

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2025

Legislative Document

No. 1619

H.P. 1073

House of Representatives, April 15, 2025

**Resolve, to Establish a Commission to Study Pathways for Creating
a Thermal Energy Networks Program in Maine**

Received by the Clerk of the House on April 11, 2025. Referred to the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology pursuant to Joint Rule 308.2 and ordered printed pursuant to Joint Rule 401.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative RUNTE of York.
Cosponsored by Representative: MCINTYRE of Lowell.

1 **Sec. 1. Commission established. Resolved:** That the Commission to Study
2 Pathways for Creating a Thermal Energy Networks Program in Maine, referred to in this
3 resolve as "the commission," is established.

4 **Sec. 2. Commission membership. Resolved:** That, notwithstanding Joint Rule
5 353, the commission consists of 13 members as follows:

6 1. Two members of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate, including a
7 member from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature;

8 2. Two members of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the
9 House, including a member from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats
10 in the Legislature;

11 3. Three public members, appointed by the President of the Senate, including:

12 A. One member who is a member of a labor organization;

13 B. One member who is a member of an environmental organization; and

14 C. One member who is a member of an organization with the capability and expertise
15 to develop and operate a thermal energy network;

16 4. Three public members, appointed by the Speaker of the House, including:

17 A. One member who is an engineer with expertise in developing thermal energy
18 networks;

19 B. One member who has professional expertise in conducting research regarding the
20 deployment of thermal energy networks; and

21 C. One member with expertise in workforce development and the construction
22 industry;

23 5. One member representing the Office of the Governor;

24 6. One member representing the Public Utilities Commission; and

25 7. One member representing the Office of the Public Advocate.

26 **Sec. 3. Chairs. Resolved:** That the first-named Senate member is the Senate chair
27 and the first-named House of Representatives member is the House chair of the
28 commission.

29 **Sec. 4. Appointments; convening of commission; meetings. Resolved:** That
30 all appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date of this
31 resolve. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative
32 Council once all appointments have been completed. After appointment of all members,
33 the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the commission. If 30 days or more
34 after the effective date of this resolve a majority of but not all appointments have been
35 made, the chairs may request authority and the Legislative Council may grant authority for
36 the commission to meet and conduct its business. The commission is authorized to meet up
37 to 6 times prior to submission of the report required under section 7.

38 **Sec. 5. Duties. Resolved:** That the commission shall:

1 1. Review available research, framework, pilot projects and other information on the
2 total cost, cost savings and efficiencies realized in thermal energy networks across the
3 country;

4 2. Assess the feasibility and applicability of thermal energy networks for residential,
5 commercial and industrial sectors in Maine, including by reviewing:

6 A. Geophysical considerations;

7 B. Compatibility with incumbent air source heat pumps and other heating, ventilating
8 and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems;

9 C. Permitting and right-of-way considerations;

10 D. Constraints around geographic density; and

11 E. Other considerations that demonstrate the total building heating and cooling load
12 potential of thermal energy networks;

13 3. Examine and recommend a process for facilitating and encouraging thermal energy
14 network pilot projects, including ownership structures and cost recovery mechanisms;

15 4. Examine life-cycle costs and benefits, including comparisons to incumbent heating
16 and cooling technologies;

17 5. Examine potential grid impacts, such as smoothing winter and summer peaks and
18 lowering system costs by avoiding or deferring investments in additional electrical
19 generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure;

20 6. Examine the suitability of thermal energy network technology for helping to meet
21 this State's statutory emissions reduction goals;

22 7. Identify and consider the labor and workforce needs associated with developing
23 thermal energy networks in the State, including consideration of job quality, supplying a
24 skilled and ready workforce, licensing, registered apprenticeship and certified
25 preapprenticeship program;

26 8. Investigate and evaluate funding opportunities and cost recovery mechanisms,
27 including, but not limited to:

28 A. Leveraging applicable tax credits available under the federal Inflation Reduction
29 Act of 2022 and other federal assistance;

30 B. Funding from the multistate program, the New England Heat Pump Accelerator;

31 C. The Thermal Energy Investment Program established in the Maine Revised Statutes,
32 Title 35-A, section 10128; and

33 D. Rebates for heat pumps through the Efficiency Maine Trust; and

34 9. Examine the role thermal energy networks can play in increasing the affordability
35 of housing, development and energy.

36 **Sec. 6. Staff assistance. Resolved:** That the Legislative Council shall provide
37 necessary staffing services to the commission, except that Legislative Council staff support
38 is not authorized when the Legislature is in regular or special session.

39 **Sec. 7. Report. Resolved:** That, no later than December 3, 2025, the commission
40 shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested

1 legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. The joint
2 standing committee may report out a bill based upon the report to the Second Regular
3 Session of the 132nd Legislature.

4 **SUMMARY**

5 This resolve establishes the Commission to Study Pathways for Creating a Thermal
6 Energy Networks Program in Maine. The commission is composed of legislators and public
7 members, including, but not limited to, members with experience in engineering, research
8 in the fields of thermal energy network development and workforce development.

9 The resolve requires the commission to study the feasibility of implementing thermal
10 energy networks for residential, commercial and industrial sectors in this State by
11 examining a number of considerations, including, but not limited to, compatibility with
12 existing systems, certain legal considerations, grid impacts, labor and workforce
13 considerations and funding opportunities.

14 The commission must submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Joint
15 Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology by December 3, 2025. The
16 committee may report out legislation related to the report to the Second Regular Session of
17 the 132nd Legislature.