

**The Maine Heritage Policy Center
Testimony to Oppose LD 1679
“An Act To Establish the Maine Climate Change
Council To Assist Maine To Mitigate, Prepare for and
Adapt to Climate Change”**

Senator Carson, Representative Tucker and distinguished members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Adam Crepeau and I am a policy analyst at The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to LD 1679.

While the intent of this bill is laudable, it would unfairly restrict the consumption of electricity from non-renewable resources in Maine. This bill would require 80 percent of the electricity consumed in the state to be from renewable resources by 2030. By 2050, the state would need to consume 100 percent of its electricity from renewable resources. Electricity consumption should be left to market forces, not forced upon Mainers through government mandates.

According to the United States Energy Information Administration, Mainers primarily consume petroleum due the cold winters in Maine. Petroleum accounts for approximately two-thirds of energy consumption in the state.¹ In addition, Maine consumes little energy compared to other states, ranking 44th overall.² This amounts to approximately 0.4 percent of total energy consumed in the nation.³ The change outlined in this bill could have negative consequences for consumers and would do little for the environment.

We also disagree with the establishment of the Maine Climate Change Council because it would grow the size and scope of government. The 38 member board established in this bill would release a state climate action plan every four years to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Maine. By 2030, greenhouse gas emissions would need to be reduced to 45 percent below the 1990 gross annual greenhouse gas emission level. By 2050, that percentage would grow to 80 percent. While this goal is ambitious, it would not have a large effect on climate change overall.

Maine ranks 45th in total carbon dioxide emissions, producing approximately 0.3 percent of total carbon dioxide emissions in the United States.⁴ In essence, Mainers could consume 100 percent of their energy from renewable resources tomorrow with little overall impact or benefit to the environment.

¹ <https://www.eia.gov/state/analysis.php?sid=ME>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://www.eia.gov/state/rankings/?sid=ME#series/226>

In addition, this bill does not identify specific funding mechanisms aside from allowing the council and its subcommittees and working groups to solicit funds from, “government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and foundations and other entities,” enabling special interests and cronyism. The Maine Heritage Policy Center believes this structure needs to be clarified because it could lead to conflicts of interest with members of the board. While it isn’t included in this bill, we are also opposed to the \$500,000 included in the governor’s budget change package that would be appropriated to the Maine Climate Change Council over the 2020-21 biennium.⁵

Lastly, some renewable energy sources in Maine are propped up by government rules and regulations while others are limited by arbitrary caps on production. The conversation needs to begin with how the state produces energy. If we are truly concerned about the state only consuming renewable resources, this committee has an obligation to lift the arbitrary 100 megawatt cap on hydropower energy production in the state of Maine. These questions need to be posed: Why is this cap in place and how does it benefit Mainers? Would Maine be closer to the goals outlined in LD 1679 if the cap is lifted?

For those reasons, The Maine Heritage Policy Center urges the committee to vote, “Ought Not to Pass” on LD 1679. Thank you.

⁵<https://www.maine.gov/budget/sites/maine.gov.budget/files/inline-files/Governors%20Change%20Package%20to%20LD1001%20FINAL%205-14-19.pdf>