

Crystal Cron
Presente! Maine
LD 1949

Dear Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology,

In Maine, we believe in looking out for one another regardless of where we come from or what language we speak. We know that our communities are strongest when every family has what they need to build stable lives and contribute to our state's future. Yet today, powerful utility companies are standing in the way of this vision, prioritizing their profits over the well-being of Maine people.

When utilities send out 440,000 disconnection notices while raking in over \$200 million in profits, as they did in 2023, they're not just shutting off electricity – they're shutting down opportunities for families to thrive. This practice disproportionately harms immigrants, seniors, and families with young children, many of whom are already working long hours and multiple jobs to make ends meet in our state.

LD 1949 represents our shared values as Mainers – that no one should have to choose between keeping the lights on and putting food on the table; that large corporations shouldn't be allowed to exploit vulnerable community members; and that by joining together across our differences, we can create systems that work for all of us.

At Presente Maine, we work with Latine families who are eager to build their lives here and contribute to our shared future, but face systemic barriers to stability and success. When families cannot afford electricity, we see firsthand the consequences cascade through every aspect of their lives. Parents who work long hours in seafood processing, agriculture, and hospitality come home to face impossible choices about which bills to pay – electricity, food, medicine, rent, and other necessities.

Children cannot study in the dark. Families cannot store food safely, heat their homes in the winter, or cool them during our increasingly hot and humid summers. Baby formula expires, and lifesaving medical devices that require electricity become useless. These real-life, everyday situations create serious barriers to our community's dignity, health and wellness, and ultimately prevent people from reaching their full potential here in Maine.

Immigrants bring tremendous resilience to our state, having already overcome significant hardships. We don't lack determination or work ethic – we lack a fair playing field where basic necessities like electricity are accessible and not at risk of being price-gouged. When a family is paying 14% of their income on energy costs – double what's considered affordable – no amount of personal “fiscal responsibility” can overcome that structural inequity.

LD 1949 addresses this injustice by:

1. Protecting our most vulnerable neighbors – including elders, infants, and those with chronic medical conditions – from dangerous utility disconnections
2. Stopping predatory advertising that targets non-English speakers and low-income customers with deceptive promises
3. Making utilities accountable by limiting what expenses they can pass on to customers
4. Creating transparency through improved reporting on affordability metrics

Utility executives and their allies may claim these protections are unnecessary. They'll say the market should decide who gets to keep their lights on. But we've seen what happens when we leave these decisions solely to profit-driven corporations – our communities suffer, families vacate the state, and Maine's future dims.

Our community members want nothing more than to put down roots here, contribute to Maine's economy, and help build the next generation of Mainers. By passing this bill, you have the opportunity to demonstrate that in Maine, we value people over profits, and we recognize that electricity is not a luxury but a necessity for

participation in modern society.

Our state is stronger when everyone has the opportunity to thrive – and that begins with keeping the lights on.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge this committee to vote “ought to pass” on LD 1949.

Respectfully submitted,

Crystal Cron

Executive Director, Presente! Maine