

MAINE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Energy, Utilities and Technology

February 27, 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, Members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Energy, Utilities and Technology, I am Amy Dumeny, Administrative Director of the Maine Public Utilities Commission (Commission or PUC).

The Commission was established by the Maine Legislature in 1913 and is responsible for regulating Maine's electric, gas, telephone and water utilities. The Commission also has limited authority over rates and service of ferry transportation. In addition to its regulatory role, the Commission enforces Gas Safety and the Underground Damage Prevention Program and manages the statewide Enhanced 911 (911) system.

The Commission is divided into six operating areas according to industry area or function. The Telephone and Water Division and the Electric and Gas Division are designated to work on the issues related to these regulated industries. The Emergency Services Communication Bureau (ESCB) manages the statewide 911 system, including program development and implementation. The Consumer Assistance and Safety Division (CASD) provides information and assistance to utility customers to help them resolve disputes with utilities. The CASD also oversees gas safety regulation and enforcement as well as Dig Safe. The Legal Division provides hearing officers in cases before the Commission and assists in preparing and presenting Commission views on legislative proposals. The Administrative Division handles day-to-day operational management of the Commission, with responsibilities for fiscal, personnel, technology and other administrative matters.

Requests in this biennium are in response to challenges the Commission will be faced with including support for gas safety inspections, technical business support for the case management system, rate increases for central services, consulting needs and rent costs to support the 911 system.

The Commission proposes adding two Utility Analyst positions, bringing the PUC's headcount total to 82. The net increases proposed in the Commission's budget are \$2,656,027 in FY2026 and \$2,693,867 in FY2027 in Other Special Revenue Funds.

EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMUNICATION BUREAU 0994

The first Budget Program presented in the Committee document is labeled "Emergency Services Communication Bureau 0994" (**page A-611**). The baseline budget presented shows this Budget Program is comprised of Federal Expenditures Fund and Other Special Revenue Funds. The fund encompasses Personal Services for 10 positions and All Other expenditures consisting primarily of information technology, contracts and services to support the 911 system. The 911 system is funded entirely through a surcharge on wireline, wireless (cellular), prepaid wireless and interconnected voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) telephone service. The surcharge is currently \$0.35 per line.

The first initiative in this budget program is on **page A-611**. This initiative provides funding for the cost of technology-related expenditures provided by the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Maine Information Technology. This initiative will support the ongoing technology needs that the Commission utilizes through software, hardware and support provided by Maine IT.

The next initiative is on **page A-611**. This initiative provides funding of the newly leased space at 45 Commerce Drive for the Emergency Services Communication Bureau. The space has consolidated the 911 training center formally housed at the Criminal Justice Academy and administrative offices of the Bureau to one location which allows for upgraded training systems and flexibility for remote participation. The Division of Leased Space services are provided and negotiated through the Bureau of General Services within DAFS.

The next initiative is on **page A-611**. This initiative provides funding for contractual services for the 911 system. Consultants are needed for the integration of 988, Maine's Crisis Line, service into the 911 system. Recruitment and staffing levels for the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) centers have been at dangerously low levels over the past few years. Funds will be used to provide a public relations campaign and other initiatives to improve the hiring and retention of PSAP personnel. Additionally, continuing education courses for the current PSAP personnel will be provided. Work will also include a total refresh of the Next Generation 911 system, including the transition of voice service providers to Next Generation compliant call delivery and other more advanced services. This line also provides for contracted quality assurance review as required by Public Law 2023 Chapter 609.

OVERSIGHT AND EVALUATION PROGRAM Z106

The next Budget Program presented in the Committee document is labeled "Oversight and Evaluation Program Z106" (**page A-612**). The baseline budget presented shows this Budget Program is comprised of Other Special Revenue Funds. The Commission was required to establish this program pursuant to Public Law 2009, c. 372, which established the Efficiency Maine Trust (Trust). The purpose of the Oversight and Evaluation Program is to defray the Commission's expenses in overseeing the Trust, including but not limited to contracting with third-party consultants in reviewing and approving the Trust's Triennial Plan. Public Law 2009, c. 372, also provides for the Commission to assess up to 1% of the funds administered by the Trust to cover the costs of this oversight.

