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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL
RESOURCES COMMITTEE
“AN ACT TO AMEND THE LAWS GOVERNING THE
DETERMINATION OF A WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT’S EFFECT
ON THE SCENIC CHARACTER OF MAINE’S SPECIAL PLACES”
L.D. 901**

GOVERNOR’S ENERGY OFFICE

March 21, 2017

Chairman Saviello, Chairman Tucker, and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee: My name is Angela Monroe and I am the Acting Director of the Governor’s Energy Office.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today in opposition to L.D. 901.

As we all know, Maine is a great place to live. The beauty and majesty of our State is an integral part of our heritage and our economy. Maine is “Vacationland” for a reason. Our mountain tops, scenic overlooks, and sometimes just our daily commutes, provide us with rich breathtaking views and bring many people from outside the State, back year after year. Like our lobsters, our forests, and our wildlife, these views are one of Maine’s natural resources. Protecting these views, as we would protect any of our natural resources, is important.

Maine has a substantial amount of wind capacity already in place -- over 450 MW as of April 1, 2015. According to the U.S. Energy Information

Administration, Maine's wind facilities produced nearly 60% of all the wind generation in New England in 2015. However, this is a fraction of what is proposed for Maine. There are applications pending at ISO New England (a regional body that approves the interconnection of generation projects to the electric grid) to increase the amount of wind capacity in Maine over 8 times – to over 3,700 megawatts.¹

As this capacity increases, more and more of our scenic landscapes will be affected. While L.D. 901 does move in the right direction by providing the siting board more latitude to consider scenic impacts, it does not go far enough. The Governor's Energy Office urges the Committee to amend the bill to require developers to provide a visual impact study whenever a project can be seen from a scenic resource of state or national significance. This would not prohibit wind developments within sight of such scenic resources, but would allow the siting board to evaluate and consider the effect of wind developments on the scenic resource. Such evaluation is critical -- the scenic beauty of our State is an asset we cannot afford to squander.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

¹ ISO New England, System Planning, Resource Adequacy, "2015 Economic Study Strategic Transmission Analysis – Onshore Wind Integration." September 2, 2016.