

TO: Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

FROM: Marianne Hill, Ph.D.

DATE: May 14, 2025

SUBJECT: Testimony In Support of LD 1963: An Act to Protect and Compensate Public Utility Whistleblowers

Senator Mark Lawrence, Chair; Representative Melanie Sachs, Chair; and members of the Committee:

In some federal agencies, whistleblowers are protected and can report cases in which practices of their employer are harming consumers or the public. It is not at all unusual for companies to place their interests ahead of public welfare. We need whistleblowers to report these harmful practices. Under LD 1963, they could do so with their anonymity protected, thus reducing the chance that they will be fired.

Unfortunately, in Maine, whistleblowers must report **internally** first. If they do not, retribution is legal. Yet if they do, they may be immediately and preemptively fired. Maine is also an “at-will” state, meaning employees may be fired without explanation.

This situation is unacceptable. The public deserves better, especially when it comes to public utilities which enjoy local monopolies. Employees often are aware of practices that harm consumers - I as a consumer want those practices to stop. Protecting whistleblowers is an important step in that direction.

I urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 1963.

Marianne Hill, Ph.D.
South Portland, Maine

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South Portland
LD 1963

The inside knowledge of whistleblowers can make a big difference to public welfare. I want to hear what they have to say. They should be able to provide information critical to public well-being without having to worry about being fired. Let's give them anonymity as is done by some important federal agencies. I strongly support LD 1963!

(The Challenger explosion wouldn't have happened if the whistleblower's warning had been heeded by his bosses - instead he was fired!)