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Testimony on behalf of Maine Equal Justice in *Strong Support* to LD 2203, An Act to Limit Rates Charged to Low-income Electricity Consumers

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Good morning, Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. I'm Andrea Steward (she/her/hers) a policy advocate at Maine Equal Justice, a nonprofit civil legal aid provider working to increase economic security, opportunity, and equity for people in Maine.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of LD 2203 to protect low-income electricity consumers.

Maine's competitive electricity provider (CEP) market has not lived up to its mandate to provide lower prices through competition. In fact, participation in CEPs has resulted in overpayments by customers as compared to the standard offer. As of 2024, residential customers in Maine have cumulatively overpaid by more than \$156 million.¹ Despite a decline in the number of customers purchasing from CEPs, gross revenue per customer has continued to grow.²

Low-income ratepayers have been disproportionately impacted by the high costs associated with CEPs.³ The Energy Rates Advisory Committee (ERAC), using Central Maine Power and Versant Powers' own data, found that LIAP recipients are a growing share of CEP customers and disproportionately harmed; LIAP customers pay higher rates on average than non-participants.⁴ Those with the least means are consistently

¹ Is Maine's CEP-Served Residential Retail Electric Supply Market Affordable? (2026)
https://www.maine.gov/meopa/sites/maine.gov.meopa/files/inline-files/2026_ERAC_CEP_Report_20260127.pdf

² Id.

³ State of Maine Office of the Public Advocate, Electric Ratepayer Advisory Council fourth annual report, (Dec. 2025).

<https://www.maine.gov/meopa/sites/maine.gov.meopa/files/inline-files/2025-11-20%20Fourth%20Annual%20Report%20Final.pdf>

⁴ n(1).

paying significantly more than necessary for electricity supply. The structural pricing issues present in the CEP market are not just inefficient, they are a quantified equity issue specifically affecting Maine households who qualify for assistance.

Maine households are struggling under an affordability crisis and face a significantly high energy burden. Low-income individuals and families have a particularly high electricity burden at about 8% of income spent on electricity, double the 4% target, and higher than state averages. This burden is compounded by failures of the CEP market.⁵

LD 2203 is an opportunity to course correct and protect Maine's ratepayers. LIAP recipients will be better served by the CEP market if they have choice *and* are protected against excessive supply rates. We can preserve consumer choice while also protecting vulnerable populations from predatory pricing.

LIAP is funded entirely through a ratepayer surcharge.⁶ LIAP bill credits are intended as a benefit to qualified low-income individuals and families. Currently, LIAP recipients are unnecessarily overpaying for electricity supply; thus, dollars intended as public assistance are actually subsidizing the inflated rates on the CEP market. This does not address energy insecurity, instead it increases it. A rate cap at the standard offer for LIAP recipients protects low-income ratepayers and the contributions of all ratepayers, so that public assistance funds can work toward affordability instead of profits.

For these reasons Maine Equal Justice urges you to vote ought to pass on LD 2203 and ensure LIAP-enrolled customers are not charged more than the standard offer rate.

⁵ VEIC & Beech Hill Research, Quantifying Maine's Household Energy Burden and Affordability Gap (Dec. 2024).

https://www.maine.gov/meopa/sites/maine.gov.meopa/files/inline-files/VEIC_Maine%20Energy%20Burden%20and%20Affordability%202024_2.pdf

⁶ Maine Public, *Regulators expand Maine's low-income electric program*. (Dec. 2025)

<https://www.maine-public.org/climate/2025-12-16/regulators-expand-maines-low-income-electric-program>