



Natural Resources Council of Maine

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Testimony in Opposition to LD 2206, An Act Regarding Incentives for Heat Pumps and Other Weatherization Products and Services

**To the Committee on the Energy, Utilities and Technology
by Jack Shapiro, Climate and Clean Energy Program Director
February 22, 2024**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee, my name is Jack Shapiro, and I am the Climate and Clean Energy Director at the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM). NRCM has been working for more than 60 years to protect, restore, and conserve Maine's environment, on behalf of our 30,000 members and supporters. NRCM testifies in opposition to LD 2206, An Act Regarding Incentives for Heat Pumps and Other Weatherization Products and Services.¹

Efficiency Maine has been capably leading Maine's efforts to deploy heat pumps for more than a decade. They have built an implementation program that's looked to nationally as an example of how to build a sustainable program, network of contractors, and word of mouth, neighbor-to-neighbor growth in this critical clean, efficient technology. But the fundamental reason Efficiency Maine has been so successful is because heat pumps save people money. This is primarily because they are so efficient, even in cold temperatures.² Heat pumps work by gathering and moving heat around, not creating it through combustion. While the most efficient fossil fuel heating sources can reach upwards of 95% efficiency, heat pumps can reach 300% or even 400% efficiency in turning energy inputs into heat inside a home or business.

However, a great deal of misinformation exists about heat pumps, some innocent, and some less so. There are many examples of systems being set up with backup heating systems kicking in at, for example, 30 degrees, well within the performance envelope of a modern heat pump. This bleeds the savings and cost-effectiveness out of heat pump installations. Maine's heat pump incentives are designed to reduce energy use and energy costs, and it makes sense to ensure Mainers are getting the most bang for their buck and not have inefficient heating systems kick in when the heat pump can do the job.

¹ <https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=SP0942&item=1&snum=131>

² <https://energynews.us/2022/07/27/in-maine-heat-pumps-are-proving-themselves-even-against-extreme-cold/>

This bill would put into statute that: “The trust may not condition the receipt of an incentive provided under a program on the disconnection or disabling of a consumer's existing primary heating equipment powered by heating fuel.” To be clear, Efficiency Maine’s incentive programs do not require the disconnection or disabling of a fueled heating system,³ so this bill seeks to address a problem that does not exist.

Ever more troubling are the unintended consequences of this legislation, which could undermine Efficiency Maine’s successful programs that save Mainers money and put installers in the impossible position of getting a job done right or complying with these ill-conceived requirements. Here are just a few examples:

- In mobile homes, there is only one space for a heating system. Replacing, for example, a kerosene heater with a high-efficiency heat pump requires removing the old system.
- In homes with existing ductwork, it is often only possible to install a heat pump system with an air handler where the old furnace was located, requiring its removal.
- In homes with hydronic heating systems (i.e., radiators), a new generation of heat pumps are becoming available, but could only be installed by disconnecting the existing system from the hot water supply pipes.
- Maine is in line to receive \$35.7 million as part of the Inflation Reduction Act’s Home Electrification and Appliance Rebate (HEAR) program, administered by Efficiency Maine.⁴ The funding in Maine is primarily targeted to provide low-income single-family and low-income multifamily rebates, and at least 40% of the benefits are required to flow to disadvantaged communities.⁵ This bill could significantly impact the effective deployment of these funds to benefit Maine’s low-income residents.

In short, Efficiency Maine has a track record of running effective heat pump programs that are literally examples to the country and the world. This bill could significantly hamper that work, in order to solve a problem that does not exist.

We urge the Committee to vote Ought Not to Pass.

Thank you, and I would be happy to try to answer any questions you have.

³ <https://www.energymaine.com/at-home/whole-home-heat-pump-incentives/>

⁴ <https://www.maine.gov/energy/initiatives/infrastructure/home-energy-rebates>

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https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/meetings/Maine%20Plan%20for%20IRA%20Home%20Energy%20Rebates_January%202024_Updated.pdf. Page 22, 26.