



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy
In support of H.1725/S.1875 An Act relative to local energy investment and infrastructure modernization
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports H.1725/ S.1875 An Act relative to local energy investment and infrastructure modernization.

The League has been at the forefront of environmental and energy issues for most of its 100-year history, educating our members and the public on issues of relevance to the public welfare and our democracy and calling for action to preserve and protect the world we share. This bill calls for modernizing the electric grid – a need that underlies the success of other energy bills heard by the Committee this session and supported by the League.

Times have changed, but our electric grid is built around technologies dating back to Thomas Edison. The grid is falling increasingly behind new technologies and the ability to support and optimize a transition to clean, efficient, reliable and affordable energy¹ for a sustainable existence.

As has been stated at other energy hearings this session, there is no single, simple, silver bullet that can get us where we need to go in terms of the accelerated need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, what is needed is a complex of interrelated policies that work together to transform our current system across all sectors of our economy. While grid modernization is below the radar screen of most of the public, it is the backbone of the electricity delivery system that we all rely on and the piece that ties together efforts to transition away from fossil-fuel-sourced energy to clean, renewable and local energy, and to improve energy efficiency and affordability. This transition requires a robust support system that will be provided by a modernized grid.

We have the mandate of the 2008 Global Warming Solutions Act and the 2016 Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruling in the *Kain v. Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Agency* requiring action. We have the technological know-how to design a more efficient, low-carbon, low-polluting electric grid as detailed in the Acadia Center's 2015 *Utility Vision*² report and its 2017 *EnergyVision 2030* report.³ We also have a growing number of reports indicating the scale of change needed to avert catastrophic climate change, with adoption of clean energy as a primary requirement.⁴

¹ *Transitioning to a Low-Emissions Energy System in the Northeast*, 2017. Acadia Center:
<http://acadiacenter.org/document/energyvision-2030/>.

² *Reforming the Energy System to Work for Consumers and the Environment*, 2015. Acadia Center:
<http://acadiacenter.org/document/utilityvision/>.

³ *Transitioning to a Low-Emissions Energy System in the Northeast*, 2017. Acadia Center:
<http://acadiacenter.org/document/energyvision-2030/>.

⁴ *Clean energy investment needs to triple to halt catastrophic warming*, October 31, 2017. Washington Post:
<http://wapo.st/2yINIRX>

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports H.1725/S.1875 because provisions of the bill provide the next steps needed to transform the antiquated, centralized electric grid now in place to one that will allow us to use rapidly evolving clean energy technology to create a resilient, consumer-centered grid. That grid will be powered by renewable energy with incentives that reward consumers and utilities alike for energy efficiency and clean energy adoption. Below are four key sections described in the letter signed by multiple organizations supporting this legislation and distributed to this Committee:

- 1) Grid Modernization 2.0: Planning for Local Energy Resources
 - Establish a new approach to grid planning that utilizes clean, local energy resources to meet system needs by requiring statewide grid modernization plans, stakeholder participation, and information to accelerate the integration of renewable energy
 - Protections for consumers, including protecting low-income consumers from remote shutoff and special cost recovery mechanisms
- 2) Fair Consideration of Local Energy Resources vs. Utility Infrastructure
 - Before approval of significant expenditures, require comparison of utility infrastructure to lower-cost and environmentally-preferable local energy resources
- 3) Cap Residential Fixed Charges to Preserve Clean Energy Incentives and Protect Low-Income Consumers
 - These types of charges limit consumer control over energy bills, undermine incentives to save and self-generate energy, and disproportionately impact low-income consumers
- 4) Improve Consumer Incentives with Opt-In Time of Use Rates
 - Enable consumers with solar, electric vehicles, or flexible energy demands to benefit from producing energy at times of greatest need or consuming energy when it is cheapest, while improving the overall efficiency of the grid

Changes in the current model have been on hold since the release of three orders from the Department of Public Utilities in 2014. Grid modernization is not “pie in the sky,” and we are not alone in this effort, with more than 30 states embracing grid modernization.⁵ There is a clear pathway for modernizing the grid as described by reports from the Acadia Center,⁶ the Synapse Group,⁷ Conservation Law Foundation,⁸ and the Union of Concerned Scientists.^{9 10} We can move beyond imagining all the benefits of a clean energy future and act to make it a reality. We know how to do this *now*, and we can start the process with passage of H. 1725/S.1875.

Thank you.

⁵ *More than 30 states embrace grid modernization*, Utility Dive. Herman K. Trabish, May 31, 2017: <https://www.utilitydive.com/news/more-than-30-states-embrace-grid-modernization-new-policy-tracker-finds/443702/>.

⁶ EnergyVision 2030, Acadia Center: <http://acadiacenter.org/document/energyvision-2030/>.

⁷ Massachusetts Grid Modernization on behalf of the Conservation Law Foundation, June 2017: <http://www.synapse-energy.com/project/massachusetts-grid-modernization>:

⁸ *What Is Grid Modernization? An Explainer*, Conservation Law Foundation. October 27, 2017. Melissa Birchard: <https://www.clf.org/blog/what-is-grid-modernization/>.

⁹ *It's Time to Upgrade the Electricity Grid*, Union of Concerned Scientists: <http://www.ucsusa.org/clean-energy/increase-renewable-energy/upgrade-the-electricity-grid#.Wfnq8VtSyUk>.

¹⁰ *Note to the Department of Energy: The Grid Has Changed*, Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS). June 2017. Mike Jacobs, Senior Energy Analyst, UCS Climate and Energy Program: <http://blog.ucsusa.org/mike-jacobs/note-to-the-department-of-energy-the-grid-has-changed>.