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Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology

RE: LD 1895, An Act to Reduce Energy Price Volatility and Create a Responsible Offshore Wind Industry for Maine

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, my name is Jocelyn Runnebaum, I am a Marine Scientist for The Nature Conservancy in Maine. I am currently a member of the Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium and was a member of the Environment and Wildlife Working Group for the Maine Offshore Wind Road Map.

I appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of the sponsor's amendment to LD 1895, An Act to Reduce Energy Price Volatility and Create a Responsible Offshore Wind Industry for Maine. We want to especially thank Senator Lawrence for bringing this bill forward, along with the many cosponsors including members of this committee.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges, including climate change and biodiversity loss, so that nature and people can thrive together. We use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners to develop innovative solutions. We work across Maine to restore rivers and streams, partner with fishermen in the Gulf of Maine to rebuild groundfish populations.

The most recent IPCC report now advises that we need to achieve net zero emissions by 2040, instead of 2050. Several decarbonization studies in the region suggest that New England will need between 40 and 50 GW of offshore wind to reach net zero by 2050. **According to the DNV analyses conducted for the Governors Energy Office, New England will need up to 12 GW of offshore wind from the Gulf of Maine with Maine's energy needs accounting for approximately 3GW. This is in addition to other renewable sources to meet our state decarbonization goals and support our regional commitments.** Given these needs, LD 1895 is a direct opportunity for the people of Maine to express, in law, how we would like to see this new and emerging industry developed as we work towards meeting these goals. TNC strongly believes that long-term sustainability will require us to thoughtfully balance competing uses for the benefit of all and with a focus on minimizing cumulative impacts. As we go forward it will also be important to maintain flexibility to ensure coordination and optimize the benefits for all of Maine.

TNC supports this bill in its entirety, but I want to highlight specific environmental considerations that our organization believes will provide the most benefits to Maine:

1) Procurement - Weighting Criteria

LD 1895 outlines the process by which a series of phased competitive solicitations would be conducted to procure offshore wind energy. It directs the PUC to use criteria that "balances benefits to ratepayers, the economic development benefits and benefits to communities and the overall benefits to the State's economy and natural resources. It

does this by assigning weights to each category – and specifically assigning a weight of 25% to economic and community benefits and a weight of 15% to natural resource benefits. This creates incentives for developers to pursue projects that support environmentally responsible offshore wind development alongside economic development and ratepayer benefits.

2) **Bid Requirements**

TNC broadly supports the comprehensive bid requirements outlined in this section that account for mitigation plans, a consultation and equity plan, a workforce development plan, and a specific fishing communities investment plan. We specifically support:

- i) Item F- requiring a description of how the proposed project will interconnect to the regional grid in the bid.

Ensuring a project developer considers existing and planned grid and transmission facilities is a key aspect of bigger picture planning. If regional transmission infrastructure becomes available, urging a selected offshore wind project to connect to it would increase grid reliability and efficiency while decreasing costs and impacts of transmission of offshore wind power.

- ii) Item H – requiring a \$10,000 per megawatt of the project’s capacity to the Offshore Wind Research Consortium Fund.

The Offshore Wind Research Consortium is using a broad stakeholder approach to prioritize the most pressing research needs to understand offshore wind in Maine. It is critical to support the long-term funding for the consortium to continue this work and take on the new responsibilities outlined in this bill.

3) **Wildlife, fisheries, and environmental mitigation plan requirements.**

TNC supports the comprehensive outline of wildlife, fisheries, and marine environment mitigation plans in this section. We appreciate the broad range of considerations including threatened or endangered species, coastal and marine habitats and ecosystems, non-commercial fisheries, and commercial and recreational fishing. LD 1895 also requires pre- and post-construction monitoring, which is critical to better understanding floating offshore wind. TNC is especially encouraged by the provision to consider ecological benefits provided by the floating wind projects through project design, enhanced ecosystem services, or habitat creation. **We believe this consideration will incentivize developers to not only mitigate impacts but also use innovative approaches that will support ecological resilience of the Gulf of Maine.**

4) **Expansion of the Maine Offshore Wind Research consortium.**

TNC supports the proposed expansion of both the scope and the makeup of the Research Consortium Advisory Board. As a member of the Advisory Board, I would ask that the EUT consider adding social science and economic expertise to the expanded list. We currently have a social scientist on the Advisory Board and the group has identified that economic expertise will be valuable to the work of the Consortium moving forward.

TNC urges the committee to support LD 1895. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and I am available to answer questions at any time.