



Mark W. Lawrence
Senator, District 35

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Mark W. Lawrence introducing

**LD 241, An Act to Authorize the Public Utilities Commission to Approve Rate Adjustments for
Low-income Water Utility Ratepayers**

before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

February 6, 2025

Good afternoon, Representative Sachs, and esteemed colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, I am Senator Mark Lawrence and I proudly represent the communities of Eliot, Kittery, Ogunquit, South Berwick, and York.

I am here today to introduce LD 241, "An Act to Authorize the Public Utilities Commission to Approve Rate Adjustments for Low-income Water Utility Ratepayers." My comments are directed at the bill, and the accompanying amendment drafted after the printing of the bill and circulated prior to this hearing.

LD 241 authorizes the PUC to approve a low-income assistance program for water ratepayers, creating the opportunity for a rate adjustment program to be proposed by a utility similar to what is already in place for electric, gas, and telecommunication customers (Title 35-A M.R.S. § 3214 and § 4706-B). LD 241 does not compel water utilities to offer a low-income assistance program, and it does not give the PUC authority to order a water utility to adopt a low-income program.

Around the nation, other states offer water assistance programs to low-income families. Access to affordable water service is clearly a necessity and in Maine, this is the only essential utility service for which there is no state or federal assistance program. The Water Affordability Report that the OPA will present demonstrates the need for this legislation. That approximately 53,000 Maine households spend more for water service than the generally accepted national standard is a sobering reality.

I encourage this committee to support this legislation, and I encourage water utilities around the state to implement programs to ease the expense of water service for low-income households.

Thank you to the opportunity to present this bill. I am happy to answer questions, and representatives from the Office of the Public Advocate are behind me who may be able to answer more specific questions.