



BRANCH

RENEWABLE ENERGY

1/15/24

Senator Lawrence
Representative Ziegler
Members of the Energy, Utilities & Technology Committee
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Opposition to LD 1465

Dear Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology,

My name is Chris Byers, and I am the owner of Branch Renewable Energy based in North Yarmouth, ME. I work as a solar developer and consultant in Maine on distributed generation solar projects. I had the opportunity to testify at the public hearing for LD1465 on January 9, 2024 and was grateful for the chance to answer some of your questions.

The premise of my testimony is simple. In the last legislative session, the legislature passed LD1986 which helped to reform and modify the NEB program in Maine. I do believe that this NEB program requires a more sustainable and predictable future for how we account for the costs of the NEB program, and I am optimistic that LD 1986 can help us get there. Given that this program has not even fully begun and we as an industry have yet to implement it into our strategy for deploying projects in the future, to change the NEB program yet again would cause even more uncertainty which is ultimately designed to save Maine ratepayers money.

The concern was brought up that there isn't enough residential ratepayer adoption of this program. I can tell you firsthand that nearly all my clients have given up on Maine due to the constant revisions of the NEB program, and this has contributed to the project attrition we are seeing in the utility interconnection queues. It's bad for business to keep moving the goalposts, and LD1465 would further damage our ability to attract competitive development bids under the upcoming procurements. If we keep changing our minds about how we can deploy cost effective solar projects in Maine, I worry that the solar industry will keep moving Maine down on its priority list. I believe it is imperative we commit ourselves to making policy decisions on transparent data analysis, not conjecture and broad-brush discussions on the NEB program as a whole.

A lot of time and energy went into writing and passing LD1986, and it would be a shame to open the engine compartment yet again before we even get in a test drive. In order to get the car on the road and see how it handles, I would urge you to not pass LD1465 out of the committee.

Sincerely,

Chris Byers
Owner
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