

Date: May 15th, 2025
Subject: **Support for protection and compensation of public utility whistleblowers (LD 1963)**
From: John Arimond, 125 Essex St, Bangor, ME 04401
To: Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the sponsor's amendment to LD 1963. My name is John Arimond. I am a renewable energy technologist, with engineering degrees from Harvard (AB 1982) and MIT (MSME 1984). Since 2013, I have worked at the University of Maine's Advanced Structures and Composites Center, where I lead federally funded projects aimed at making wind turbines more affordable and reliable.

Before moving to Maine 12 years ago, I had lived in Minnesota, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and New Zealand. By comparison with my experience living in those five jurisdictions, I have been regularly disappointed by the frequency and duration of power outages, and by the ever-higher prices we see as ratepayers.

Maine's investor-owned public utilities have a legal obligation to operate in accordance with Maine laws and regulations, and a fiduciary obligation to maximize shareholder profits. Since electric rates are set based on reported costs, utility profits are substantially driven by the utilities' cost accounting and reporting behaviors. Accordingly, Maine's investor-owned utilities are incentivized to report costs as high as they can get away with, even by "creative accounting".

Maine has excellent regulators, who have the legal right to audit internal records. But the staffing levels at the Public Utilities Commission and the Office of the Public Advocate are limited; based on their broad responsibilities, these public servants have only a limited amount of time for such audits. The utilities have more substantial accounting and legal staff teams.

Should a public utility get unreasonably creative in its cost accounting, no one is better placed to call this behavior to account than a civic-minded staff lawyer or accountant. Whistleblowers can perform a valuable public service. Whistleblowers should be incentivized to do so. And whistleblowers need to be legally protected from retribution.

I can't think of a better object lesson than Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard's dismissal yesterday of Michael Collins and Maria Langan-Riekof, the chair and vice chair of the National Intelligence Council, who were dismissed for speaking truth to power: the Tren de Aragua gang "does not take orders from or operate in close coordination with the Maduro government."

We need truth tellers, and we need to protect them from retribution. So, I write to urge you to pass the sponsor's amendment to LD 1963.

Respectfully submitted,

John Arimond

Bangor