

PSR Maine

Physicians for Social Responsibility Maine Chapter

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*Testimony in favor of **LD 2077** by Sydney R. Sewall, MD of Hallowell –*

Sen. Lawrence, Rep. Zeigler and members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee –

I am writing as the current President of **PSR Maine**, an organization of over 500 health practitioners who recognize the importance of addressing the “big issues” that impact the well being of our patients. Those issues include climate change, along with indoor and outdoor air pollution. LD 2077 is not a cure for these problems but does take positive steps to improve our environment and promote public health by favoring electrification over natural gas.

Over the last year, the reality of climate change has hit us over the head. It seems counter-productive in 2024 to expand the infrastructure that supports the burning of fossil fuels. We sorely need investments in both renewable energy sources (wind, solar) along with improvements in the grid that distributes the output of these sources. Public policy should reflect these priorities.

The enthusiasm for natural gas that began about 20 years ago was generated by its accessibility and low cost due to the new technology for extraction – fracking. While fracking had the positive effect of giving the US some degree of energy independence, the unintended consequences have included geological disruptions, along with chemical contamination of aquifers. Proponents argue that shale gas is better for the environment than coal – but that is a VERY low bar. It produces less particulate matter, but equal amounts of CO₂ and chemical products of combustion. In addition, the methane leaks associated with its production and distribution contribute extra greenhouse gas effects.

The burning of natural gas indoors creates hidden pollutants that can be harmful to health, especially for individuals with respiratory conditions. As this information disseminates, market forces will eventually eliminate demand for gas-burning kitchen appliances, since electric ovens and ranges work just as well. There are no essential functions in homes where gas technology is superior to other energy sources, and the bill will not create a burden on households.

For these reasons, PSR Maine strongly supports **LD 2077**. It is a common-sense addition to our state’s overall approach to dealing with climate change.

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