



Testimony of Vicki Schmidt, Hebron ME in support of LD 2205,

Resolve, to Require the Public Utilities Commission to Initiate a Feasibility Study to Evaluate Transmission Technologies and Siting Locations for Any Future Electric Transmission Line Proposed Pursuant to the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program

Feb 20th 2024

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and members of the Joint Standing Committee On Energy, Utilities and Technology.

Thank you for today's opportunity, I am Vicki Schmidt from Hebron Maine and a 20-year member of the Buckfield Fire Department, a 14-member volunteer department in Western Maine.

As a volunteer firefighter and a State Fire Instructor III with the Maine Fire Services Institute for almost two decades I urge your support and funding of LD2205. Along with structure fire experience I am also active in wildland fire mitigation. I have hiked the wildfire devastation of many prominent fires, such as Storm King, CO, and Yarnell, AZ, as well as studied the total obliteration of Paradise California, along with its aftermath and attempted remediation. Most recently I have researched the multi-faceted impacts of the 2023 fires in Maui, Hawaii. The consequences and catalytic actions of power lines, in especially the Paradise CA and Maui HI, fires can not be ignored.

Climate change and its dramatic weather events have brought increased wildfire danger to Maine. Every state and national wildfire organization and association has increased its wildland risk assessment for our State. Currently, our states transmission lines of all sizes are not adequately maintained for wildfire safety. We are dominated by Central Maine Power, who's business model does not entertain or adequately allow for preventing damage from 40mph winds, and much less from damage that ignites wildfires.

The answer is simple: utility lines, especially high capacity lines, need to go underground if we sincerely care about grid stability, wildfire mitigation, and community risk reduction for Maine. Feasibility studies for all power lines, and the benefits of lines being underground is easily proven, and need to be part of all utility projects in Maine. Please note, placing utility lines underground fully prevents their ability to ignite a wildfire.

Those wanting to put high-capacity transmission lines through Maine are high profit mega-billion dollar corporations that have a proven track record of not managing their transmission infrastructure for the good of Maine and our citizens; these corporations can afford to put their lines underground. We just need to make it happen.

Thank you,

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