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THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

**Testimony of Senator Nicole Grohoski
In Support of LD 2163, "An Act to Require Electricity Providers to Inform Customers of Alternative
Electric Rates and Gather Consent Prior to Contract Renewal"**

**Before the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
6 February 2024**

Good afternoon Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and fellow members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. As you know, my name is Nicole Grohoski and I am honored to represent the 22 coastal communities of Senate District 7. I am here to present LD 2163, "An Act to Require Electricity Providers to Inform Customers of Alternative Electric Rates and Gather Consent Prior to Contract Renewal."

I sponsored this bill on behalf of the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) because I think that the contents of the bill deserve public scrutiny. At this time, I support some but not all of its provisions. I hope that through this public hearing process, our committee will gather the necessary information to determine the best course forward regarding additional regulation of competitive electricity providers (CEPs).

In 2021, the Legislature made significant changes to how the state regulates CEPs to enhance consumer protections at the request of the Office of the Public Advocate (LD 508). I am sure that more can be done to protect consumers, but I do not want to see the competitive supply market shut down via increased regulatory burden because it has clear benefits. These include saving participating ratepayers \$33 million in 2022 and allowing consumers to purchase cleaner electricity than the standard offer provides or obtain discounts on other goods and services, like home heating oil.

The most important part of the bill, in my opinion, is Section 1, which ensures that customers who are unhappy with their current supplier can quickly switch providers, effective within three business days. I think rapid switching is one of the best consumer protections we can establish. If someone is unhappy with their service, they shouldn't be stuck with it for one to two billing cycles given the updated billing and metering systems ratepayers have financed.

Other sections that help consumers access more information to make informed decisions seem sensible to me as well (Sections 2, 6, and 9). I would like to see the OPA have access to information (Sections 7 and 10) needed to properly assess the pros and cons of the current CEP regulatory regime but I am not sure if the bill language contains enough criteria about the allowable uses for data requested and frequency of requests. Similarly, I would like to give further thought to how to ensure that taxpayer dollars that help income-eligible customers pay their electricity bills are used prudently (Section 8).

I will conclude by saying that I would like to see our Public Utilities Commission use all the tools at its disposal to crack down on bad actors in this market and do so as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your attention and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.