

Senator Mark Lawrence, Chair  
Representative Seth Berry, Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

Clerk Abben Maguire  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

May 16, 2019

**Testimony of Conservation Law Foundation in support of L.D. 1711,  
*An Act to Promote Solar Energy Projects and Distributed Generation Resources in  
Maine***

Conservation Law Foundation (CLF)<sup>1</sup> supports LD 1711, which would establish policies that promote development of solar power throughout Maine, paving the way toward a clean energy future.

CLF recognizes climate change as the most pressing issue of our time. To decarbonize the region, CLF has long focused on decreasing reliance on fossil fuels. Reducing carbon pollution emissions from the electricity generation sector by encouraging investment in solar is a critical element of this strategy.

**I. CLF Supports LD 1711 Because Today is the Day to Enact Comprehensive Solar Policy in Maine.**

Just this month, a nation-wide solar milestone was reached: the 2 millionth solar installation.<sup>2</sup> The country's second million installations took only three years, with projections that the industry will double again in half of a decade.<sup>3</sup> This rapid investment in solar reflects wide-

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<sup>1</sup> CLF is a public interest advocacy organization that works to solve the environmental problems that threaten the people, natural resources and communities of New England. Founded in 1966, CLF is a nonprofit, member-supported organization. CLF promotes clean, renewable and efficient energy production and has a decades-long record of advocacy in support of renewable energy development throughout the region and in Maine.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., E.F. Merchant, Green Tech Media, *U.S. Surpasses 2 Million Solar Installations as Industry Looks to 'Dominate' the 2020s* (May 9, 2019). Available at <https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/u-s-solar-installations-top-2-million#gs.bqts5w>.

<sup>3</sup> See Solar Energy Industries Association, *United States Surpasses 2 Million Solar Installations* (May 9, 2019), <https://www.seia.org/news/united-states-surpasses-2-million-solar-installations>, last visited May 16, 2019.

spread recognition of the extensive values proffered, which range from less air pollution and climate-damaging emissions, to opportunities for job growth, rural development, economic savings and energy independence.

Yet here in Maine, the state lacks a comprehensive solar policy and has fallen behind the region and the nation in terms of solar development.<sup>4</sup> Maine's former Governor Paul LePage vetoed bipartisan solar legislation that would have created market certainty for the industry in each of the last three legislative sessions.<sup>5</sup> Maine's Public Utilities Commission enacted regulations that penalized solar panel owners, charging them fees for electricity they generated and consumed on-site.<sup>6</sup> CLF challenged those rules in court and celebrated earlier this session when the deleterious reimbursement scheme was statutorily prohibited.<sup>7</sup>

The failure of Maine to invest in our own natural resources means that Mainers are losing out on good jobs and clean air, all while spending our money on imported fossil fuels with volatile prices. Maine's people understand these lost benefits and support policies that would increase the amount of solar power in the state.<sup>8</sup> Maine citizens and businesses have repeatedly been vocal in their support of solar growth, for instance in the context of the Public Utilities Commission's rulemaking to change net energy billing.<sup>9</sup>

LD 1711 would move Maine forward on solar by expanding access and removing barriers. Among other things, the bill would improve Maine's existing net energy billing provisions and would additionally use competitive markets to ensure cost-effective investment in solar. It would create certainty in this burgeoning marketplace, and would enable many more people, businesses, and communities in Maine to avail themselves of the benefits—economic and otherwise.

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In short, CLF supports LD 1711 because it will stimulate development of renewable energy in Maine which is a win-win for people and businesses: it will provide new opportunities for growth in our rural economies; create good jobs to keep young people in the state; increase

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<sup>4</sup> See Solar Energy Industries Association, *Solar State By State*, <https://www.seia.org/states-map>, last visited May 16, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., LD 1444 (128<sup>th</sup> Legis. 2016), An Act Regarding Large-Scale Community Solar Procurement; LD 1504 (128<sup>th</sup> Legis. 2016), An Act Regarding Solar Power for Farms and Businesses; LD 1373 (128<sup>th</sup> Legis. 2016), An Act to Protect and Expand Access to Solar; LD 1649 (127<sup>th</sup> Legis. 2014), An Act to Modernize Maine's Solar Power Policy and Encourage Economic Development.

<sup>6</sup> See *Public Utilities Commission*, Amendments to Net Energy Billing Rule (Chapter 313), No. 2016-222.

<sup>7</sup> See LD 91 (129<sup>th</sup> Legis. 2018), An Act to Eliminate Gross Metering.

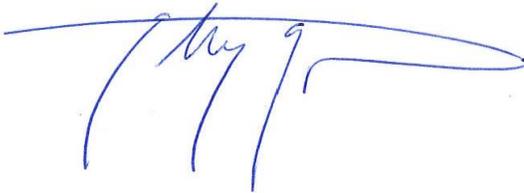
<sup>8</sup> Critical Insights, *Critical Insights on Maine Tracking Survey, Proprietary Summary Report of Findings* (Spring 2018) at 8, available at <https://www.nrcm.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/CriticalInsightsSummaryChartsSpring2018.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> See *Maine Public Utilities Commission, Central Maine Power Company*, Commission Initiated Inquiry into Net Energy Billing Rules (Chapter 313), No. 2016-00120, Public Comments; see also *See Commission, Maine Public Utilities*, Public Utilities Commission Amendments to Net Energy Billing Rule (Chapter 313), No. 2016-00222, Public Comments.

energy independence; lower electricity rates; reduce climate-damaging emissions; and benefit the environment, the air we breathe, and the health of our communities.

CLF thanks the committee for this opportunity to present testimony in support of LD 1711, and urges members to vote Ought to Pass. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or for further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Emily K. Green". The signature is stylized with a long horizontal line at the top and several vertical strokes below it.

Emily K. Green