

Scott Vlaun
Center for an Ecology-Based Economy
LD 1986

STATE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, UTILITIES, AND
TECHNOLOGY

Testimony of Scott Vlaun, Executive Director, Center for an Ecology-Based
Economy, 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 Scott Vlaun, and I am the
Executive Director of the Center for an Ecology-Based Economy. For over a decade
our organization has worked with communities throughout rural Maine to 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.

The Center for an Ecology-Based Economy is currently to create a
community-owned, solar cooperative 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 and accounting for avoided transmission,
distribution, and fossil fuel costs. It would take important 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-based projects, such as ours, viable. LD 1347
attempts to do this relying on distorted and unproven accounting which blames
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 many Mainers without access to 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. If LD 1347 were to pass, members of our low and moderate-income
communities would not be protected—our ability to access the benefits of solar
ownership would only suffer. LD 1986, in contrast, will improve net energy billing
and benefit Maine ratepayers, allow Maine to leverage significant federal funds,
support Maine's renewable energy goals, and protect the viability of
community-benefitting solar projects, such as ours.

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 careful consideration of this important matter for Maine's energy
future,

Scott Vlaun
Center for an Ecology-Based Economy, Norway, Maine.