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Testimony in Support: LD 860, An Act to Require Competitive Electricity Providers to Provide Certain Information to the Public Advocate

Greetings Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. My name is Alf Anderson, and I am an Associate State Director for Advocacy and Outreach for AARP Maine. AARP is a non-profit, non-partisan social mission organization with more than 200,000 members across the state. We work on a range of energy issues at the state level. The core principles we approach this work with include affordability, reliability, and accountability.

I'm here today to testify in support of LD 860 with some suggested language that we think could improve the intent of the bill.

The purpose of this bill is to ensure that the Public Advocate has access to the required reporting requirements imposed on the Competitive Electricity Providers by the Commission. Those reporting requirements are set forth in the Commission's Rule, Chapter 305. Under this Rule, CEPs must file an annual report that includes some information on their terms of service and prices charged to their customers. Pursuant to this bill, the Public Advocate would have access to this information in order to allow their office to monitor the impact of this retail energy market on customers. AARP Maine supports this modest improvement given the PUC's decision not to provide pricing information to the Public Advocate in an Order issued on July 16, 2024 in Docket No. 2004-00090.

However, this proposed legislation does not completely resolve the need for the Public Advocate to have access to actual prices charged to customers by the investor-owned utilities who bill and collect CEP charges. The Annual Report requirement in Chapter 305 only requires the CEPs to provide: "Average prices, revenues, sales and number of customers, in total and for each pricing product, broken out by (i) residential and small non-residential customers; (ii) medium non-residential customers; and (iii) large non-residential customers and by transmission and distribution service territory." The result of this narrow reporting requirement is that there is no information in these reports that provide the actual prices charged to individual CEP customers. Thus, it would not be possible to evaluate the CEP's prices and contracts by zip code or whether the customer was enrolled in a low-income assistance program. This is a significant defect in this bill. AARP Maine recommends that the

bill be amended to ensure that the Public Advocate can obtain actual pricing information from the investor-owned utilities who bill on behalf of CEPs and that this information be provided by zip code and by identification of the customer's receipt of LIHEAP, LIAP, or other bill payment assistance.

Our recommendation reflects the public's access to this data in other states, such as Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Illinois, and Ohio. In these jurisdictions, the access is accompanied by a protective agreement to ensure that customer identifying information is not released (such as the customer's name and address other than zip code).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our views on this important bill. If I can answer any questions or provide any further information, you can reach me at aanderson@aarpp.org or 207.330.1147.

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