

Testimony to House Committee/ Science Technology & Energy

In Support of HB 1544, by Rep. Peter Somssich , District 27, Portsmouth

Thank you, Chairman Barry and committee members, for giving me the opportunity to introduce HB 1544. This bill is designed to be a planning tool. It is not the plan to reach a 100% renewable energy goal for electricity by 2040. Instead it seeks to establish a committee to inventory our state's renewable energy assets, investigate how they could be maximized, and provides a strategic exercise by using a target date of 2040 to evaluate how NH could reach that goal, if we faced such a deadline.

As the Science Technology & Energy committee of the House, I believe it is our obligation to NH voters that we use are insights gained through our committee work to attempt to outline a vision for NH's energy future. Of course, as Yogi Berra once said: "It is difficult to make predictions, especially about the future". However, our committee is in a unique position to observe the various elements that make up NH's current energy landscape. Of course, the Office of Strategic Initiatives' "10 Year State Energy Strategy" plan that we recently discussed is an important document for such an effort. And, of course, the Governor will likewise have his own ideas. However, I am convinced that the committee envisioned by HB 1544 could provide a valuable contribution to all of these efforts.

On the one hand, when it comes to renewable energy in NH, our shortfalls may be an asset. Many other states have already, or are about to, finalize with legislation, 100% renewable energy goals. Hawaii already has such a goal for 2050, while California, New York, Massachusetts and Vermont are very close to finalizing such goals. Although, we are currently not at that stage of consensus in NH, we should watch and learn lessons from these other states. However, we should not take too long to contemplate our own actions, otherwise neighboring states will implement goals and policies which will inevitably affect NH. For example, young workers and innovative companies may well choose those states instead of NH as their home. Unlike many other states, after the sale of all generation units by Eversource, our state is no longer burdened by antiquated fossil fuel plants and their infrastructure. This gives us an opportunity to focus intensively on our own NH energy assets

On the other hand, NH has a wealth of in-state opportunities to further develop renewable energy resources, eliminate rules and barriers that prevent increasing these energy resources, as well as fully harvesting all of the low-hanging fruit of energy efficiency that has still gone unpicked in our state.

The committee would research and document areas such as: A) All of NH's in-state renewable energy (RE) assets, e.g. solar, biomass, hydro, wind energy (both on land and in the Gulf of Maine), biofuels and efficiency measures, B) identify how much more energy could be produced, if current rules and/or restrictions were changed, C) look at the projected price declines for RE and the new emerging technologies, e.g. grid-level and residential battery storage and decentralized microgrids using blockchain applications, D) bring our NH utilities together to discuss how their business model might evolve to meet a 2040 goal of 100% renewable energy for electricity, and E) determine how much RE might still need to be imported to meet a 2040 goal, and where would it come from.

Our state has many of the elements needed for a viable plan: A) we currently import roughly \$2 billion dollars each year of fossil fuel products, that could be replaced by in-state RE resources while creating new jobs, B) a viable biomass and small hydro industry, C) a strong solar and growing wind industry, D) a huge potential for Gulf of Maine off-shore wind energy, E) municipalities interested in community energy projects and efficiency upgrades and F) still largely untapped energy efficiency measures, including e.g. between 10,000 to 30,000

low-income residents waiting for energy audits, with state and federal funding only enough for 1000 each year.

This bill is not a plan to reach that 2040 goal, but a planning tool and a roadmap we could use in the future. As the saying goes: "Every journey begins with the first step." This could be NH's first step, assuming we want to compete with other New England states, and do not decide to retreat from challenging goals.

Thank you for allowing me to address you today.