

Kathleen Gross  
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RE: Proposed Utility Whistleblower Program

Dear Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of the amendment to L.D. 1963 sponsored by Senator Mike Tipping.

My sense is that we have entered an era where many sectors in our commerce have consolidated into monopolistic forms. This becomes a challenge for consumers and regulators to ensure fairness in our various systems. The concept of Customer Service has nearly vanished. The hierarchy of business decision making is increasingly complex and opaque.

Whistleblowers have an important role in holding business and other systems accountable. It is not an easy decision or a position that anyone would wish for. It is an act of conscience.

There are two factors in the regulation of utilities in Maine that highlight the need for this proposal.

One, is that while the PUC provides essential oversight, it would benefit greatly from the ability to consider potential whistleblower tips that could provide valuable insight into problems that should be addressed.

Secondly, Maine's current requirement that whistleblowers report internally first, defeats the purpose—especially in the case of utilities. I can understand a healthcare consumer being required to lodge a complaint with an HMO first before making an external complaint—but not an employee.

The proposed protections and incentives for whistleblowers set the ground for good corporate behavior. I hope the committee will support the sponsor's amendment—it is a good model and an important step in the right direction

Thank you,

Kathleen Gross