



**Testimony of the Island Institute in Support of LD 1682, An Act To Require Consideration  
of Climate and Equity Impacts by the Public Utilities Commission  
May 12th, 2021**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee, my name is Nick Battista, and I am offering this testimony on behalf of the Island Institute generally supporting the ideas contained in LD 1682.

The Island Institute is a 38-year-old nonprofit organization based in Rockland, Maine. The Island Institute's community development work focuses on: the marine economy, climate and energy pilots, small business, education, and leadership. Broadband is foundational to all of this work, and all Mainers need to have the ability to use high-speed, reliable internet.

Seventy-five percent of Maine's coastal communities have fewer than 3,500 people, and 25 percent of coastal communities have fewer than 800 people. The Island Institute participates in the Maine Climate Council process, in part, because many of Maine's rural communities have neither the capacity nor the regulatory tools to achieve our climate goals alone and need supportive State institutions.

We are also participating in the Maine Climate Council process, because we work with communities that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Maine's natural resource-dependent communities are on the frontlines of being impacted by climate change. We know these communities may also be asked to bear some of the burden of helping to reduce the state's greenhouse gas emissions.

LD 1682 helps the Public Utilities Commission account for the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions in its decision-making processes by prioritizing proceedings and activities that advance decarbonization in the utility sector. The PUC may well need additional authority to fully account for greenhouse gas emissions as part of its regulatory proceedings, and LD 1682 is a reasonable step in this direction.

LD 1682 also requires the PUC to mitigate disproportionate energy burdens and other inequities of affordability and environmental justice experienced by customers. LD 1682 defines environmental justice populations. While this definition may not be entirely adequate, it may be helpful as a floor or minimum standard from which the PUC can add additional populations and areas through the rulemaking process. In undertaking this process, we would encourage the PUC to consult with the Maine Climate Council's equity and inclusion subcommittee in any efforts to broaden this definition through the regulatory process.

We encourage you to support LD 1682 and allow the PUC to define the operative terms.