



State of Maine
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Janet T. Mills
GOVERNOR

William S. Harwood
PUBLIC ADVOCATE

January 30, 2023

Harry A. Lanphear
Administrative Director
Maine Public Utilities Commission
State House Station #18
Augusta, ME 04333-0018

RE: Public Utilities Commission
Request for Proposals for Renewable Energy Generation and Transmission Projects
Pursuant to the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program
Docket No. 2021-00369

Dear Mr. Lanphear,

I am writing to follow up recent announcements regarding procurement of renewable energy from Northern Maine.

The Office of Public Advocate is charged with ensuring our statutory policies and regulatory proceedings provide for affordable, high quality utility services. OPA has consistently advocated for the need to aggressively and cost effectively make a clean energy transition to help mitigate the harmful effects on Maine residents due to price swings caused by our overreliance on fossil fuels. We believe one way to accomplish that goal is through competitive bidding in order to bring more grid-scale renewables online. That is why we were encouraged to see the Maine Legislature pass LD 1710, "An Act To Require Prompt and Effective Use of the Renewable Energy Resources of Northern Maine."

Importantly, this law did not mandate that our Maine Public Utilities Commission approve any project or line at any cost - rather, it introduced a competitive bid process that encouraged the most cost-effective generation projects, while also seeking bids for responsibly sited transmission lines using existing rights of way as much as possible.


As the PUC noted in its November 1, 2022 Order, the winning generation and

transmission bids best meet the relevant statutory criteria regarding cost and allowing the state to move toward meeting its renewable goals while maximizing economic benefits to the state. But even after the PUC's decision, one additional hurdle remained: the statutory directive to seek additional partners who may wish to purchase some of the output of these facilities. On December 30, 2022, pursuant to its statutory authority, the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources issued its favorable decision that their participation in Maine's procurement would indeed qualify for its beneficial determination. This is no small feat and would be the first time Maine has ever directly partnered with another state in New England for clean energy development.

The Commonwealth's participation is a major milestone for Maine to be able to import the benefits of our clean energy transition, while also exporting some of the associated costs. Notably, Massachusetts' participation in helping to fund these projects expires on February 28, 2023 should the Maine PUC not finalize contracts for Maine's participation in these projects.

Please let me know if there is anything OPA can do to help meet this deadline. We are hopeful the Commission can move toward finalizing these winning bids and turning them into long-term contracts so that Maine ratepayers can benefit from them for years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William S. Harwood".

William S. Harwood
Public Advocate