

Dear Board Members of the Efficiency Maine Trust-

Thank you for allowing me to address you today. My name is Will Ikard and I'm the director of the Maine Small Business Coalition, which represents over four thousand small business owners across the state. As well you know, small businesses are not only the central drivers of our economy, they are also the centers of our communities. Our members care about making a living to support their families, creating good jobs for their friends and neighbors, and building communities that everyone wants to live in. That's why I'm here today. To urge you to keep up the good work and make it easier for Maine's small business owners to keep doing what they're doing.

First, let me say that my members care deeply about energy issues. Energy costs are one of the largest expenses for many Maine businesses. When they can cut their energy costs through greater efficiency, small businesses invest that money back into our local communities, growing bigger and creating more jobs. This is on top of all of the jobs that are directly created by energy efficiency contractors, many of whom are here today. For the sake of cost savings through energy efficiency alone, we urge you to invest in your small business programs.

But there's another reason my members care so much about this issue: climate change. Maine's small business owners are among the first to feel the effects of a change climate. Maine's tourist industry depends on seashores and forests that are currently under threat. Our farmers and fishermen are seeing changes to the weather and oceans every day that threaten their livelihoods. And our thriving coastal economies are just a few inches of sea rise away from being decimated. Small business owners want government at all levels to take immediate action to avert crisis.

Efficiency Maine has proven very successful at lowering energy costs for businesses. In fiscal year 2015, about 3,500 individual businesses took advantage of the primary business program. This is a big number and we'd like to see it even bigger. We'd also like to see an expansion of the small business direct install program. Build on the initial successes and roll out the program as quickly as possible to the rest of the state.

We need to accelerate these initiatives in order to maximize the savings for small businesses and increase their competitiveness, all the while efficiently and effectively combatting climate change.

Thank you.

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