



February 28, 2022

Senator Matthea Daughtry, Chair
Representative Mike Sylvester, Chair
Committee on Labor and Housing
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Testimony in opposition to LD 1969, “An Act Concerning Equity in Renewable Energy Projects and Workforce Development”

Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester, members of the Labor and Housing Committee, my name is Jeremy Payne and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Renewable Energy Association (MREA). MREA is a not-for-profit association of renewable energy producers, suppliers of goods and services to those producers, and other supporters of the industry. MREA members sustainably manufacture electricity from hydro, biomass, wind, tidal, and solar.

As we did last year when this substantially similar bill ([LD 1231](#)) came before you courtesy of the exact same sponsor, the MREA is opposed to the sponsor’s amendment to LD 1969 which is before you today. While we certainly share some of Representative Cuddy’s goals found within the legislation – a high quality and Maine-based workforce, clean and Maine-made electricity, and progress toward meeting our climate goals – we do not believe this is the right approach to cost effectively achieving our clean energy goals through rushed and substantive changes to apprenticeship requirements, additional regulation, unfairly targeting only clean energy projects, and impacting open requests for proposals (RFP) by changing the rules in the middle of the game.

The private marketplace will accomplish many of these same workforce priorities – in fact, twice in the last month we have written letters of support for grants to help fund a new solar electricians program for the community college system, and another for the Associated General Contractors of Maine’s innovative “Construction Academy” – we know we need more tradespeople as make our clean energy transition, however, it is clear we can do this without the need to effectively hamstring other companies who choose not to pursue the use of a Project Labor Agreements (PLA), or are not employee-owned companies. As drafted, the legislation provides bonus points to a bidder through a Public Utilities Commission (PUC)-administered request for proposals for renewable projects larger than 2 megawatts, and it sends a clear message to bidders: include a PLA or work with an employee-owned business or you will face a competitive disadvantage.

www.renewablemaine.org

As this committee surely knows, our electricity prices have spiked due to exploding natural gas costs and standard offer consumers are now paying more than 80% above what they paid just last year. We must be extremely cautious with introducing any additional requirements that will drive up the cost of electricity for future renewable energy projects. Any efforts to direct energy construction work away from some companies, or toward others, will only have the ultimate effect of decreasing competition and increasing prices.

Notably and bizarrely, the requirements in LD 1969 would only apply to renewable energy procurements – if this is such an important shift in policy that it is not only deemed to be an ‘emergency,’ and is being rushed through the process where the sponsor’s amendment is released on Thursday and then has its hearing two days later, then why would it not also apply to the next proposed natural gas or oil-fired generator? If we are serious about having a level playing field, then it is illogical to only extend these requirements to the clean energy industry.

Further, there is language at the bottom of page 6 that would impact an open RFP ([Docket No. 2021-00369](#)) that the PUC is currently administering for transmission and generation projects in Aroostook County ([LD 1710](#), which became law just last session).

(h) For an assisted project, with respect to additional requests for bids or proposals initiated by the commission pursuant to this section for energy or renewable energy credits after January 1, 2022, including bids or proposals that supplement a process started on or before January 1, 2022

Again, the language above specifically implicates the RFP which is open now, whereby the PUC is accepting transmission bids that are actually due tomorrow, March 1st. And then generation bids are due a few months later on May 1st – this type of approach of changing the rules in the middle of the game is what has deservedly saddled this state with a questionable business and investment reputation.

We respectfully encourage the committee to vote ought not to pass.¹

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Jeremy N. Payne
Executive Director

¹ All of the views expressed in this document do not necessarily represent the positions of each of our members. Since MREA represents a broad spectrum of companies, we anticipate some members may submit comments of their own.