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Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and Members of the Committee, my name is Richard Wolfe and I live in Cumberland.

Thank you for the chance to testify today in support of the sponsor's amendment to L.D. 1963.

In 2023, my wife and I received a complex legal document by email from a lawyer in Arkansas purporting to represent Summit Natural Gas ("Summit"). It turned out to be an easement agreement in favor of Summit, and the lawyer was asking us to sign it. A day or two later, a local Summit employee began calling to tell us that it was urgent that we sign off on the easement so that a residential gas service line could be installed across our property.

He called several times, and we attempted to explain to him that there was already such a gas line in place, pursuant to an easement agreement with the owners of the house on the outlot directly behind our property. We suggested to him that perhaps there had been some confusion at Summit because of a house being constructed on a second outlot behind us. It didn't seem to make any difference what we said, he just kept on insisting that we sign Summit's easement document.

(As an aside, we also contacted Summit customer service to verify the existence of the line previously installed to serve the first outlot. To our surprise, the company was unable to verify that a line was already in place. We ended up contacting the owners directly behind us, who readily affirmed that, yes, they had gas service.)

Does this sound like a horror story to you? Read on, it gets worse.

With Summit refusing to listen to us, we began to consider that we might be forced to sign another easement after all. But the Summit document was thick with legalese, and we felt it necessary to have our lawyer review it, even though that would cost us money.

Our lawyer emphatically told us not to sign, and so we passed along that position to the local Summit representative. At the same time, we entered a complaint against Summit on the PUC website.

Other than an automated email acknowledgment, the PUC never responded to the complaint. After waiting for a response, we reached out to the Public Advocate.

They, in turn, called their counterpart at the PUC and received assurances that we would hear back from the Commission shortly. But again, there never was a response of any kind from the PUC. Finally, as a last resort, we brought the matter to the attention of the governor's office. To this day, there has never been a response of any kind from the governor's representatives.

All of this, of course, I can document with emails and PDFs.

Throughout this ordeal, we were incredulous that the owners of a single-family residence were being badgered by a public utility to sign a complex legal document. We had never heard of such a thing, *but it made us wonder if it is happening to others.*

To sum up, here we have a Colorado utility, with parachute service areas in our state, employing an Arkansas law firm to confront residential customers with demands that they sign off on legal commitments that it takes a lawyer to review. From our point of view, something got seriously out of control at this public utility.

I hope that you agree that the proposed whistleblower amendments have the potential to act as a brake on out-of-control public utilities.

In conclusion, I urge the committee to support the sponsor's amendment and to help Maine lead the nation by adopting this proven model for corporate accountability.

Thank you,

Richard Wolfe