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April 4, 2023

Honorable Michael Tipping, Senate Chair
Honorable Amy Roeder, House Chair
Joint Legislative Committee on Labor and Housing
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: ***Testimony in opposition to LD 1152, An Act To Make Long-term Disability Insurance Coverage Available To Public Employees***

Dear Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Members of the Committee on Labor and Housing:

The Maine Water Utilities Association (MWUA) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to LD 1152.

About MWUA. The Maine Water Utilities Association is a nonprofit association based in Augusta that provides support for water works professionals throughout the State of Maine in advocating for safe drinking water through educational and technical programming as well as advocacy on the local, state, and national level. The Association was formed in 1925 and counts approximately 109 water utilities in Maine as members.

Discussion. LD 1152 requires the Maine Public Employers Retirement System to offer long-term disability insurance. Under LD 1152, employers are required to cover the cost of the premiums.

While MWUA appreciates the desire to provide this type of insurance to employees, we are opposed to the requirement that employers have to cover the cost of the premiums. The principal source of income for water utilities is water rates. Therefore, the costs of providing this insurance will be passed on to our ratepayers – the public. If the Legislature determines this is a priority, we request the insurance to be optional with the ability for employers to pass the cost onto employees who opt into the coverage.

Conclusion. MWUA asks that the Committee vote ought not to pass on this unfunded mandate.

Thank you for your consideration.

Roger Crouse,
Legislative Committee Chair, Maine Water Utilities Association
General Manager, Kennebec Water District

cc: Bruce Berger, Executive Director (MWUA)
James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, Legislative Counsel