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LD 1986

Over the past few months, there has been a steady narrative in the press around the anticipated high costs of community solar. This narrative ignores the tangible and proven quantifiable benefits of distributed generation. This perspective, that solar will cost Maine ratepayers \$220 million, has largely been pushed by the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA). However, multiple studies have shown that the Net Energy Billing (NEB) program in Maine provides ratepayers with net benefits. Both the Daymark Study (2021) and the Synapse Study (2022, page 37) report benefits, including tangible economic benefits (such as grid upgrades and reduced supply costs) as well as environmental benefits. However, utilities are not accounting for program benefits in their rate design, and, even more, utilities show lost revenue (i.e. solar customers buying less power) as a cost. This is, quite simply, bad math.

Despite these facts, the OPA has introduced legislation in Augusta to repeal our state's Net Energy Billing (NEB) program, which would move us backward to LePage-era solar policies, and potentially retroactively destroy all existing NEB projects. The OPA's proposal has been inserted as an amendment to LD 1347, a bill that was heard last month. The bill is scheduled for a work session on Thursday. By inserting the language as an amendment, rather than as a new bill, the Office of the Public Advocate bypasses, and we lose, the opportunity to bring many new voices to a public hearing, which is very unfortunate and misaligned with public advocacy.