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February 6, 2025

Senator Mark Lawrence, Chair

Representative Melanie Sachs, Chair

Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technologies

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

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Committee, my name is Daniel Wells, the Superintendent for the Winthrop Utilities District. I am providing testimony in opposition of LD 1241 "An Act to Authorize the Public Utilities Commission to Approve Rate Adjustments for Low-income Water Utility Ratepayers".

We all want to help struggling Mainers, the Winthrop Utilities District would like to point out a few items and concerns about LD 241. First in order to subsidize rates for one class of rate payer another class of rate payer has to have an increase in their water rates. For smaller water utilities this would be a heavy lift. There would have to be income guidelines, secure files, and training on a new process seems like a tax through a small group of people.

In addition, this first iteration is voluntary as we all know soon in a couple of years becomes mandatory and a financial and an administrative burden. Districts have many rules and regulations which equate to costs to the rate payers that we are struggling with now. To keep piling on the financial burden to a small group seems counterproductive we try hard to keep costs as low as possible and still provide the quality product and level of service expected by both statute and the rate payers.

If the State truly wants to subsidize low-income rate-payers they have the LiHEAP program and this could be added to that program, the costs would then be spread out amongst a larger group of tax payers instead of a small group of tax/rate payers.

Sincerely,



Daniel R. Wells, P.E. (ME)

Superintendent