

Scott Vlaun
The Center for an Ecology-Based Economy

12 May 2021

To: Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

From: Scott Vlaun on behalf of the Center for an Ecology-Based Economy

Re: LD1659

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology:

Thank you all for the important work you are doing and for your careful consideration of this important bill. My name is Scott Vlaun. I am the Executive Director of The Center for an Ecology-Based Economy in Norway. I am here today to speak in support of LD1659 an Act to Create the Maine Clean Energy and Sustainability Accelerator.

For nearly a decade, our organization has been working to transition our underserved region of western Maine to the post-fossil fuel future that is required to stabilize the Earth's climate, and to create equity in our food, energy, shelter and transportation systems. While we have made progress with projects like a region-wide electric vehicle charging network, demonstration-scale public solar power installations, support for local food production, and weatherization of our aging housing stock, funding for the kind of larger scale projects that can truly begin to move the needle on emissions and carbon sequestration has eluded us. Investors and lenders have been reluctant to take on the risk associated with the kind of innovative projects that will be needed to transform our rural communities to weather and indeed thrive in the deepening climate emergency.

The science tells us that in the next decade we will need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by nearly half, and then almost entirely by mid-century to avoid the worst effects of climate change and give future generations a chance for a liveable planet. This is clearly spelled out in Maine's Climate Action Plan. To bring about this kind of system level change will need the rapid deployment of capital to fund a broad array of projects, from equity-based renewable energy cooperatives, to accessible public transportation and car sharing; from affordable net-zero housing, to local food processing facilities. We have no shortage of solutions to address the climate crisis and create a higher quality of life for our rural communities. We also have plenty of people, especially our younger generations ready to get to work to build this brighter future for people and planet, but are often forced to leave for lack of opportunity. By providing access to critical capital, this Clean Energy and Sustainability Accelerator will support our young entrepreneurs to build the brighter future they know is possible for their communities and do their part to rescue the planetary ecology.

Thank you so much for considering this critically important bill. I am happy to answer any questions.

Scott Vlaun
Executive Director
The Center for an Ecology-Based Economy