

Ian Lynch  
Waterville  
LD 1949

Rev. Ian Lynch  
Waterville, Maine  
May 13, 2025

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and Honorable Members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Ian Lynch, I'm a resident of Waterville, and I speak as pastor of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ. I write today in support of LD 1949.

Until recently, we had three people living in our household who would be protected by this act, my wife, who is over 65, our dependent adult daughter, and our grandson, who recently celebrated his first birthday. Thankfully, we have only ever endured being without power for a short period following a storm, and not with a baby in the house. I can only imagine how stressful and chaotic a longer stretch would be. When the house is cold and dry, my wife's asthma is aggravated, which would become riskier with a longer outage. If we had to provide fresh food and formula for a baby, we would likely manage, but not only is that more costly, it is not sustainable. And I am very aware of how fortunate we are, because we can tap resources to make that happen, at least in the short run. But an ever-increasing number of my neighbors locally and throughout the state cannot say the same.

The congregation I serve is fundamentally committed to serving those who find themselves on the margins. One way we do that is through an outreach program we call Starfish Village. The name derives from the story of a person tossing starfish who have been stranded by the tide back into the water, one at a time. Knowing that they all cannot be saved, the principle is that it matters to the one who is helped. In 2024, our small congregation facilitated the distribution of \$15,680 to pay for utility bills, keeping the lights and heat on or getting them restored. This represented 21% of our program's budget. Obviously, this is just a drop in the bucket in the face of a flood of suffering. We are pleased to be able to provide what assistance we can, but clearly legislation like this is required to address the bigger picture. It is indeed a matter of fairness to share the burden so that all might have access to the necessities of life.

I am grateful for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on this bill. Thank you!