

January 22, 2024

Distinguished members of the EUT Committee,

I am the Maine Program Director for Acadia Center, which has offices in Rockport, Maine and in several New England states as well, and I write in support of L.D. 2077. Acadia Center advocates at every level of state and federal government for policies, laws and practices that will meet the ambitious climate goals of Maine's Climate Action Plan and Maine's even more ambitious Maine Won't Wait four-year carbon reduction plan. Natural gas is a fossil fuel that has served its function but will not in the future be compatible with Maine's climate goals or with public health. Mainers who are gas customers should not be expected to pay for the gas utilities expansion and a business-as-usual approach.

So called "natural" gas is mostly comprised of methane, a known super-polluter that has more than 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide. Moreover, extracting natural gas by fracking is also environmentally harmful in several ways. Gas utilities want to continue their business model to maximize the return on investment to its corporate parents and their shareholders. Under the law they will seek to expand their business model at ratepayers' expense.

L.D. 2077 will help redeploy gas infrastructure where it can help, into geothermal heat districts, and it will protect Maine gas customers by prohibiting expansion of gas services into municipalities outside current gas utility service areas. It will also prohibit utility costs recovery from ratepayers for new gas service at the expense of ratepayers. Finally, it will direct the State to investigate thermal heat districts, investigate the costs to gas customers of gas system expansion, and to investigate the impacts of health and indoor air quality of fossil fuel combustion.

Sincerely,

/s/

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