



**Testimony in Support of LD 995,
An Act to Provide Funding for Low-income Electric Ratepayer Assistance**

**To the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
by Rebecca Schultz
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March 26, 2025**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee, my name is Rebecca Schultz, and I am a Senior Advocate for Climate and Clean Energy with the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM). NRCM is a nonpartisan membership organization that has been working for more than 65 years to protect, restore, and conserve Maine’s environment, now and for future generations.

On behalf of our nearly 24,000 members and supporters, NRCM testifies in strong support of LD 995, An Act to Provide Funding for Low-income Electric Ratepayer Assistance (LIAP).

The costs of energy are very high for Maine families, among the highest in the region. According to the recent energy burden analysis done on behalf of the Electric Ratepayer Advisory Council, over 200,000 households cannot afford to cook, heat, and power their homes. Low-income Mainers are paying 30% of their household income just to cover energy costs. Of that, 8% of income goes just to pay electricity bills. This is twice as high as our state affordability target of 4% of income.¹

Due to a dependence on fossil-fuel powered electricity from the regional New England market, mounting year-over-year storm recovery costs—another \$228 million requested by CMP last month for the prior year’s storms²—as well as its rural, wooded landscapes, Maine has some of the highest electric rates in the country. And we need strong, well-resourced programs to support low-income Mainers’ access to what is an essential service.

¹ Quantifying Maine’s Household Energy Burden and Affordability Gap, VEIC and Beech Hill Research for Maine Electric Ratepayer Advisory Council, December 1, 2024,

https://www.maine.gov/meopa/sites/maine.gov.meopa/files/inline-files/VEIC_Maine%20Energy%20Burden%20and%20Affordability%202024_2.pdf

² CMP seeks \$228 million for 2024 storm repair costs, Portland Press Herald, February 28, 2025, <https://www.pressherald.com/2025/02/28/cmp-seeks-228-million-for-2024-storm-repair-costs/>

This is why it's important to continue diversified funding for the program, as LD 995 would do.

Since 2023, the Department of Health and Human Services has been making efforts to automatically enroll qualifying LIAP ratepayers based on their enrollment in other DHHS income eligible programs. This has been an important step to reduce the barriers to accessing the program, which historically has been poorly subscribed, reaching only a fraction of eligible households. As a result of auto-enrollment, participation is ticking up and the program is able to reach more of the Maine families who need it.

If LD 995 does not pass, funding for this program will be cut at a time when enrollment is poised to increase.

We therefore urge you Ought to Pass on LD 995.

I would be happy to answer any questions that the Committee has.

Thank you.