

Barbara Tennent  
Holden  
LD 1986

STATE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, UTILITIES, AND  
TECHNOLOGY

Testimony of Barbara Tennent

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 Barbara Tennent, and I am a resident of Holden, ME. As a citizen who supports bold action towards the Maine Climate Council's 2030 goals, I strongly support LD 1986 An Act Relating to Net Energy Billing and Distributed Solar and Energy Storage Systems. I volunteer with A Climate to Thrive, based on Mount Desert Island, to support their work in making solar ownership accessible to low-and moderate-income community members.

LD 1986 would advance Maine's climate action goals while protecting low-income ratepayers. By establishing a new distributed generation program for solar that is based on expert recommendations, LD 1986 would allow Maine to leverage substantial federal funds and fairly allocate net energy billing costs and benefits, a pivotal step to ensure that net energy billing benefits accrue to all ratepayers.

I urge you to pass LD 1986 and to oppose LD 1347, which will be reviewed by this Committee during a working session tomorrow. While LD 1986 supports the continued growth of distributed energy in a way that is beneficial to low and moderate-income ratepayers, LD 1347 would remove important components of net energy billing that make community-benefitting projects viable. LD 1347 has serious equity concerns, making solar ownership inaccessible for most low and moderate-income households and leaving Mainers unable to access significant federal funding for solar. Rather than acknowledging high natural gas prices as the true driver of high electricity rates, LD 1347 falsely blames net energy billing. If LD 1347 were to pass instead of LD 1986, members of our low and moderate-income communities would not be protected— their ability to access the benefits of solar ownership would only suffer.

I urge you to pass LD 1986, a bill which is based on the expertise of diverse stakeholders. LD 1986 would improve net energy billing, benefit Maine ratepayers, allow Maine to leverage significant federal funds, and protect the viability of community-benefitting solar projects that expand low and middle-income households' access to solar ownership. Maine needs LD 1986 to provide a strategic pathway for vulnerable communities to benefit from distributed energy resources.

Thank you for your time and dedication to the people of Maine.

Sincerely, Barbara Tennent