

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Joshua Schauer 271-3077

HB 1723, requiring utilities and electric grid operators to assess and report the vulnerability of high-voltage transformers to geomagnetic and electromagnetic disturbances, and to recommend mitigation measures to protect the state electric infrastructure.

Hearing Date: March 31, 2026

Time Opened: 9:04 a.m.

Time Closed: 9:15 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Avard, Pearl, Watters and Rosenwald

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator McConkey

Bill Analysis: This bill directs the Department of Energy to investigate vulnerabilities of electric transmission transformers to geomagnetic and electromagnetic disturbances and report findings with recommendations.

Sponsors:

Rep. Mattson

Rep. Cole

Rep. Qualey

Rep. Sabourin dit
Choiniere

Rep. Schneller

Rep. D. Thomas

Rep. Vose

Rep. Ammon

Rep. McGhee

Rep. Mary Murphy

Sen. Innis

Sen. Ricciardi

Who supports the bill: Senator Daniel Innis (SD7), Representative JD Bernardy, Representative Michael Vose, Representative Douglas Thomas, Representative Rita Mattson

Who opposes the bill: Cory Stone

Who is neutral on the bill: Joshua Elliot and Emily Tomasi, (NHDOE), Michael Licata (Eversource)

Summary of testimony presented:

Representative JD Bernardy, Rockingham District 36

- Representative Bernardy spoke on behalf of the prime sponsor, Representative Matson, introducing the legislation and presenting

- He stated the proposal originated from a resolution developed at a conference of the National Conference of State Legislatures.
- The bill directs the New Hampshire Department of Energy to work with utilities to survey high-voltage transformers, identify grid vulnerabilities, and assess risks from solar storms and high-altitude EMP events.
- He noted that although grid security is primarily a federal responsibility, the state can take steps to better understand and mitigate local risks.
- He cited that solar weather events cost utilities over \$10 billion annually, and that improved technology meeting international GIC protection standards which is about 100 volts per kilometer and could reduce costs to roughly \$4 billion.
- He warned that a severe geomagnetic or EMP event could damage or destroy parts of the electrical grid, and that the bill aims to identify weaknesses and help prevent a major catastrophe.

Senator Watters talked about a possible amendment from Eversource wanting to ensure that it is an accessible charge and inquired if the representative was amenable to that change.

Representative Bernardy said he was okay with the amendment.

Senator Rosenwald asked if this language was given to house by Eversource.

Representative Bernardy said that the specific language presented was not, however the concept was discussed and he had no objections.

Michael Licata, Eversource

- Mr. Licata spoke to the amendment and hoped it was just a simple clarifying amendment that makes it clear it is the utility assessment that is paid for by customers, not an assessment on the utilities which will be the source of funding.
- He said to answer Rosenwald's question, they didn't see final language to the house bill until it was too late, so they could not offer any clarifying language then.

Senator Rosenwald was curious about why the ratepayer should pay instead of the utilities.

Mr. Licata explained that it's a DOE investigation. It's the state essentially telling the utility what to do, so the state run investigation should not be assessed on utility.

Joshua Elliot and Emily Tomasi, NH Department of Energy

- Ms. Tomasi stated that the Department is neutral on the bill.
- She explained that, based on testimony heard thus far, it is clear what the Department needs to investigate and include in its report. The Department would engage a consultant through a competitive bidding process, with a cost

cap of \$350,000. She noted that a consultant is necessary to provide the level of expertise required for the report.

- Regarding page 2, line 34, which states that the Department has 90 days to commence the work, she expressed concern that this timeframe is insufficient and asked whether the committee would consider extending it to 120 days.
- Regarding page 3, line 8, she noted that the word “specifically” should be revised to “specially.”

Senator Watters said they have a draft amendment and asked whether he was comfortable with the recommended changes, which are intended to verify that the cost is accessible.

Mr. Elliot said that the “specifically” and “specially” language has been addressed. However, there is still an issue due to inconsistency in how the legislature has defined the department’s authority to conduct special assessments. He suggested using the Eversource amendment, without referring to statute directly, and stating that the department is authorized to conduct a special assessment.

JS
Date Hearing Report completed: April 2, 2026