

**Testimony of
Peter M. Gore
Executive Vice President
Maine State Chamber of Commerce
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing in opposition to
L.D. 1969, An Act Concerning Equity in Renewable Energy Projects and Workforce Development**

February 28th, 2022

Sen. Daughtry, Rep. Sylvester and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Peter Gore, and I am the Executive Vice President of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, a statewide business association representing both large and small businesses speaking to you today in opposition to L.D. 1969, An Act Concerning Equity in Renewable Energy Projects and Workforce Development.

LD 1969 as drafted would negatively impact Maine businesses to fairly participate in these critical renewable energy projects. Requiring project labor agreements of any contractor involved in the development and construction of renewable energy projects, will hurt Maine businesses and the jobs they provide by excluding them from participating in the bid process. Governor Mills has made climate change a priority of her administration and established the Maine Climate Council which recently released its report, Maine Won't Wait. As part of this, Governor Mills has set a goal for Maine of reducing our carbon emissions by 45% by 2030 and 80% by 2050. The Maine State Chamber of Commerce supports these reduction goals for our state. If the State of Maine is going to achieve the emissions reductions goals laid out by Governor Mills and reinforced by the findings and recommendations of the Maine Climate Council, we need everyone working together to achieve these goals. LD 1969 does the opposite – it limits who can participate in clean energy projects in the State of Maine and will make it more difficult in achieving the goals of the Climate Council. It will exclude many Maine based contractors, who already have an outstanding track record in renewable energy development here in Maine, in favor of out of state contractors. Thus LD 1969, as a public policy adopted by this state, would deliberately choose winner and losers in the development process solely based on their status as a union shop. We believe this patently unfair to the vast majority of Maine based companies who are not unionized and will drive these projects into the willing arms of out of state contractors. Is this what the Maine legislature really wants?

During the 129th Legislature, we, as a State, updated our Renewable Portfolio Standard. One of the issues now facing us, and not necessarily a bad one, is the need to develop the workforce to meet these demands for these projects. Rather than enacting a policy that will limit who can participate in the renewable energy field, as LD 1969 does, shouldn't we as a State be developing policy that looks at expanding and trying to attract more people into this field. LD 1969 takes us in the wrong direction in trying to meet the workforce demand for the renewable energy development and will result in the unintended consequence of bringing in out of state workers when Maine workers don't meet the requirements outlined in LD 1969.

The final concern with LD 1969 is the impact this may have on dockets that already exists at the PUC. While not my area of expertise, it is my understanding that at this moment, we have an open docket for the

Northern Maine RFP, following the passage of Sen. Troy Jackson's LD 1710 last session. This has the potential to unlock renewable resources in Northern Maine and connect it to the rest of the New England grid. This would be an enormous project for Northern Maine, which could see millions of dollars invested in economic development – and jobs. It also would be a major factor in assisting the New England region with more renewable alternative connect to the grid. If this legislation were to pass, it is unclear to us how would it impact the bids the PUC is currently receiving? Businesses have already made bids to the PUC's open proceeding, and this would certainly change these requirements in the middle of an open proceeding, as the introduction into PLA's will very likely add to the costs and are not factored into current bids. We believe this is unfair to the Maine businesses, and the potential Maine jobs, that could come from this project. Consistency in business practices related to government regulation and oversight is one of critical importance to any Maine business, large or small. Changing the established rules on any businesses in the middle of any project sends the wrong signal to businesses in, or outside of Maine, and adds the perception that we are not a state in which any employer might want to do business. We would ask the committee to take a hard look at this to ensure this legislation does not negatively impact open proceedings in which bids have already been submitted.

Similar legislation to LD 1969 was considered by the legislature last session, and was ultimately rejected in the senate, for many reasons which we share. We think LD 1969 should also be rejected by this committee and this legislature. We would therefore request this committee to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1969. Thank you for your time.