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Maine Legislature Passes Community Solar Legislation

Augusta, Maine (June 29, 2021) - On June 18, the Maine Legislature passed [LD 936](#), An Act To Amend State Laws Relating to Net Energy Billing and the Procurement of Distributed Generation. The bill is a culmination of months of discussions between stakeholders, and its passage provides clarity about cost savings for Maine consumers -- residential, commercial, and industrial ratepayers -- and investment certainty for solar companies currently participating in the Net Energy Billing program. LD 936 places Maine on a clear path to ensure savings accrue to homeowners and businesses, while continuing to develop a successor program to ensure a future for distributed solar in Maine.

The Coalition for Community Solar Access (CCSA) and the Maine Renewable Energy Association (MREA) commend the Legislature's commitment to community solar, as well as their engagement with stakeholders over the past couple of months to establish a sustainable path forward. Industry representatives worked with members of the Energy, Utilities and Telecommunication Committee, representatives of the Governor's Energy Office, and the Public Utilities Commission to implement reasonable guardrails on the existing program, ensure costs for the program remain low, and protect investments made by the community solar industry in response to the creation of Maine's first community solar program in 2019.

Community solar was first introduced to Maine in 2019, through the passage of LD 1711, *An Act to Promote Solar Energy Projects and Distributed Energy Resources in Maine*. Following the passage of that landmark legislation, Maine saw a robust response from many companies looking to help consumers save money on their monthly bills in addition to making hundreds of millions of dollars in grid infrastructure investments. While the success of the program means strong growth in Maine's clean energy economy, a narrow report compiled by the Maine Public Utilities Commission (PUC) did raise concern about certain areas of the program. In response to those concerns, Daymark Energy Advisors completed a [cost-benefit analysis](#) of the program, concluding that the program benefits accruing to Mainers outweigh the costs. CCSA and MREA worked with stakeholders – including legislators – to ensure reasonable ratepayer

protections are implemented, while continuing to support the growth of community solar in the state.

The legislation outlines criteria for projects to move forward under the existing rules of the Net Energy Billing Program based on a variety of factors including when the project obtained a signed Net Energy Billing Agreement, a utility-issued Interconnection Service Agreement, and signed customer contracts. The bill also directs the Governor's Energy Office to lead a stakeholder group that will provide recommendations to the Legislature on the design for the next iteration of the program for distributed generation.

"We thank the legislature for passing a bill that provides necessary protections for customers that have already signed up for community solar projects and for solar companies that have made significant local investments in communities across Maine," said Kaitlin Kelly O'Neill, northeast regional director for CCSA, "While it's unfortunate some projects may not move forward because of new program rules, this bill at least provides clear direction for industry and ensures community solar will be an important part of Maine's energy mix going forward."

"We applaud the leadership demonstrated by the Maine Legislature, and the Maine homeowners and businesses who spoke out loudly in support of preserving this program. It is important to acknowledge that as Maine continues its pursuit of a cleaner energy future, that we will need clean electricity from many different sources, of many different sizes, and this will require clear and consistent policy that provides companies and consumers the certainty they require to feel confident in making these substantial investments," said Jeremy Payne, Executive Director of the Maine Renewable Energy Association.

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