

SUPPORT

LD 1263: An Act to Create Jobs and Promote Investment in Maine's Economy through Increased Access to Solar Energy

Sponsor: Representative GIDEON of Freeport

Co-Sponsors: Senator SAVIELLO of Franklin; Representatives BLACK of Wilton, CAMPBELL of Orrington, DEVIN of Newcastle, GROHMAN of Biddeford, HUBBELL of Bar Harbor, MALABY of Hancock, PIERCE of Falmouth, POULIOT of Augusta

Summary: This bill reduces several existing barriers that arbitrarily limit the ability of Maine people, businesses and communities to invest in solar. This includes removing the limit on the number of people who can co-own and benefit from a solar project, as well as increasing the size of solar projects that communities or businesses can install to reduce their electric bills (through net-metering.) The bill also establishes a solar-specific component of Maine's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), which is the core policy in Maine (and nearly 40 other states) to spur investment in new renewable generation. The bill calls for Maine to get 2.5% of its total electricity from solar by 2022. The bill would enable those who install solar to receive solar renewable energy credits (SRECs) for each megawatt-hour they produce. Estimated results would be roughly 10,000 residential projects and nearly 3,000 business or community-based installations.

Explanation: Maine has an excellent solar resource—comparable to cities like Houston, Miami or Atlantic City and *better* than that of leaders in solar like Germany, Massachusetts and Vermont. It's now economical for homes and businesses to produce their own power and increase energy security. Despite this good news, Maine is falling far behind the region and the U.S. on solar installations and job creation.

Without greater energy diversity and more choices, Maine homeowners and businesses face volatile and rising prices. Rooftop solar offers a way for Mainers to take control of their own energy costs. Prices for solar panels have fallen 50% in the last five years. While the *price* of solar is increasingly competitive, all of the cost needs to be paid up-front, for systems with no fuel costs.

Solar offers many benefits to Maine, including: stabilizing energy costs; employing Maine workers with good-paying jobs; and reducing pollution that threatens our climate and oceans. Maine's new Value of Solar study shows solar provides substantial benefits to all ratepayers and the general public.

To better capture the opportunity of solar, Maine needs to reduce financial and regulatory barriers. The bill makes solar power more accessible for Maine people, businesses, and communities by reducing current barriers, including the arbitrary limit on the number of people who can co-own a solar project. It spurs the market for solar by lowering upfront costs so the state can catch up on solar installations and job creation. It emphasizes rooftop solar, community/shared solar, and other special opportunities for solar, such as at landfills and farms. The bill puts the state on the path for steady growth in solar. It builds on existing, successful Maine policies like the RPS.

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