

STATE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, UTILITIES, AND TECHNOLOGY

Testimony of Caleb Davis, of A Climate to Thrive's Cooperative Solar Steering Committee

May 24th, 2023

Testimony in Support

LD 1986: An Act Relating to Net Energy Billing and Distributed Solar and Energy Storage Systems.

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and honorable members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee. My name is Caleb Davis, and I am a board member for A Climate to Thrive and a small business owner who is deeply invested in working with communities on Mount Desert Island and throughout Maine to transition to renewable energy and implement climate solutions that benefit local communities. I strongly support **LD 1986 An Act Relating to Net Energy Billing and Distributed Solar and Energy Storage Systems**.

I serve as a member of the Steering Committee for A Climate to Thrive's initiative to create a community-owned, cooperative solar project that would expand the benefits of solar ownership to low and moderate-income homeowners and renters. LD 1986 would support innovative community-benefitting projects like ours by fairly allocating net energy billing costs and benefits, accounting for avoided transmission, distribution, and fossil fuel costs. It would take pivotal steps to ensure that net energy billing benefits accrue to ratepayers and address concerns about regressive rates without retroactive changes.

I urge you to pass LD 1986 rather than LD 1347. While LD 1986 would support the continued growth of distributed energy in a way that is beneficial to low and moderate-income ratepayers, LD 1347 would revoke important components of net energy billing that make community-benefitting projects, such as ours, viable. LD 1347 does this in the name of distorted figures which blame net-energy billing instead of natural gas for skyrocketing electricity prices. This repeal would make solar ownership inaccessible for most low and moderate-income households, leaving Mainers unable to access the significant federal funding for solar allocated by the Inflation Reduction Act. In effect, it will prioritize wealthy individuals and entities that can afford to purchase distributed generation projects outright. LD 1986, in contrast, will improve net energy billing and benefit Maine ratepayers, allow Maine to leverage significant federal funds, and protect the viability of community-benefitting solar projects, such as ours.

In closing, I urge you to pass LD 1986 to provide Maine with a strategic pathway for vulnerable communities to benefit from distributed energy resources. Thank you for your time and dedication.

Sincerely,
Caleb Davis