To Support the Maine Offshore Wind Industry.

The Nature Conservancy is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. We have been working for several decades with Maine's communities and natural resource users to conserve forests, reconnect rivers to the sea, and rebuild depleted fish populations in the Gulf of Maine.

Climate change is now affecting these ecosystems and communities in significant ways, including wildlife species and resource users in the Gulf of Maine, where waters are warming faster than 99 percent of the world's oceans and average annual temperatures have increased three degrees over the past century. Addressing climate change requires reducing our collective dependence on fossil fuels, which will require significant amounts of new clean, renewable energy production. Market analyses have shown that well-sited offshore wind will be an important component of a diversified renewable energy portfolio to help Maine and the New England region achieve our climate goals.

As Maine plots a path forward on clean energy, it is essential that we take a science-based approach, carefully balancing development to minimize impacts on Maine's communities and our environment. An offshore wind research array is aligned with this science-based approach. If well-designed to ask the right research questions and carried out over the right time horizon to collect sufficient data (5-7 years), a research array can help the State better understand the impacts and benefits of this emerging technology. A research array can help us understand, for example, the general behavioral effects of floating turbines on pelagic and bird species, and specific effects associated with anchoring cables and transmission lines, as well as how floating offshore wind can co-exist with marine resource users.

We support LD 336 because it would make this research effort viable. It would allow an entity seeking to conduct the research to petition the PUC to enter into a long-term contract necessary to finance the development of a research array.

We would also like to take this opportunity to note that the siting process for the research array itself is critically important. We believe siting should be conducted through an inclusive stakeholder process that seeks to minimize impacts on sensitive marine habitats and conflicts with marine resource users. We look forward to continuing to work with all interested parties to identify how to responsibly site the research array and ensure it is well-designed to best inform future offshore wind development.

Thank for you the opportunity to testify today, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.