



**Testimony in Support of LD 1682, *An Act to Require Consideration of Climate and Equity Impacts by the Public Utilities Commission*
by David Costello, Climate & Clean Energy Program Director
May 12, 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 1682, *An Act to Require Consideration of Climate and Equity Impacts by the Public Utilities Commission*.

Addressing Climate Change and Achieving a Prosperous Clean Energy Future

To reduce the most severe health, environmental, and economic impacts of climate change, the world must cut greenhouse gas emissions by almost half by 2030. That's the position of the overwhelming majority of scientists, health professionals, and economists, including those at the University of Maine. Fortunately for Maine, Governor Mills and a bipartisan majority of state lawmakers have been heeding this advice and are working hard to address climate change, and they are doing so in ways that are bolstering the health and well-being of all Maine residents.

Central to this effort is the work being undertaken to accelerate Maine's transition to a future powered by local, clean energy. This vital work requires significant upgrades to the state's electric grid and increased investments in solar and wind energy generation and storage.

Stronger, More Engaged PUC Critical

LD 1682 would help in advancing this essential work by requiring Maine's Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to consider the full cost of climate change impacts and the benefits of Maine's clean energy transition – including appropriately valuing climate justice, public health, job creation, enhanced resilience, and the minimization of climate change impacts – in their decision making.

More specifically, LD 1682 would require the PUC to consider greenhouse gas emissions and the mitigation of disproportionate energy burdens and other impacts on Maine's environmental justice and frontline communities when making important regulatory decisions. The PUC's current mandate centers on keeping rates low and ensuring a reliable supply of electricity. It does not require the PUC to deliberate whether or not its decisions advance Maine's climate and equity goals.

By requiring these considerations, LD 1682 would compel the PUC to be a more active and thoroughgoing partner in the critical work ahead. For these reasons we urge the Committee to join NRCM in supporting this important climate and equity initiative. Thank you for your consideration, and I welcome any questions that you may have.