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**MWUA**

MAINE WATER UTILITIES ASSOCIATION

Organized in 1925

May 14, 2025

Honorable Mark Lawrence, Senate Chair  
Honorable Melanie Sachs, House Chair  
Joint Legislative Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

**Re: *Testimony in Opposition to LD 1929, An Act to Improve Utility Service by Addressing Seasonal Property Hazards***

Dear Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and Members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology:

The Maine Water Utilities Association (MWUA) appreciates the opportunity to provide belated testimony in opposition to LD 1929, *An Act to Improve Utility Service by Addressing Seasonal Property Hazards*. This bill had its public hearing last week, but we wanted to provide comments to the Committee now in advance of today's work session.

Very simply, this is a bill focused on risks to seasonal utility service associated with trees or storm hazards that might impact above-ground utility facilities like telephone or electric wires. The bill does not relate to underground utility services like water service which are not at risk of trees falling or bad weather. For this reason, if this bill proceeds, we would recommend carving out below-ground utilities like water utilities.

**About MWUA.** MWUA is a nonprofit association based in Augusta that provides support for water works professionals throughout the State of Maine in advocating for safe drinking water through educational and technical programming as well as advocacy on the local, state, and national level. The Association was formed in 1925 and consists of approximately 86 utility and 60 associate members. Maine's water utilities provide service to approximately 700,000 Maine residents, thousands of Maine businesses and public institutions, and millions of visitors to Maine every year.

**Discussion.** LD 1929 is drafted to apply to all public utilities in Maine, but the language of many of the provision is clearly aimed at utility "lines" subject to tree or storm damage. Under the bill, all utilities would be directed to maintain lists of seasonal caretakers responsible for seasonal dwellings, develop protocols for repairing "lines" that are impacted by trees or storms, and conduct annual inspections on "lines" with a history of seasonal outages. None of these functions relates to underground utilities, yet the bill would still require water utilities to undertake these actions.

Under the bill, there is language requiring the state to seek federal support to offset the cost to utilities for undertaking annual inspections. However, there is no assurance that such funds will be obtained or that they will be sufficient to offset these inspection costs. At the same time, there is no additional funding for utilities to undertake other aspects of the bill. Those costs would fall to the customers of utilities, which impacts utility rates – including for the very smallest of water utilities who can least afford the staff or costs.



**Letter from MWUA re LD 1929**

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**Conclusion.** For these reasons, if the Committee decides to move forward with LD 1929, we would strongly recommend that the Committee carve underground utilities like water utilities out of the scope of the bill. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony, and I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Roger Crouse". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Roger Crouse, Chair  
MWUA Legislative & Regulatory Affairs Committee

cc: James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, Legislative Counsel