



To: Joint Committee on Labor and Housing

From: Hallie Arno, Maine Youth for Climate Justice

Date: April 8, 2021

Re: Testimony in support of L.D. 1231 **An Act Concerning Climate and Community Investment Projects**

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Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and Members of the Joint Committee on Labor and Housing. My name is Hallie Arno and I proudly write as a representative for Maine Youth for Climate Justice (MYCJ), a coalition of over 300 youth from across the state who are fighting for bold climate action and a just transition to a livable future in Maine. To power this transition, rapid and ambitious clean energy development will be key, and we cannot consider energy development without consideration of the workers who will build the infrastructure that will power our climate-resilient and low-emissions future.

Bold action to mitigate, adapt, and prepare ourselves for this reality is crucial to our work as climate justice advocates. But the climate is not changing in a vacuum. We cannot pause progress on the economic and racial injustices that run through our society during our climate transition, especially as the changing climate stands to impact low-income and people of color more than any other group. Those who contributed least to the climate crisis may be affected most. We must address this directly, and L.D. 1231 provides the economic framework to do so.

Massive amounts of renewable energy infrastructure is key to meet the needs of this moment, and these projects offer an unprecedented number of jobs for craftsmen—likely thousands. We must ensure that these jobs are high quality and advance equity in Maine, we cannot simply expect it. The legislature must act proactively to provide basic protections and support for the workers that will power our state's economy through the rest of the 21st century.

What makes a job high quality can be complicated, but high wages, skills building, equitable distribution of opportunity, and expansive union representation possibilities clearly align with this goal. L.D. 1231's assurance of registered apprenticeships in these projects is key for young Mainers to work while learning trade skills applicable to long-term career pathways. Early opportunities to learn a craft are crucial for building a highly-skilled clean energy workforce in

Maine, and ultimately a population of young workers excited to stay in Maine to drive our renewable energy development. Equity as a central concern is key to our coalition's support: the economic opportunities that accompany rapid renewable energy development must be equitably distributed. Requiring developers to prioritize disadvantaged communities and those with barriers to employment is common sense reform, and will help address the stark economic injustices currently facing these communities.

Transitioning to a clean energy future is not enough. The ends do not justify the means, we must use the climate crisis as an opportunity to create a more just and equitable future. Crucial to a "just transition to a livable future" is protecting the workers who will build that future. As young people living in Maine whose life will be defined by climate change, we must approach this crisis through a hopeful lens. And using the climate transition as an opportunity to move forward on and relieve existing inequities in our state, and emerge on the other side as a more just society, powers that hope. L.D. 1231 begins to answer that call for hope and codifies it into law.

Respectfully,

Hallie Arno on behalf of Maine Youth for Climate Justice

Hallie Arno  
Maine Youth for Climate Justice

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