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March 7, 2025

Honorable Anne Carney, Senate Chair
Honorable Amy Kuhn, House Chair
Joint Legislative Committee on Judiciary
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: ***Letter of Support of LD 251 An Act to Protect the Confidentiality of Information on Individual Customers of a Public Utility***

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary:

Thank you very much for providing an opportunity for the Maine Water Environment Association (MEWEA) to provide comments with regard to this bill.

About MeWEA. The Maine Water Environment Association is a non-profit, all volunteer association of over 650 members. MEWEA represents a diverse group of water quality professionals throughout Maine including wastewater treatment plant operators, sewer collection system operators, utility system administrators, consulting engineers, suppliers, contractors, public works officials, stormwater system operators, and regulatory officials. The mission of MeWEA is to support and enhance Maine's water environment community through promoting training opportunities; supporting balanced environmental policy and practice; promoting education and collaboration with the public to protect and enhance Maine's water resources.

Discussion. As drafted, LD 251 does not apply to wastewater treatment districts like quasi-municipal sewer districts, sanitary districts, or municipal sewer departments, all of which are local government entities covered by Maine's Freedom of Access Act. However, we understand that, during the public hearing on this bill, there was discussion about broadening the bill to include wastewater districts, which we would support. For the same reasons that consumer-owned water utilities are concerned about how to respond to FOAA requests seeking data and information about our customers, wastewater districts have similar concerns. Moreover, there are a number of combined water and wastewater districts in Maine, and having consistent standards within the same district would make tremendous sense.

With regarding to crafting an amendment to the bill, there are two important factors that need to be considered: (1) there are several different types of wastewater treatment districts, including "sewer districts," "sanitary districts," and "municipal sewer departments;" and (2) such entities are not regulated by the Maine Public Utilities Commission. With these points in mind, we look forward to working with the Committee to develop appropriate language that would include wastewater treatment districts within this bill.

Sincerely,

Theresa L Tucker

Theresa Tucker, President