



Testimony of the Environmental Priorities Coalition
Before the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee
Supporting LD 1711

An Act To Promote Solar Energy Projects and Distributed Generation Resources in Maine
May 16, 2019

Good afternoon Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee. My name is Beth Ahearn and I offer testimony on behalf of the Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC).

The EPC is a partnership of thirty-four conservation, environmental, and public health organizations who unify around a common agenda every year. The EPC represents over 100,000 members in Maine who stand together for clean water, energy independence, land and wildlife conservation, and healthy local food, and work to protect the good health, good jobs, and quality of life that our environment provides. This year the EPC is laser focused on climate change and clean energy legislation. LD 1711 removes barriers that have stymied solar development and creates a fair and effective policy for non-grid scale solar. The Renewable Portfolio Standard bill deals with grid scale solar.

Maine currently has the distinction of being in last place in New England in solar production, solar investment and the creation of solar jobs. It is time to change that standing; a transition to a clean energy economy is long overdue. Our health, our fisheries, our broader economy and our future depend upon it. We have abundant sunshine that gives us the opportunity to create our own solar power and keep energy dollars in Maine.

Most of the ideas in this bill are not new; they were developed through an extensive stakeholder process including the Public Advocate, utilities, solar installers, legislators and clean energy advocates. Similar legislation was passed by several legislatures, was vetoed and failed to pass a veto override by a few votes each time.

LD 1711 is crafted to use competitive markets to capture low-cost solar. It would create 125 megawatts of commercial or institutional solar power and 250 megawatts of larger scale or municipal solar power through a competitive procurement process.

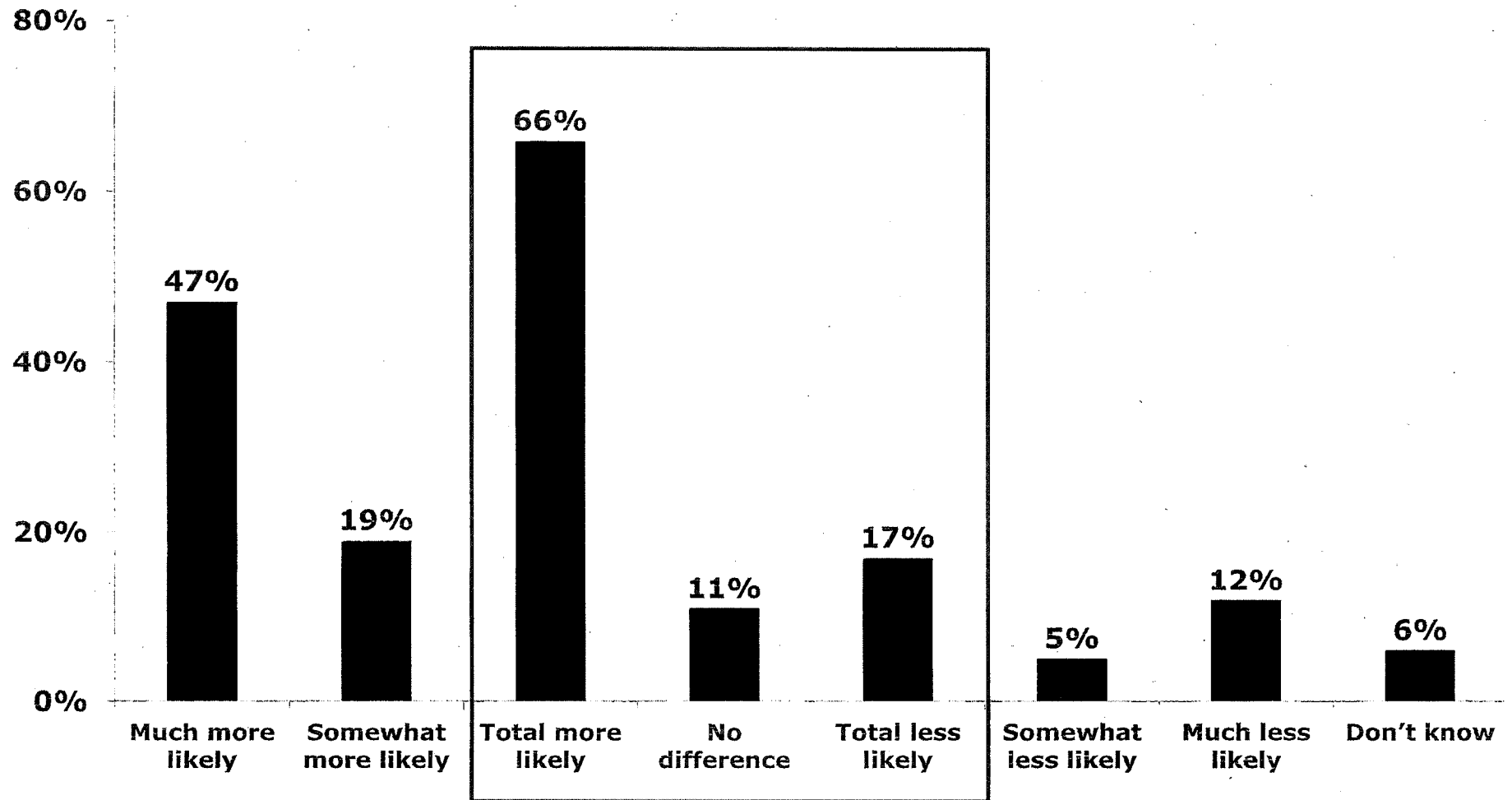
This legislation lifts the arbitrary community solar cap from the current limit of 9 to allow up to 200 participants under net metering, with no limit on participants for community solar farms under a competitive contracting process. It also increases access to community solar, by instating specific targets and policies to assist low- and moderate-income families. 10% of large scale procurement must go to low or moderate income families and at least 5% of largely municipal projects must do the same.

