



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

From: Patricia Rubert-Nason, Sierra Club Maine

Date: April 20, 2021

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 1094

Chairman Breen, Chairman Pierce and Members of the Joint Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. My name is Patricia Rubert-Nason and I write on behalf of Sierra Club and the over 20,000 members and supporters in Maine. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nation-wide as we defend everyone's right to a healthy world. We urge you to vote "ought-to-pass" on LD 1094.

Climate change is a very real threat to Maine. One of the things that makes Maine's environment special is that we are at the boundary between northern and southern ecosystems. This special place increases the ecological richness of the Maine landscape, but also makes us vulnerable. Many species reach the northern or southern edge of their range in Maine. Significantly, when it comes to the discussion of climate change, many of our most iconic species, including moose, lobster and some trout, are near the southern edge of their range and are likely to disappear from Maine with continued warming.

Consistent with the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Maine has committed in statute to a 45% reduction in emissions by 2030 and 80% by 2050.¹ To reach these goals we need to rapidly decarbonize every sector of our economy, including buildings. According to the 8th biennial greenhouse gas report, in 2017 19% of greenhouse gas emissions came from the combustion of fossil fuels in the residential sector.²

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<https://www.ncsl.org/research/energy/greenhouse-gas-emissions-reduction-targets-and-market-based-policies.aspx>

² <https://www.maine.gov/dep/news/news.html?id=1988154>

Investment in weatherization for low income households also helps increase equity. According to the Maine Low Income Energy Burden Study,³ the average low income household in Maine spends 19% of their household income on energy. Low income households are often caught in a double bind with respect to energy. They are simultaneously less able to afford high energy prices and less able to make the capital investments to improve the efficiency of their homes. Efficiency Maine's low income initiatives help close the gap and make sure that low income households with limited access to capital or credit do not get left behind.

Efficiency Maine is a cost effective way to help these low income households. Their low income initiatives (particularly for electricity and natural gas) yield lifetime cost savings 3-4 times greater than their cost with payback periods of just a handful of years (on average).⁴

However, Efficiency Maine needs more resources to meet the need for their low-income programs. There are at least 175,000 low income households in Maine eligible for Efficiency Maine's services.⁵ While not all of these households will need weatherization, the need is significant. To adequately address those needs, more funds are required, which this bond issue will provide.

Decarbonizing municipal buildings and schools is also important. Like low income families, many communities are limited in what they can do by their budgets. By increasing the efficiency of municipal buildings and schools there is more money left over to spend on important goals like education, providing services to residents or even reducing property taxes.

As a Sierra Club volunteer, I urge you to pass LD 1094 and support energy efficiency for low income families, municipalities and schools.

Respectfully,

Patricia Rubert-Nason
Legislative Team Volunteer

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<https://www.maine.gov/meopa/sites/maine.gov.meopa/files/inline-files/Maine%20Low%20Income%20Energy%20Burden%20Study%20June%202019.pdf>

⁴ Annual Reports for Efficiency Maine for Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020
<https://www.energymaine.com/about/library/reports/>

⁵ https://www.energymaine.com/docs/FY20-Annual-Report_final_11.18.2020.pdf