



MUUSAN

**Maine Unitarian Universalist
State Advocacy Network**

Testimony before the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology regarding LD 1659: An Act to Create the Maine Clean Energy and Sustainability Accelerator

May 12, 2021

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of LD 1659.

My name is David Bilski, and I am a resident of New Harbor in Lincoln County. I submit this testimony on behalf of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN). I am proud to add the voice of Maine's 25 Unitarian Universalist congregations in support of this legislation, which would speed the development of clean energy and sustainability projects and infrastructure by providing financing support in the form of loans, loan guarantees, and other financial and risk mitigation products.

At the heart of our faith is the acknowledgement of and respect for the deep interconnectedness of all beings and the planet that sustains and nourishes them. We are at a point in time when the notion of a climate change "tipping point" appears often in our national conversation. And with depressing regularity, updates from researchers in the field indicate that changes in our environment are happening faster than the models have predicted. If we are to manifest any real and consequential respect for this web of interdependence, we need to act now, and with haste. This piece of legislation acknowledges this situation and responds in a meaningful and appropriate manner. Our state's Climate Action Plan calls for a major transition to renewable energy and climate resilience. This requires capital, but due to a variety of market barriers, traditional models of financing may not be adequately responsive to our current needs. The creation of a clean energy and sustainability accelerator – a successful model already adopted by a number of U.S. states and nations around the globe – will be an important step toward reaching these goals. It will mitigate risk for private lenders, provide access to capital under favorable terms for borrowers, and will be well-positioned to quickly respond to newly available federal funds from the National Climate Bank Act. Reducing market barriers and swiftly driving significant amounts of private capital into clean energy and resilience projects will make a real difference in Mainers' lives in terms of job creation, energy efficiency, and community resilience. It will most definitely help to put our state on a path that demonstrates greater respect for our planet and all the beings that share in its bounty.

Additional support for this bill arises from our principle of “justice, equity and compassion in human relations.” It is obvious to each of us that there is a significant wealth disparity in our country and in our state. And it is equally obvious that, when it comes to financing energy and resilience projects, low-income households and vulnerable communities which disproportionately bear the cost of fossil fuels and the impacts of climate change, are more than likely to end up being left behind. A clean energy and sustainability accelerator will be considered successful if it not only speeds the transition to renewable energy and climate resilience, but also makes it possible for these same low-income households and vulnerable communities to benefit equally. This legislation was crafted with this in mind, focusing a minimum of 40% of capital investment to address the needs of vulnerable communities across Maine. We believe that wide support can be built for this -- or any -- legislation that rests on a foundation of justice, equity, and compassion. A Clean Energy and Sustainability Accelerator is an innovative and important tool that can assist us in achieving this goal. We urge you to support it. Thank you very much.

Respectfully submitted,

David Bilski,
Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN)