

Audrey Hufnagel  
Damariscotta  
LD 2077

January 23, 2024

To: Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee

From: Audrey Hufnagel

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 2077 “An Act Regarding Customer Costs and Environmental and Health Effects of Natural Gas”

Senator Lawrence, Representative Ziegler and the members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee, my name is Audrey Hufnagel and I am a resident of Damariscotta. I am writing as a young person and a climate justice advocate with Maine Youth Action in support of LD 2077, An Act Regarding Customer Costs and Environmental and Health Effects of Natural Gas.

The impacts of the climate crisis in Maine are becoming more and more evident. Twice last week, a portion of my town was flooded due to severe rainstorms, causing damage to the parking lot and a number of local businesses. Around the state, homes, buildings and infrastructure sustained serious damage. Storms such as these will only worsen with climate change, posing threats to lives and homes. Climate change is no longer only a problem of the future. It is clear that we must act now by transitioning from fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy, in order to mitigate these effects and protect the future of my generation and generations to come.

Natural gas is a major source of energy for Maine, and has often been presented as a cleaner alternative to fuels such as coal and oil. However, the process of fracking can cause extreme and lasting environmental damage. Furthermore, both the extraction and burning of natural gas releases, not only carbon dioxide, but also methane, a greenhouse gas that is about thirty times more potent, which contributes greatly to climate change. Additionally, burning natural gas can cause indoor air pollution and ground level ozone formation, which can result in asthma and other health issues.

Maine needs to transition rapidly away from environmentally harmful energy sources such as natural gas, towards clean, renewable alternatives in order to address the climate crisis in the timeframe dictated by science. LD 2077 would direct the state to conduct research around natural gas in Maine in order to reform our natural gas systems and begin to phase it out as a major source of energy, thereby helping the state reach its climate and emissions goals.

Though the climate crisis poses numerous challenges, it also provides an opportunity to rethink and reshape our energy systems. LD 2077 will begin this process of transforming energy distribution. I therefore urge you to vote ought to pass to help Maine address the climate crisis and create a better energy future.