Robert Burr
IUOE/ Scarborough ME
LD 2077

Good Afternoon Members of the Committee on Energy,Utilities and Technology. My name is Robert Burr. I reside in Scarborough ME and I am the Business Representative for the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 4. Our union is opposed to LD 2077. It just hasn't been enough research and infrastructure performed in the state of Maine to allow such legislation to move forward. Here is some research prepared for you.

Background information from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA)
https://www.eia.gov/state/print.php?sid=ME

MAINE QUICK FACTS:

- In 2022, 7 out of every 10 Maine households used petroleum products for home heating, a larger share than in any other state.
- In 2022, renewable resources fueled 64% of Maine's total electricity net generation, and wind provided the largest share at 23% of the state's total net generation.
- Maine uses less energy than 44 states, but Maine's economy uses significantly more energy per dollar of GDP than the national average.
- Forests cover about nine-tenths of Maine, the largest share of any state, and forest products are both a major energy-intensive industry and an important biomass resource. In 2022, biomass, mostly wood and wood-derived fuels, supplied 14% of Maine's total electricity net generation, the second-largest share, after Vermont, among the states.
- In 2021, Maine's natural gas use on a per capita basis was third-lowest in the nation, after Hawaii and Vermont, in large part because most of Maine lacks natural gas distribution systems.

Last Updated: October 19, 2023

Energy burden for Mainers: According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), Maine has the third highest average retail price of electricity in the U. S.. At 29 cents per kilowatt hour, Maine is behind Hawaii ($0.49 / kw) and Rhode Island ($0.31 / kw).
In addition to calling for studies of the impacts of natural gas within our homes, business, and the built environment, we should also be conducting studies on how to help lower the energy burden to Mainers across the state.
Source: https://www.eia.gov/beta/states/states/me/rankings

According the EIA data, in 2021 Maine's natural gas use, on a per capita basis, "was third-lowest in the nation, after Hawaii and Vermont, in large part because most of Maine lacks natural gas distribution systems."

Source: https://www.eia.gov/state/print.php?sid=ME

Reliability: When we talk about energy burden and the cost of electricity, we have to discuss reliability. Last year we heard the case being made by some advocates to municipalize Maine's electric grid and service. This was due, in part, to the long-standing reliability issues the state has faced over the past decade. However, as our utility companies continue to make investments and upgrade our distribution network, Mainers need to ensure that back-up generation is available when the grid goes down. Home generators that are natural gas-fueled provide one option to solve reliability issues with the electric grid. Even when the electric grid is down, natural gas can continue to provide home back-up generation, which can help provide heat and basic electricity needs within the home.

According to Maine's Climate Council Action Plan released in 2020, residential buildings comprised of 19% of greenhouse gas emissions. While these numbers have fluctuated, the report included actionable steps and strategies that will support reducing our carbon emissions within the residential built-environment. With the funding made available through the Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act (IIJA), the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), and the associated energy programs being implemented by our state energy office, many of the strategies outlined in that roadmap will allow Mainers to implement the technologies to help reduce emissions.

Below is a brief highlight of those strategies:
Improve the design and construction of new buildings: Provide incentives and code requirements that encourage net-zero, renewable energy ready homes and businesses. Provide training to contractors and code enforcement officers to support compliance.
Transition to cleaner heating and cooling systems: Provide incentives to encourage consumers to purchase highly efficient heat pumps, heat pump water heaters, and efficient, modern wood heat.
Improve the energy efficiency of existing buildings: Expanded weatherization programs will reduce emissions and save money for homeowners on utility bills through added storm windows, reduction of air leaks, and supplementing insulation.
Promote "Lead by Example" programs in existing and new publicly-funded buildings: This work would be accomplished by requiring best practices in construction, including building materials selection, heating, cooling and lighting systems, and enhanced efficiency and weatherization.
Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from industrial processes: Support industrial facilities that shift from carbon-intensive fuels to cleaner alternatives. Expand funding for industrial energy efficiency and fuel switching projects and establish a task force to recommend additional long-term strategies in this sector.
Modernize Maine's electric grid: Make buildings part of the solution and ensure the state state's electricity system is ready for increased electricity use by the building and transportation sectors as they convert to electricity procured from clean, renewable sources.

SOURCE:
https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/2020-07/MCC_ClimateActionPlan_Toolkit%20(1).pdf

The funding opportunities and strategies outlined are significant, and in some cases, represent significant opportunities for Maine's workforce – and our labor union – to see real gains and job opportunities, now and into the future; as our state's energy grid, consumption, and technologies transition, so can our workforce.

Study of Geothermal Districts: We applaud the sponsors of this legislation, the committee, and our public utility commission to continue to pursue new technologies and opportunities to reduce our state's emissions, reduce the energy burden, and reduce energy consumption by making our buildings, heating, and cooling systems more efficient.
Studying the impact of geothermal district, or community-scale, geothermal technology is promising. If done appropriately and at scale, geothermal can provide low-cost and low-emission heating and cooling for Mainers.
In fact, this technology may also represent an opportunities for jobs and workforce development across the state and for our union.
However, we will still need reliable electricity to power these systems in homes, and back-up generation for when the grid goes down.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Burr

IUOE
Scarborough ME