

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

Amend the bill by striking out the title and substituting the following:

**'An Act To Authorize the Public Advocate To Mediate  
Disputes Related to Rates for Sewer Service'**

Amend the bill by striking out everything after the enacting clause and before the summary and inserting the following:

'**Sec. 1. 35-A MRSA §1714** is enacted to read:

**§ 1714. Sewer rate mediation services**

Notwithstanding section 1710, the Public Advocate may provide mediation services for disputes regarding rate changes between a sewer district as defined in Title 38, section 1251 and its customers. The Public Advocate may charge reasonable fees for these services. Any fee must be charged evenly between a sewer district and its customers participating in a mediation.

**Sec. 2. 38 MRSA §1252, sub-§1**, as enacted by PL 1981, c. 466, §13, is amended to read:

**1. Adoption of new rates.** Prior to the adoption of a new rate schedule, the trustees shall hold a public hearing regarding the proposed rate schedule. The trustees shall publish the proposed rates and notice of the hearing not less than once in a newspaper having a general circulation in the district not less than 7 days prior to the hearing. The district shall mail to each ratepayer a notice of the public hearing and the proposed new rate at least 14 days prior to the hearing. The notice must include a statement describing the amount of the rate change, the percentage change for each customer class and the customer's right to request information relating to the present and proposed rates. The sewer district shall maintain adequate records to provide justification for the proposed rate and any rate set by the sewer district.

**Sec. 3. 38 MRSA §1259** is enacted to read:

**§ 1259. Mediation services**

If, within 30 days of the public hearing for a rate change under section 1252, subsection 1, 15% of the customers of a sewer district or 1,000 customers, whichever is less, file with the treasurer of the district and with the Public Advocate a petition requesting mediation services regarding the proposed rate, the sewer district and the customers, upon agreement of both parties, may request mediation services from the Public Advocate under Title 35-A, section 1714.'

**SUMMARY**

This amendment replaces the bill. It authorizes the Public Advocate to mediate between a sewer district and its customers with respect to a proposed rate change if 15% of the customers or 1,000 customers, whichever is less, petition the Public Advocate to mediate.