



Natural Resources Council of Maine

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Testimony in Support of LD 210, An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027

To the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology

**by Jack Shapiro, Climate and Clean Energy Program Director
February 27, 2025**

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. My name is Jack Shapiro, and I am the Climate and Clean Energy Director at 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 favor of LD 210, in particular, NRCM supports the provisions in the budget related to the Governor's Energy Office (GEO), and the proposed Department of Energy Resources (DOER).

The Governor's Energy Office oversees Maine's energy system, integral to daily life for all of Maine's households and businesses. Our energy system, like energy systems worldwide, is in the midst of a once-a-century transformation as we move from a system based on centralized and often polluting sources of energy to a dynamic, flexible, clean, innovative, and participatory one. It's a change on par with the shift in computing from mainframe terminals to cloud computing and mobile technology. Managing these changes on behalf of the people of Maine is a hefty responsibility, and establishing a cabinet-level energy department as this budget supports is commensurate with those duties and aligns our structure with other states. This change would also help with staff retention and continuity of expertise, as well as laying the groundwork for a more consistent and steady approach to these issues over time and across administrations.

Funding for the Clean Energy Partnership and Maine's Offshore Wind Research Consortium also represent critical investments in Maine's future.

The Clean Energy Partnership builds public-private partnerships between State agencies, educational and training institutions, and industry to equip workers with relevant skills and

advance innovative clean technologies that benefit Maine. It is well documented that a thriving clean energy sector isn't just essential to reduce climate risks, improve health, and protect our environment, it's also an economic bright spot in our state, providing new opportunities for good-paying jobs and careers, and growing more than three times faster than the economy as a whole. More than 15,000 Mainers work in clean energy built right here in Maine, where skilled labor is part of meeting Maine's workforce needs and bolstering local communities.

Offshore wind is a generational opportunity, building on centuries of maritime heritage, and we have taken significant steps toward developing this new clean industry for Maine. Commercial-scale floating offshore wind projects are still many years away, giving us the opportunity to invest in critical research priorities to better understand the interactions between future offshore wind development, the environment, the economy, and communities along Maine's coast. The Offshore Wind Research Consortium, whose work incorporates expertise and input from fisheries representatives, wildlife and environmental experts, tribal representatives, and scientists among others, directs research to key priorities including the socioeconomics of Maine fishing communities and seafloor mapping, and to future priorities like wildlife monitoring and risk assessments. These project priorities come from stakeholders and will inform the responsible development of offshore wind not just in the Gulf of Maine, but around the world.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you have.