

12 May 2021

Representative Seth Berry

Senator Mark Lawrence

Distinguished Members of the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

Maine State Legislature, 130th Session

RE: Testimony in Support of LD 1556, Resolve, To Create the Commission to Study and Recommend a Financing Model to Increase Investment in Renewable Energy, Clean Energy Technology, Energy Efficiency Projects and Jobs in Maine

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and Distinguished Members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 1556. My name is Julia Bassett Schwerin, I live in Cape Elizabeth, and I am here representing Agents for the Built Environment, an advocacy group, including members Leanne Barshdorf Nichols of Freeport, Marc Chadbourne of Portland, David Gulick of Cumberland and Russell DeConti of Hiram, not here today representing any Realtor groups or real estate agencies. We participated in the Buildings working group during the Maine Climate Council meetings in 2019-2020 that resulted in a Four Year Climate Action Plan for the state of Maine entitled "Maine Won't Wait". The plan outlines the path for each main economic sector to achieve the 45% reduction by 2030 and 80% by 2050 greenhouse gas emissions goals. As REALTORS®, we are members of the Sustainability Advisory Group of the Greater Portland Board of Realtors, a chapter of the Maine Association of Realtors and the National Association of Realtors, who defend the public's right to private property, a right that will be at grave risk if the effects of climate change are not brought swiftly under control on account of rising temperatures, rising sea levels, flooding, droughts, storms, and wildfires.

Here in the state of Maine, our land, and in particular our coastal and shoreland areas, are economic engines from tourism, recreation, fishing and agriculture, all sectors endangered by climate change. Governor Janet Mills, Director Hannah Pingree, and Commissioner Melanie Lozimir wisely conceived of the Maine Climate Council to accomplish several things they couldn't do by deploying their staff to hire a consultant and create a set of recommendations.

They instead gathered a bipartisan coterie of experts from state government, industry, environmental agencies, and technical experts to investigate all the options over a period of a year and make their recommendations on how to best arrive at the ambitious goals.

At the end, in the building working group of the Maine Climate Council, we know the recommendations were not surprising: weatherization, electrification and renewables to create the electricity. But we would argue that without the bipartisan consensus process, those answers would have less credibility and be more open to challenge in the future. It was the consensus that made the recommendations credible. The buy-in from a bipartisan Climate Council will help the plan endure as people and power shift.

LD 1556 wisely employs the same strategy of using a bipartisan consensus to establish credibility and buy-in that will hasten our work to finance these projects in a public-private partnership. Even if the end result is a Green Bank that looks just like the Maine Clean Energy and Sustainability Accelerator bill's recommendations in LD 1659 sponsored by Rep. Paige Ziegler and Sen. Anne Carney, a bill that we also support "ought to pass", LD 1556 will give it more credibility and buy-in; if it recommends something else, then that will be yet another way to help us achieve our goals. Using private funding and with GOPIF oversight, LD 1556 can't help but make a positive contribution, and with emergency status it will be able to form swiftly and be deliverable by the end of this year. We ask you to vote LD 1556 "ought to pass".

Thank you for considering our testimony, and for your work for the people of Maine.

Respectfully,

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Agents for the Built Environment