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**March 8, 2023**

***Testimony of Rep. Valli Geiger presenting  
LD 699, An Act to Reduce Future Energy Costs  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology***

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and fellow members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology: as you know, my name is Valli Geiger and I represent House District 42: Rockland, most of Owl's Head, and the Islands of North Haven, Criehaven, Matinicus, the Muscle Ridge Islands. I am here to present my amendment to **L.D. 699, An Act to Reduce Future Energy Costs.**

The amendment was sent to all interested parties yesterday. I hope our discussion today can focus on that more specific language, which I have worked on with Our Power.

As you know, Our Power is the coalition that convinced bipartisan majorities of the House and Senate to vote for LD 1708 in 2021, and then went on to put a referendum on our ballot for this November. If passed, the referendum will create a new, large consumer-owned utility. This utility would have a private sector operations company. Its rates would be established by the PUC, and its operations contract also. In most other ways, it would be a larger version of Maine's other 10 consumer-owned transmission and distribution utilities, which currently provide service to 98 of Maine's 483 towns.

I have been very impressed by the two consumer-owned utilities I represent, on Matinicus and on North Haven. I was also impressed to learn that Maine's newest consumer-owned utility, at Brunswick Landing, is a major business attractor and is Maine's first utility to arrive at 100% renewable energy.

With both CMP and Versant requesting a 30% rate hike at the PUC at this moment, a rate decrease of 10% may seem hard to imagine. But I, and Our Power, are confident that if a new consumer-owned utility is created in Maine, it will reduce rates by at least 10%, and will not cost a penny more in taxes.

Today, we ask you to make this a guarantee.

As amended, this bill would require that the PUC deny any initial operations contract with any new, large consumer owned utility, unless the contract ensures three things: an immediate, 10% rate cut, a net benefit to rates, reliability and customer service, and not a single new taxpayer dollar.

While we may disagree on the reasons why, we all know that Maine people and businesses are being crushed today by skyrocketing electricity bills. So whether we are skeptical or supportive of replacing our two IOUs with a COU, by supporting this bill we can make sure it goes forward only if it cuts rates by 10% immediately, and does not cost a penny more in taxes.

Thank you for your time, and I will try to answer any questions you may have. I would however defer many specific questions to the Honorable Seth Berry who is here today with additional testimony.

District 42: Rockland, Owls Head, North Haven and part of Matinicus Isle