



Testimony in Support of LD 1708: An Act to Create the Pine Tree Power Company, a Nonprofit Utility, to Deliver Lower Rates, Reliability, and Local Control for Maine Energy Independence

Anya Fetcher, Environment Maine State Director, May 20, 2021

Good evening Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology. My name is Anya Fetcher and I'm the state director of Environment Maine, a citizen-based environmental advocacy organization. We work to protect clean air and water, wildlife and open spaces, and a liveable planet for future generations. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

On behalf of our thousands of members across the state, I am testifying today in support of LD 1708, An Act to Create the Pine Tree Power Company, a Nonprofit Utility, to Deliver Lower Rates, Reliability, and Local Control for Maine Energy Independence.

You have already heard numerous strong arguments in favor of switching to a Community Owned Utility (COU), and they are all valid. However, Environment Maine's support of this bill is fueled by one primary reason: in order to prevent the worst impacts of global warming, we must rapidly decrease greenhouse gas emissions and transition to 100% renewable energy.

Fortunately, Maine has more than enough renewable energy potential to support all of our energy needs, and Maine's Climate Action Plan provides some guidance on how to get there. But transitioning to an economy powered entirely by clean, renewable fuels will require us to find ways to tap more of that clean energy potential, to take advantage of advances in technology, and to integrate clean energy thoughtfully into our energy system. Essentially, we need to accelerate the pace of change, and we need an electric grid and utility company that is up to the challenge.

Unfortunately, that's not what we have. Maine's Investor Owned Utilities (IOU), particularly Central Maine Power (CMP), have shown they are more interested in maximizing profits than minimizing harm to the planet and communities. Initially, they fought net energy billing, a crucial element in making solar energy affordable and accessible. Recently, they have nullified interconnection agreements with solar companies, which not only threatens a massive amount of clean energy development already in the works, but it could also send signals to investors that Maine is too risky a bet for future projects.

Alternatively, with the Pine Tree Power Company proposed in LD 1708, Maine people would have greater control over the priorities of the company, and decisions would reflect the values and interest of the community, not the boardroom. It would also include a commitment to provide a supportive platform

for renewable energy, efficiency, and storage and assist the state in rapidly meeting or exceeding the state's climate action goals. This is what Maine people want.

To address the climate crisis, we must take bold action. It is time for Maine to invest in a power grid that will support a clean energy future, and Environment Maine feels that the Pine Tree Power Company can provide that. We urge the committee to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1708.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

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