Mainers want clean energy policy. Maine Conservation Voters, where I am the director of government affairs, recently conducted polled 500 Mainers about their thoughts about climate change and clean energy. We asked “Would you support or oppose transitioning to 100% clean energy in Maine by the year 2050, if not before?” 69% of people polled supported this transition. We also asked “Are you more or less likely to support a candidate for the Maine Legislature who supports growing Maine’s clean energy economy and addressing climate change?” 66% of the respondents answered that they were more likely to support such a candidate. You are all invited to a poll briefing by the pollster, with lunch, on Tuesday, May 21st at noon in Room 121 of the State House.

Enacting LD 1711 will help Maine people, businesses, and communities lower energy costs by increasing solar power and creating good-quality new jobs. The Environmental Priorities Coalition urges your unanimous support.

Attitudes on Candidate Who Supports Clean Energy and Addresses Climate Change

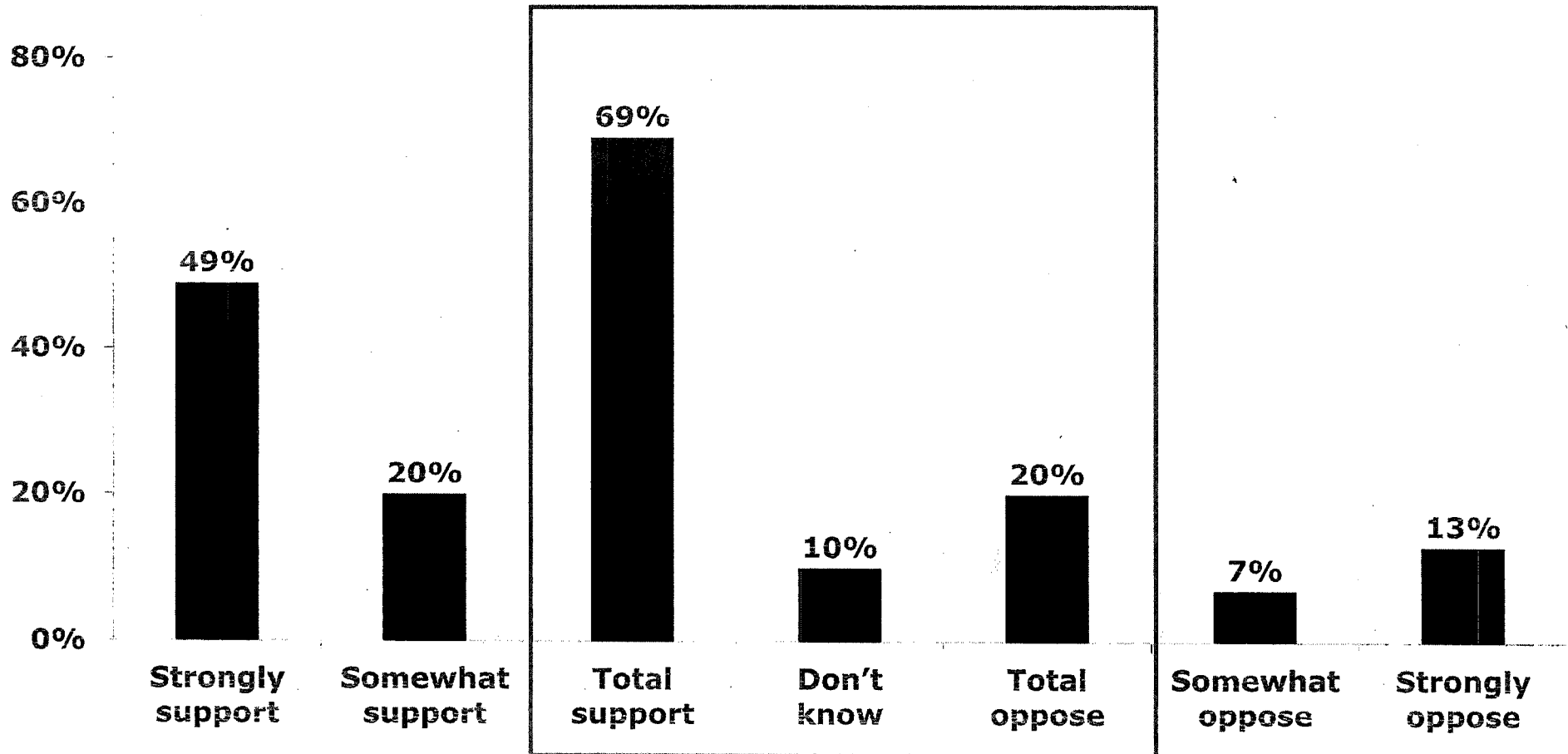
"Are you more likely or less likely to support a candidate for the Maine State Legislature who supports growing Maine's clean energy economy and addressing climate change?" (Q10)



Strong support for a candidate who supports growing Maine's clean energy economy and addressing climate change.

Support for Transition to Clean Energy

"Maine currently gets 40% of the state's energy from renewable sources without dependence on fossil fuels. Would you support or oppose transitioning to 100% clean energy in Maine by the year 2050, if not before?" (Q7)



