

May 3rd, 2023

Hon. Senator Craig Hickman, Senate Chair
Hon. Representative Laura Supica, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

RE: MSCC Testimony in Opposition to L.D. 1610: An Act to Prohibit Campaign Spending by Foreign Governments and Promote an Anticorruption Amendment to the United States Constitution

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs:

My name is Ben Lucas, I live in Portland, and I represent the Maine State Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber is the voice of Maine business, speaking for approximately 5,000 Maine businesses of all sizes throughout the State. The Maine State Chamber of Commerce appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to L.D. 1610.

For several years now, the Chamber has been in front of the Legislature and this committee expressing concerns about legislation like the proposal being discussed here today. Most recently, there was previous legislation in the 130th Legislature, L.D. 194 - which is the original motivation behind what is before you today. The Chamber testified in opposition to that bill with concerns for three basic reasons. Predominately, that bill presented very substantial challenges to settled constitutional limits concerning the permissible governmental regulation of political speech. Second, there was no emergency. Third, enactment of that proposed legislation would present serious operational difficulties for Maine businesses and impede their ability to protect and advocate for their legitimate interests. While we recognize the proposal before you today is narrower scope focusing on just companies that have the backing of foreign governments, some of our concerns still hold true.

Additionally, we believe that this legislation is targeting a specific company, Hydro-Quebe over the New England Clean Energy Connect. This is not a reasonable way to make policy and it sends a troubling signal to companies that may be looking to invest in Maine that they could be subject of targeted to legislation like this.

Our final point to make is that we recognize this issue will likely be decided at the ballot box in November, and we look forward to engaging in that ballot question. But we felt it was important to highlight a couple of the concerns that the Chamber has with this proposal. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,
Benjamin R. Lucas
Senior Government Relations Specialist
Maine State Chamber of Commerce
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