



**Testimony in Support of LD 837,  
An Act to Require the Office of the Public Advocate to Implement  
the State's Climate Action Plan**

**To the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology  
by Rebecca Schultz  
Senior Advocate for Climate and Clean Energy  
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Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee, my name is Rebecca Schultz, and I am a Senior Advocate for Climate and Clean Energy with the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM). NRCM is a nonpartisan membership organization that has been working for more than 65 years to protect, restore, and conserve Maine's environment, now and for future generations.

On behalf of our nearly 24,000 members and supporters, NRCM testifies in support of LD 837, An Act to Require the Office of the Public Advocate to Implement the State's Climate Action Plan.

LD 837 proposes to modify the Public Advocate's governing charter to include the state's Climate Action Plan, pursuant to Title 38, section 577, among the duties of the Office.

The climate change crisis affects all of us and requires responses across the economy and across the government. **LD 837 amounts to a good-housekeeping update to ensure continuity in an "all of government" approach to addressing climate change.**

The Public Advocate plays a critical role at the Public Utilities Commission, representing the interests of Maine families and businesses. Those interests increasingly reside in the complex interplay of ratepayer costs and benefits across short- and long-term planning horizons, where upfront costs in shifting away from expensive, polluting fossil fuels will yield stable, affordable savings over the long-term.

Securing a homegrown supply of renewable energy and switching to efficient electric technologies in the transportation and heating sectors is the key to both overcoming our dependence on fossil fuels and providing a pathway to affordable, reliable energy for the state of Maine.

Navigating and advocating for Maine consumers throughout the state's transition to clean energy must be central to the work of the Public Advocate. And that's what this bill intends to make clear.

In 2021, the 130<sup>th</sup> Legislature passed and the Governor signed LD 1682.<sup>1</sup> That law established climate change requirements for the Public Utilities Commission and expanded the agency's statement of purpose to include reducing greenhouse gas emissions to levels set forth in Title 38, section 576-A.<sup>2</sup>

**LD 837 can be understood as a companion bill to LD 1682, to bring the duties and responsibilities of the Public Advocate into alignment with the state's priority of addressing climate change.**

Acknowledging that the Office of the Public Advocate does not have direct implementation authority over most aspects of the state's Climate Action Plan, we would recommend friendly amendments to the bill to more appropriately reflect the nature of the role of the Office in advancing the state's climate and clean energy requirements.

These minor modifications aside, we strongly support what we understand to be the sponsor's intention.

We urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 837.

I would be happy to answer any questions that the Committee has and be available for work session.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> An Act To Require Consideration of Climate Impacts by the Public Utilities Commission and To Incorporate Equity Considerations in Decision Making by State Agencies, [https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/display\\_ps.asp?PID=1456&snum=130&paper=&paperId=l&ld=1682](https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/display_ps.asp?PID=1456&snum=130&paper=&paperId=l&ld=1682)

<sup>2</sup> Title 35-A, §101 and §103-A, <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/35-A/title35-Asec103-A.html>