

*129th Legislature*  
*Senate of*  
*Maine*  
*Senate District 13*

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**LD 1711, “An Act To Promote Solar Energy Projects  
and Distributed Generation Resources in Maine”**

**Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology**  
**May 16, 2019**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology:

My name is Dana Dow and I represent Senate District 13, several towns in the Kennebec, Knox and Lincoln Counties. I appreciate the opportunity to present to you LD 1711, “An Act To Promote Solar Energy Projects and Distributed Generation Resources in Maine.”

The core policy proposal in this bill, the procurement of distributed generation by a standard buyer, was before the Legislature back in 2016; and the approach was borne out of dialogue among many parties with varying interests, including those who want to promote solar energy and those who want to protect ratepayers. This measure before you actually builds upon similar legislation introduced last session by our colleague Senator Woodsome.

Maine is embracing renewable energy and solar power, which can benefit our economy and create jobs in our state. One of the intriguing aspects about solar power is that it can be located nearly anywhere, at small scales and large scales; and individual homes, businesses and towns can invest directly to produce their own power. That is what is known as "distributed generation."

Distributed generation puts the power where it needs to be, right where it is consumed; and that can reduce costly burdens on our electricity grid. To a large degree, solar produces power when we need it most, during those long, hot summer hours when the costs to ratepayers to run every peaking power plant is the highest.

This bill is certainly not a solution to all of our energy challenges, but it can be a major part of moving Maine forward on the solar energy front. We can begin to build a policy foundation and a thriving solar market. Most of the distributed solar power in this bill would be achieved through market competition that can drive down the costs.

LD 1711 does support increased use of solar on people's homes, but the main focus is providing larger customers better access to solar and promoting community solar. By larger customers, I mean businesses, schools, towns and cities and other commercial customers. New approaches can help achieve reduced energy bills and predictable electricity costs over the long-term. Many of these customers pay demand charges that make it harder to recoup the cost of solar under net metering. We should be willing to look at innovative methods can work for everyone and benefit other ratepayers.

Community solar is a very promising idea as well. By allowing larger community solar farms, we can bring down the costs and provide solar indirectly to more Maine people, businesses and towns, even if they don't have a building or property themselves that is suitable for solar. With this proposal it is my hope to bring the benefits of solar to more Mainers, from businesses to families with more limited incomes.

My constituency is very excited about solar energy. I am here for them. I am also interested in finding practical solutions that meet the needs of Maine citizens, businesses and municipalities.

I have met with many interested parties along the way as this bill was drafted. I engaged folks from both ends of the spectrum, so to speak; and there are aspects of this bill that do not satisfy some. My hope is that we can work on amended language to bring parties together to produce thoroughly vetted, fair and balanced language that enables folks to take advantage of solar energy and does not raise costs for our industrial consumers.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I am sure the folks who follow me will be able to answer any technical questions you may have.