There are no new initiatives in this budget. The biennial budget reflects \$252,660 in FY26 and FY27 in Other Special Revenue Funds.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION PROGRAM 0184

The next Budget Program presented in the Committee document is labeled “Administrative Division Program 0184” (**page A-613**). The baseline budget presented shows this Budget Program is comprised of Federal Expenditures Fund and Other Special Revenue Funds. The Administrative Division Program provides the Commission with the resources to regulate Maine’s electric, gas, telephone and water utilities, ensuring that consumers have access to safe and reliable service from public utilities at rates that are just and reasonable. In addition, this program provides funding for gas safety regulation including damage prevention and pipeline safety work performed by the Commission. These Commission functions are funded through an assessment on regulated utilities. The Commission also receives federal funds from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s One Call Grant and Pipeline Safety Base Grant to partially fund damage prevention investigators and gas safety inspectors.

The first initiative is on **page A-613**. This initiative provides funding for the cost of technology-related expenditures provided by the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Maine Information Technology. This initiative will support the ongoing technology needs that the Commission utilizes through software, hardware and support provided by Maine IT.

The next initiative is on **page A-613**. This initiative establishes one Utility Analyst position. This position will conduct federally mandated gas safety inspections, perform analysis, and engage in outreach with regulated gas utilities, industry groups, and damage prevention stakeholders. The position will allow the gas safety and damage prevention programs to increase outreach to regulated groups, enhance damage prevention efforts, ensure continuous inspection and investigation coverage, and allow the program to establish succession-related resiliency. This position will be reimbursed from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Pipeline Safety Base Grant for up to 80% of the position cost and was requested to be added to the gas safety program during an annual federal review process.

The last initiative is on **page A-613**. This initiative establishes one Utility Analyst position. This technical business position will provide analysis, advice and project management of the Commission’s Case Management System (CMS). All cases that come before the Commission are docketed in the CMS which is a critical tool for the Commission. This system allows utilities and citizens to file all documents electronically. It is complex and there are many stakeholders that utilize the system. This position will conduct testing and analysis of changes made by programmers of Maine IT to ensure business needs are met and the system is operating as expected. Currently, this role at the Commission is supported with a long-term contract of a retired IT director that will finish work at the Commission in the fall of 2025. This technical business role has been advised by MaineIT that the best path forward to support business needs of CMS is with a Business Analyst position. On-site support at the Commission is vital for understanding the technological needs of the Commission and communicating those needs as priorities change over time. This position will also work to assist the

Commission with other IT related functions including website, network and audio/video streaming technology used in Commission proceedings and other IT related changes that come before the Commission.

PUC – INTERCONNECTION OMBUDSMAN FUND Z393

The next Budget Program presented in the committee document is labeled “PUC- Interconnection Ombudsman Fund Z393” (**page A-614**). The baseline budget presented shows this Budget Program is comprised of Other Special Revenue Funds. The Commission was required to establish this program pursuant to Public Law 2023, c. 307, to provide Maine ratepayers with equitable access to the interconnection of distributed generation resources. The purpose of the Interconnection Ombudsman Program is to track interconnection disputes, facilitate the efficient and fair resolution of disputes, review investor-owned transmission and distribution utility interconnection policies, convene stakeholder groups as needed, and prepare reports related to interconnection disputes. This fund encompasses one appointed position with expertise in interconnection procedures and processes. There is a \$40 fee for interconnections and all fees collected are to fund the interconnection ombudsman. This fund may accept federal money and contributions from private and public sources.

There are no new initiatives in this budget. The biennial budget reflects \$201,637 in FY26 and \$216,655 in FY27 in Other Special Revenue Funds.

PUC – UNUSED NEB CREDITS FOR LOW-INCOME ASSISTANCE Z392

The next Budget Program presented in the committee document is labeled “PUC- Unused NEB Credit for Low-Income Assistance Z392” (**page A-614**). The baseline budget presented shows this Budget Program is comprised of Other Special Revenue Funds. This program directs transmission and distribution utilities to remit the value of unused and expired net energy billing credits to the Commission and that the credits be used for the Low-Income Assistance Program at the Maine State Housing Authority.

There are no new initiatives in this budget. The biennial budget reflects \$500 in FY26 and FY27 in Other Special Revenue Funds.

CONCLUSION

This concludes the testimony of the Public Utilities Commission. I would be happy to answer any questions you have.