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S.P. 361

In Senate, March 22, 2021

An Act To Support the Continued Access to Solar Energy and Battery Storage by Maine Homes and Businesses

Received by the Secretary of the Senate on March 18, 2021. Referred to the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology pursuant to Joint Rule 308.2 and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D M Grant", is positioned above the printed name of the Secretary of the Senate.

DAREK M. GRANT
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator WOODSOME of York.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 35-A MRSA §3474, sub-§3 is enacted to read:

3. Interconnection rules. The commission shall adopt rules related to the interconnection of renewable capacity resources, as defined in section 3210-C, subsection 1, paragraph E, using solar power to investor-owned transmission and distribution utilities, as defined in section 3201, subsection 11-A, in a manner that supports the goals in this section and ensures:

A. The State's interconnection rules reflect nationally recognized best practices:

B. Customers affected by deficiencies in the rules are able to access timely resolution processes that do not place an undue burden on the customer; and

C. Investments in investor-owned transmission and distribution utility distribution upgrades related to load are coordinated with utility infrastructure upgrades required for the interconnection of renewable capacity resources using solar power.

Sec. 2. Solar energy resources interconnection evaluation. The Public Utilities Commission shall contract with an expert to evaluate near-term reforms to the State's standards, practices and procedures related to the interconnection of renewable capacity resources as defined in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 35-A, section 3210-C, subsection 1, paragraph E using solar power to investor-owned transmission and distribution utilities to:

1. Ensure that the costs and requirements for an interconnection study do not unduly limit the ability of residential and nonresidential customers to install on-site solar energy generation and battery storage systems; and

2. Improve the transparency of interconnection screens and upgrades for customer-sited generation.

Within 6 months of the effective date of this Act, the commission shall conduct a proceeding and issue an order relating to the near-term reforms identified in the evaluation conducted under this section. Within one year of the effective date of this Act, the commission shall determine and adopt cost allocation methods for interconnection studies and upgrades that ensure on-site solar energy generators do not bear prohibitive costs for their projects to be studied by investor-owned transmission and distribution utilities and to be interconnected to the State's distribution system.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the Public Utilities Commission to adopt rules related to the interconnection of renewable capacity resources using solar power to investor-owned transmission and distribution utilities in a manner that supports the goals in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 35-A, section 3474. It also directs the commission to contract with an expert to evaluate near-term reforms to the State's interconnection standards, practices and procedures related to renewable capacity resources using solar power.