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The voice of Maine's forest economy

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Testimony in Opposition to LD 1232

“An Act to Increase Adoption of Solar Power in Maine”

April 4, 2023

Patrick Strauch, Executive Director

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler and members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Patrick Strauch and I am here on behalf of the Maine Forest Products Council to testify in opposition to LD 1232, “An Act to Increase Adoption of Solar Power in Maine.”

As drafted, LD 1232 would mandate that all new construction of buildings 25,000 square feet or larger be solar-ready with a 40% or larger section of roof designated and reserved for solar installation. The bill would also direct the PUC to amend its rules for interconnection procedures of small generators to transmission and distribution facilities. Without addressing grid congestion issues and making necessary investments, this provision could have serious impacts throughout Maine’s aging grid.

The mandates included in this bill would come at a tremendous cost for construction including engineering, building and maintenance, yet it provides no direct benefit to the company, municipality or individual saddled with the extra costs associated with these mandates. The Council questions how 40% of 25,000 square feet translates into energy savings or a payback period? Will this bill include a cost-benefit analysis?

LD 1232 presents a whole host of questions. Would we be better off making investments in energy efficient structures vs. solar array infrastructure? There’s also the issue of storage buildings/warehouses that have no thermal and limited electrical demand, such as lumberyard warehouses. Will this mandate apply to them? What about facilities that want to utilize a land-based option for their solar array, or facilities that are not in close proximity to the grid?

It seems that as drafted, LD 1232 creates more problems than solutions. Perhaps it would be more effective and appropriate to amend this bill to establish an incentive program rather than advance the current form, which is a costly mandate with broad application, applying even in locations where solar is a bad match and not cost effective.

Roof top utilization needs to be an individual, case-by-case consideration that accounts for the many factors outlined in this testimony. For these reasons, **the Maine Forest Products Council urges you to vote ‘Ought not to pass’ on LD 1232.**

Thank you for your consideration.