Solid majority support transitioning to 100% clean energy by 2050.



**Environmental
Priorities
Coalition**

Maine's Environmental Priorities Coalition

is a partnership of 31 environmental, conservation and public health organizations representing over 100,000 members who want to protect the good health, good jobs and quality of life that our environment provides.

We are counting on Maine policymakers to take the important steps needed to make wise use of Maine's extraordinary environment so Maine people and Maine communities can thrive.

Acadia Center	Maine People's Alliance
Appalachian Mountain Club	Maine Public Health Association
Atlantic Salmon Federation	Maine Rivers
Bicycle Coalition of Maine	Maine Wilderness Guides Organization
Conservation Law Foundation	Midcoast Conservancy
Environmental Health Strategy Center	Natural Resources Council of Maine
Environment Maine	Physicians for Social Responsibility, Maine Chapter
Friends of Casco Bay	RESTORE: The North Woods
Islesboro Island Trust	Sierra Club, Maine Chapter
Maine Association of Conservation Commissions	Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative
Maine Audubon	The Ocean Conservancy
Maine Center for Economic Policy	The Trust for Public Land
Maine Conservation Alliance	The Wilderness Society
Maine Council of Churches	Toxics Action Center
Maine Council of Trout Unlimited	Upstream
Maine Interfaith Power & Light	350 Maine
Maine Lakes Society	
Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association	