

# Maine Climate Action **NOW!**

To: Maine Legislature Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology

From: Ezra Sassaman, Advocacy Coordinator, Maine Climate Action Now

Date: May 15, 2025

Re: LD 1963, An Act to Protect and Compensate Public Utility Whistleblowers

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, my name is Ezra Sassaman. I live in Bar Harbor and represent Maine Climate Action Now! (MCAN), a coalition of sixteen nonprofit organizations united by a shared desire for transformative action in response to the climate crisis.

Across the state, many, especially low-income people, are struggling with rising electricity costs, a lack of reliability, and high energy burdens.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, Maine's investor-owned utilities have been enjoying consistent returns and, as private companies, are incentivized by their business model to continue prioritizing profits.

Investor-owned utilities' incentives sometimes point in the opposite direction of what Mainers need, which can sometimes lead to corporate malfeasance. While Maine's regulators have many tools at their disposal to crack down on utility misbehavior, most regulator-utility dynamics still suffer from "information asymmetry" – as utilities are ultimately the ones choosing which data to provide to regulators.

This is why protections for whistleblowers – who can give us insights into corporate wrongdoing from the inside – are so important. However, as it currently stands, whistleblowers must report first internally or risk legal retribution.<sup>2</sup> But if they *do* report internally, they may be preemptively fired. This contradiction needs to be resolved, which is why we support the Sponsor's Amendment to LD 1963.

This legislation is modeled after existing whistleblower protections in several federal programs. They combine anonymity in reporting to shield against retribution, a possible award of 10-30% of corporate penalties resulting from a whistleblower report; and publicity to raise awareness of this program for potential whistleblowers.

For the above-stated reasons, we urge you to vote "ought-to-pass" on LD 1963.

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<sup>1</sup> VEIC and Beech Hill Research. "[Quantifying Maine's Household Energy Burden and Affordability Gap](#)". Report. December 1, 2024. Accessed May 12, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> MRSA. [Title 35-A](#), §1316(3): "This subsection does not apply... unless the employee has first brought the subject matter of the testimony or information in writing to the attention of a person having supervisory authority with the employer and has allowed the employer a reasonable time to address the subject matter of the testimony or information."