

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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May 18, 2021

**MAINE CITIZENS, TOWNS AND BUSINESSES URGE ENERGY
COMMITTEE TO PROTECT THE NET ENERGY BILLING PROGRAM**

*Diverse Coalition of Mainers Send Letter to Legislators Detailing Solar Program's
Success and Contributions to Maine's Economy*

AUGUSTA -- A coalition of Mainers representing a diverse array of backgrounds, including the Maine School Superintendents Association, Maine School Boards Association, and multiple town and municipal officials, submitted a letter today urging the Legislature's Energy, Utilities, and Technology (EUT) Committee to protect the state's Net Energy Billing (NEB) program.

The letter reads;

"Our coalition spans a diverse array of construction workers, municipalities, manufacturers, small businesses, school administrators, and residential consumers who participate in the NEB program. We have made significant investments in time and resources to participate in the program, and recent activity in your committee has raised the alarm that the community solar projects we're part of might be at risk if the committee makes retroactive changes."

Maine's NEB program was expanded by the Legislature in 2019, allowing the proliferation of Maine-made "community solar" projects that allow previously-excluded groups of Mainers to access clean, renewable, and affordable solar power. Since the update to the NEB program, Maine has attracted hundreds of millions of dollars in new investment, and the ripple effect of this new solar development is poised to benefit every corner of Maine's economy.

"We have made significant investments in time and resources to participate in the program, and recent activity in your committee has raised the alarm that the community solar projects we're part of might be at risk if the committee makes retroactive changes," the letter continues. "The NEB program is creating jobs, sustaining businesses, and moving Maine closer to our long-term carbon reduction goals."

The EUT committee has been deliberating changes to the NEB program, and some proposals under discussion would pause the program altogether, putting millions of investment dollars at risk, and negatively impacting Maine towns, schools, businesses, and energy consumers. The coalition letter makes it clear what's at stake:

"If this program ends, it means an entire strata of middle- to low-income Mainers will once again be forced to consume carbon-emitting fossil fuels. It would mean the loss of hundreds of jobs, and a spike in energy costs to consumers, municipalities, and businesses who have already made the shift to community solar power."

Jeremy Payne, Executive Director of the Maine Renewable Energy Association (MREA), said the letter shows how widespread the impacts of Maine's new solar law have been. "In 2019, the Governor and the Legislature took appropriate action and created a new Maine-made solar policy that has helped attract to our state hundreds of megawatts of clean energy, the potential for hundreds of millions of dollars of private investment, and the avoidance of tons of pounds of harmful pollutants. In years past, Mainers were often asked to choose between cheap or clean, with the arrival of NEB solar projects now they can have both. The program is working not just for those in the solar industry, but, as this letter shows, also for the thousands of Mainers who benefit from the tremendous investments now being made in our state thanks to this program," said Payne.

The letter was delivered to the EUT committee and the full legislature this morning. The full text of the letter and the signatories is included below.

May 18, 2021

Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
Cross Building, Room 211
Augusta, ME 04333

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and Members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee,

As representatives of a coalition of Mainers with a strong stake in Maine's Net Energy Billing (NEB) program, we're writing to urge you to protect this critical program.

Our coalition spans a diverse array of construction workers, municipalities, manufacturers, small businesses, school administrators and residential consumers who participate in the NEB program. We have made significant investments in time and resources to participate in the program, and recent activity in your committee has raised the alarm that the community solar projects we're part of might be at risk if the committee makes retroactive changes.

Some of us are participating in this program to reduce our energy costs. Some are helping to build these projects, and supporting our families through these good, Maine jobs. Others are depending on the program to reduce property taxes in our towns. And all of us are eager to make the shift from fossil fuels to clean, renewable solar power, for the good of Maine and our environment.

As you know, the expansion of the NEB program in 2019 opened the door for an unprecedented level of investment in Maine. Hundreds of millions of dollars in new money is poised to come into our state, which is helping our economy at a time when we need it the most. The program is creating jobs, sustaining businesses, and moving Maine closer to our long-term carbon reduction goals.

Community solar projects now allow all Mainers - from homeowners to large and small businesses, and including education institutions and municipalities -- to benefit by making the jump from fossil fuels to clean, cost-effective Maine-made power. The NEB program has ended the cost prohibition to lower-income Mainers because anyone can now access renewable solar power without having to finance their own arrays.

If this program ends, it means an entire strata of middle- to low-income Mainers will once again be forced to consume carbon-emitting fossil fuels. It would mean the loss of hundreds of jobs, and a spike in energy costs to consumers, municipalities, and businesses who have already made the shift to community solar power.

The EUT committee's deliberations over the last several weeks have made it clear there is a stark lack of data to justify significant changes to the NEB program. Members have voiced concern about the cost to Maine energy consumers, but do not yet have a clear idea of what that cost might be. It should go without saying that any changes to this critical program must be based on facts, not fears. Without an actual study of the consumer impacts of the NEB program in its current form, changes to the program would be ill-informed and premature.

