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**In Support of LD 1711: An Act to Promote Solar Energy Projects and Distributed Generation Resources in Maine**

May 16, 2019

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology,

My name is Anne D. Burt, former Environmental Justice Program director, now serving as Environmental Justice volunteer for the Maine Council of Churches (MCC). I am testifying today on behalf of the Maine Council of Churches' Board of Directors, who strongly supports LD 1711. The legislation would significantly increase access to solar power for residential, business, and municipal consumers. **The Council is especially supportive of the legislation's requirement that 10% of each large-scale community solar farm serves low- and moderate-income households through cooperative arrangements with organizations that serve those households. This is a new and important component of solar legislation.**

Over the years growing numbers of congregations across Maine have been standing up to the moral challenge of accelerating climate change and its ravages on our environment and those most vulnerable to its impacts — the poor, children, the elderly, the sick, and other living beings. Despite few incentives, these congregations have adopted solar power as a clean and renewable technology to operate their facilities along with other measures to reduce energy consumption and their greenhouse gas emissions.

Some congregations have even turned suitable land over to households wishing to establish a solar farm. My own Friends (Quaker) Meeting in Damariscotta leases a small piece of our land to a solar farm that serves nine households in the Central Maine Power service area. The Council can imagine, with this legislation's provision to lift the limit of meters allowed on a solar farm from the current nine to 200 and to require 10% low- and moderate-income household participation in these farms, that other congregations may step forward with land and/or underwriting that would help their financially strapped neighbors access the economic benefits of solar power. Developing cooperative ways to transition our communities towards a renewable energy future is critical as we face the climate emergency that is upon us.

The Maine Council of Churches represents seven Protestant denominations. Among us we have 437 congregations with 55,000 members. Bringing forward their concerns for social and environmental justice to the legislature, for several years the Maine Council of Churches has supported public policy that promotes solar power and expands its accessibility to low-income families. We do so again today as we urge you to vote **OUGHT TO PASS on LD 1711.**

Thank you for your serious consideration of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne D. Burt  
For the Maine Council of Churches