



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

From: Marianne Hill, Ph.D., Sierra Club Maine

Date: March 15, 2023

Re: **Testimony Against LD 421: An Act to Ensure Utility Acquisitions Benefit Maine People - concept draft**

Senate Chair Mark Lawrence, Representative Chair S. Paige Zeigler, and members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee, I am testifying on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nation-wide as we work towards combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable economy. To that end, we oppose LD 421 and urge an "ought not to pass" report on LD 421.

The intent of this bill is not to protect the best interests of the people of Maine, but to place obstacles in the path of the establishment of a consumer-owned utility in the state in place of CMP and Versant.

A consumer-owned utility, like the proposed Pine Tree Power, is much needed if Maine is to achieve its energy goals. Twenty years ago, a bill stating that "the purchase of a utility company serving over 100,000 entities in Maine by a private company chartered outside of the US should be scrutinized by the legislature" would have made sense. But, as proposed in the concept draft (the only language available as of 3 pm on March 15th), this bill would obstruct - not respect - the democratic process that is currently underway.

The bill does not specify the kind of entity doing the purchasing of a utility. Surely, an entity that has been subject to study, lengthy public debate, a voter referendum, and in addition would be established by the state of Maine has been through process enough. In addition, as written, the bill has the potential to pit the PUC against the will of the people and the state legislature. We support a consumer-owned utility and oppose leaving the fox in the henhouse, with a foreign entity benefiting at the expense of Maine people. We ask that the democratic process that is currently underway be respected.

We urge you to oppose LD 421 and report "ought not to pass". Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Marianne Hill, Ph.D.
Sierra Club Maine