The Maine Legislature, and the EUT committee in particular, led the way in 2019 by including community solar projects in the NEB program. And the bill has been a

resounding success. We urge you to maintain careful stewardship of the program by basing your decisions on a sound body of factual data. It's worth taking the time to make sure we make the right choices, and that the incredible successes of this program are not sacrificed to unsubstantiated fears. The country is now poised to take bold steps forward to clean our energy resources and build the clean energy economy. Don't let Maine slide backwards after having taken its own bold step towards a clean energy future with the implementation of the NEB program.

We appreciate the difficult work you are doing, and would welcome the opportunity to speak with you more about this issue.

Sincerely,

Honorable Kent Ackley, Monmouth

Mark Adams, Sebago Technics Inc, Lewiston

Annie Allen, Orland

Carl & Ann Anton, Surry

Steve Bailey, on behalf of the Maine School Boards Association, West Bath

Gene Bergoffen, Eastern Slope Airport Authority, Fryeburg

Ethan Bessey, E D Bessey & Son, Hinckley

Gene & Shirley Bibber, Gorham

Steve Blake, BH2M, Gorham

Adam Bowen, Scarborough

Brody Boynton, EC Boynton & Sons, Prospect

Charles Boynton, EC Boynton & Sons, Prospect

Elwin Boynton, EC Boynton & Sons, Prospect

Gloria Boynton, EC Boynton & Sons, Prospect

Heather Boynton, Outta Town Auto, Prospect

Larry Boynton, EC Boynton & Sons, Prospect

Tucker Boynton, Bennett Painting, Prospect

Debbie Bradstreet, Bradstreet Farms, Newport

Seth Bradstreet, Bradstreet Farms, Newport

Ken Briggs, Gouldsboro

Ben Burns, Quality Containers of New England, Yarmouth

Tom Chadbourne, Waterford

David Chase, Danforth

Kathryn Clark, Denmark

Laurence Clark, Denmark

Columbia Forest Products, Presque Isle

Ted Crooker, Crooker Construction, Topsham

Phil Crowell, Auburn City Manager
David Delthier, Blue Hill
David Dickey, Camden
Daniel Diffin, Sevee & Maher Engineers, Cumberland
Tom Davis, Tom Davis Dairy Farm, Kenduskeag
Linda and John Fenderson, Fenderson Farm, Saco
Guy Ferris, South Gardiner
Sid & Liz Geller, Oxford
Tedd Gifford, RLC Engineering, Standish
Jenna Gilbert, Sevee & Maher Engineers, Cumberland
Joan & Jay Goudreau, Monmouth
Charles Haddock, Windham
David & Cindy Harkins, Minot
Carlton Jones, Skowhegan
Luke & Olivia Kalloch, East Machias
Matt Kearns, Longroad Energy, Portland
Scott Kimball, The Outback Salvage Yard, Naples
Eileen King, on behalf of the Maine School Superintendents Association, West Boothbay Harbor
Ashley Krulik, Town of Falmouth Sustainability Coordinator
Scott Laliberte, Riverside Disposal, Randolph
Jorge Larenas, Eliot
Abigail Latulippe, Sevee & Maher Engineers, Freeport
Kevin Lauze, Coastal Metal Fabrication, Topsham
Emery Lee, Millinocket
Ben Lund, Monmouth
Andy Madura, Director of Facilities MSAD 61 Lakes Region School District, Bridgton
Erik and Ashley Martin, Naples
Deborah Martin, Bridgton
Shane McDougall, Aviest Engineering, Woodland
Bruce & Judith Meklin, Rockland
Yvette Meunier, Topsham
Rob Mitchell, Environmental & Energy Services Contractor, Portland
Abbie Morong, EC Boynton & Sons, Prospect
George O'Keefe, Jr., Town of Rumford Economic Development Director
Kevin & Jennifer Paradis, Ashland
Nathan Poore, Falmouth Town Manager
Amy Posovsky, South Gardiner
Neil R. Postlewaite, North Vassalboro
Robert Quick, Prospect

Rex Rolfe, R. Rolfe Corporation, Harrison
Bertrand Roy, Auburn
Thomas Saliba, Spar Cove Associates, Freeport
Michael G. Saunders, Orland
Joshua P. Sawyer, Deblois
Joan & John Shurtleff, Passadumkeag
Penni Shute, Shutes Seafood, Stockton Springs
Darren J. Shute, Shutes Seafood, Stockton Springs
Robert Taisey, Assured Solar, North Yarmouth
Sean Thies, Haley Ward, Bangor
Melinda Turner, Riverside Disposal, Randolph
Bill Walsh, Walsh Engineering Associates, Westbrook
Nick Whatley, Morningstar Stone and Tile, Topsham
Joanne Weiss, Monmouth
Terryann Wentling, Winslow
Toby and Shari Whitman, Whitman's Hidden Meadow Farm, West Paris
Debbie and John Whitney, Chester

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