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Maine Community Action Partnership Supports LD 2132, An Act to Clarify the Right to Appeal Certain Public Utilities Commission Decisions

January 25, 2024

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, members of the Committee On Energy, Utilities and Technology, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of the Maine Community Action Partnership, the membership association of the ten community action agencies in Maine and we support LD 2132, An Act to Clarify the Right to Appeal Certain Public Utilities Commission Decisions.

Our state's greatest resource is our people, and our state's policies shape people's possibilities. In Community Action, we create conditions that invite children to learn and adults to apply their skills, tapping into the vast potential in individuals, families and our communities.

Unfortunately, some of those families find themselves falling behind in their bills due to low wage jobs, high costs of food, housing, and energy. We have programs to help those households, including the Home Energy Assistance Program, or HEAP, we are a gateway to the Arrearage Management Programs (AMP) and the Low Income Energy Program (LIAP), and the short-lived Water and Homeowner Assistance Programs, but even with those supports people fall behind.

The result, as you know, is that utilities shut off a household's access to necessary power, water or gas when they need it the most.

This bill follows a recent ruling that would allow consumers to please their case in court, which does not mean they will not have to pay for their utilities but means there may be extenuating circumstances that will present the utilities with an alternative to simply shutting of the supply of what any and every household needs to support physical, mental and economic health.

On behalf of the thousands of families we help each year, please support LD 2132 to give our neighbors the opportunity to plead their cases.

Thank you for your time and attention today, I am happy to answer any questions that I can.

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