

# Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

*Joshua Schauer 271-3077*

**SB 599-FN**, relative to the renewable energy fund.

**Hearing Date:** January 8, 2026

**Time Opened:** 3:08 p.m.

**Time Closed:** 3:19 p.m.

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

**Members of the Committee Absent :** Senator Pearl

**Bill Analysis:** This bill requires that remaining moneys from certain electricity provider payments made to the renewable energy fund shall first be used by the department of energy for administrative costs up to \$1,000,000, with the remainder to be used to support thermal and electrical renewable energy initiatives. The bill also prohibits any remaining moneys from being used to support individual residential solar initiatives.

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**Sponsors:**

Sen. Pearl

Sen. Lang

Sen. Innis

Sen. Watters

Rep. Mooney

Rep. Erf

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**Who supports the bill:** Senator Daniel Innis (SD-7), Senator Howard Pearl (SD-17)

**Who opposes the bill:** Susan Richman

**Who is neutral on the bill:** Megan Stone, NH Department of Energy

**Summary of testimony presented:**

**Senator David Watters, District 4**

Sen. Watters introduced the bill on behalf of the prime sponsor, Senator Pearl.

- He said that the purpose of the bill is to preserve funding for administrative tasks within the Energy fund that was in HB 2 from the last session.
- He explained that the House eliminated these funds during the budget deliberations, however Senator Pearl thought it was necessary to sustain some funding for these programs. He also pointed out that there was subsequent legislation that stripped the funding as well.

- Senator Pearl wanted to ensure continued funding for necessary “small” administrative tasks. The legislation ensures there is not a lapse in funding that could happen if this bill does not pass. He said that there is approximately \$4 million at risk of lapsing.

**Sen. Rosenwald** referenced testimony given in December to the Finance and Energy committees from Representative Weyler and raised a concern about the Governor’s \$16 million allocation to the general funds, noting that all but \$967,000 was swept from that fund. She asked why the Department of Energy needs a million dollars to administer a fund that has less than that amount in grants.

**Senator Watters** said the original intent was to provide \$1 million to support thermal electrical renewable energy initiatives and not residential solar. He acknowledged that the finance committee cut a lot of the funding but emphasized importance for investors and the Renewable Energy Fund (REF) to be able to approve some small projects in the area of thermal electrical renewable energy. He said the goal is to maintain the ability to fund new small renewable projects each year and without administrative funding, the fund would not be viable for new projects.

**Senator Rosenwald** followed-up and expressed some confusion about allowing DOE to use the entire amount for administrative costs instead of new projects.

**Senator Watters** pointed to lines 14 and 15 that states “after funding the administrative costs up to \$1 million annually” clarifying that the funding goes to projects after administrative costs are covered.

**Senator Rosenwald** said she was concerned that there is not enough money to support both administration and project costs with the amount of money allocated for that fund.

**Senator Watters** said he believed more money would be coming in because of the program.

#### **Megan Stone, Legislative Liaison for Department of Energy**

- Started by addressing Senator Rosenwald concern about funding stating that in July, the department receives the alternative compliance revenue into the renewable energy fund which is approximately \$8 million dollars. The language in the bill allows the administrative costs to be covered and then up to \$1 million dollars for programs.

**Senator Rosenwald** asked, based on the information Megan gave, if that effectively leaves \$2 million in the fund. \$1 million solely for administrative costs, and the other million for projects. She also pointed out that it seems very “top-heavy” administratively.

**Ms. Stone** directed the question to Chris Ellms.

#### **Chris Ellms, Deputy Commissioner of Department of Energy**

- Deputy commissioner Ellms explained that the funding does not only support renewable energy staff but also supports multiple staff across all REF-related projects. It covers broader program support, not a single project. However he did point out that she was correct in her cost analysis.

**Senator Avard** asked what would happen if they lose the funding.

**Mr. Ellms** responded that projects would lose funding and staff would need to be reduced or eliminated.

**Senator Rosenwald** referred to line 24 of the bill, which applies to funds collected on or after July 1, 2025 and asked whether funds have been collected between then and now.

Mr. Ellms said that he did not have a specific number but in the HB2 budget, approximately \$20 million was available previously in the surplus statement pre-July 1st. Allocating \$5 million dollars for the next fiscal year.

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Date Hearing Report completed: January 15, 2026