

March 18, 2025

Testimony on LD 633

An Act Concerning the Restoration of Electricity During Emergencies for Certain Medically Vulnerable Individuals Who Rely on Electronic Medical Apparatuses

From Carlton Wilcox

Resident of Minot, Maine

Dear Chairs

Senator Mark Lawrence

Representative Melanie Sachs

And esteemed members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology thank you for this opportunity to speak on Legislative Document 633.

I'm neither for nor against LD 633. It has some merits and some detriments. I'm 62-years old, born and raised in Maine and lived for all but 10 of my 62 years on the same family farm in what was once rural New Gloucester. Now I live in Minot 5.5 miles from downtown Lewiston-Auburn. Living for 52 years in New Gloucester we would frequently lose power from minutes to 9-days in the 1998 ice storm.

First, if someone has a serious health condition to which they need continuous electrical power, they should have some self-responsibility to try not to live in a rural area where power has low dependability.

For example, a southern Maine friend of mine was thinking of retiring to the Rangeley area.

Unfortunately, he developed a heart condition and decided it was best to continue to reside in New Gloucester within 20 miles of two major hospitals.

It is one thing if there is a young child that needs a continuous power supply who will likely outgrow their health condition, but it is another if it is an elder person with COPD or similar. Maybe they should move closer to a major population center with more dependable power.

I have had aunts and uncles who farmed in the rural Midwest. When they got old, they moved to town where they had neighbors and more support services. Some continued to farm but commuted daily to their rural farms.

Mainers pay a lot for our electricity we don't need CMP and Versant going to great and expensive efforts to return power service to rural areas bypassing more populated areas with greater economic activity because a person here or there has a medical condition that needs continuous power.

A potential solution is to have Efficiency Maine own a fleet of batteries that can be installed in infirmed people's homes, who cannot afford battery backup power systems. Reportedly, Tesla Powerwall battery systems cost about \$12,000 to \$16,000 installed. There are other providers of home battery power systems.

1. Efficiency Maine could place a lien on the property until the battery is returned after the person no longer needs reliable power at that residence.
2. Meanwhile, when the battery is installed, Efficiency Maine, or its subcontractor, could operate it with its fleet of other home installed batteries across the state as a virtual power peaking plant when power rates are high, as is being done by Sunrun in Massachusetts. That would provide a source of income to offset the battery expense.

That way CMP and Versant are not restoring service to far distant rural areas to serve a few people at the expense of more populated areas when wide scale power outages occur.

Sincerely,

Carlton Wilcox