



Testimony in Support of LD 1847, An Act to Modify the Visual Impact Standards for Offshore Wind Port Development

**To the Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources
by Jack Shapiro, Climate and Clean Energy Program Director
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Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Jack Shapiro, and I am the Climate and Clean Energy Director at the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM). NRCM has been working for more than 60 years to protect, restore, and conserve Maine’s environment, on behalf of our 25,000 members and supporters. NRCM testifies in support of LD 1847, An Act to Modify the Visual Impact Standards for Offshore Wind Port Development.¹

Offshore wind will play an essential role in meeting Maine’s climate and clean energy goals. Maine’s comprehensive climate action plan, *Maine Won’t Wait*, came out in 2020,² and it clearly identifies electrification as Maine’s central strategy for shifting our energy use away from expensive and outdated fossil fuels toward clean and affordable energy technologies. We have the ability to meet most of our climate goals with technologies that exist right now, today: Renewable energy, electrified vehicles, heat pumps, battery storage, and flexible grid technologies. Critically, we need to source all of that new electricity demand for how we heat our homes and businesses, and how we fuel our cars and trucks from renewable sources at reasonable costs. This is where offshore wind comes in.

Years of work have gone into setting the stage for offshore wind development in Maine, including developing cutting-edge technologies at the University of Maine,³ and a multi-year Offshore Wind Roadmap strategy developed by the Governor’s Energy Office.⁴ The federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is planning lease sales in the Gulf of Maine as early as next year.⁵ There is offshore wind procurement legislation up for consideration this legislative session as well.⁶

¹ https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/display_ps.asp?PID=1456&snum=131&paper=SP0748

² https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/MaineWontWait_December2020.pdf

³ <https://composites.umaine.edu/>

⁴ <https://composites.umaine.edu/>

⁵ https://www.boem.gov/sites/default/files/documents/renewable-energy/state-activities/BOEM_GoME_InformationExchangeMtgs.pdf. Page 20.

⁶ https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/bills/display_ps.asp?PID=1456&snum=131&paper=&paperId=l&ld=1895

The importance of constructing a floating offshore wind terminal (or “port”) in Maine can’t be overstated. Without a port, the economic benefits of offshore wind largely would not be realized in Maine. A report developed to support the Offshore Wind Roadmap estimated that Maine could experience up to 33,000 short-term and 13,000 long-term jobs from the development of an offshore wind industry. But those estimates rely on modeling a significant “local share” of economic benefits, workforce development, and supply chain participation. Without a port, that local share happens somewhere else. The same study estimated the economic impact of offshore wind development with a significant local share — consistent with having a Maine offshore wind port — as being more than triple that without it.⁷

This bill advances the construction of an offshore wind port designed to support the construction of *floating* offshore wind platforms and turbines — the only kind suitable for the deep waters of the Gulf of Maine. Floating ports have different requirements than ports designed to support traditional “fixed-bottom” offshore wind development. Floating turbines are erected on foundations in port, then towed out to sea. That requires tall cranes to lift components to the top of the very large turbine towers. By making narrow and targeted changes to Maine’s permitting laws, LD 1847 clears the path for the development of an offshore wind port, with all of the economic and climate benefits that it will enable.

Importantly, LD 1847 also sets aside the question of specific siting. The Offshore Wind Port Advisory Group (OSWPAG), led by the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT), has been charged with evaluating the multiple technical, environmental, and economic considerations for recommending a site for an offshore wind port and we believe their work should be allowed to proceed toward a recommendation later this year.⁸

NRCM supports the development of responsibly developed offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine, including a responsibly developed offshore wind port. We believe this legislation supports that goal, so we support LD 1847, and encourage the Committee to do the same.

Thank you for your consideration.

⁷ <https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov/energy/files/inline-files/Maine%20OSW%20DNV%20Socioeconomic%20Analysis%20of%20Offshore%20Wind%20in%20the%20Gulf%20of%20Maine%20Final%20Report.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.maine.gov/mdot/ofps/oswpag/>