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DAN BURGESS
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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Resolve, to Direct the Governor's Energy Office to Conduct a Study Regarding the Future of Electric Transmission Infrastructure in the State

L.D. 197

**GOVERNOR'S ENERGY OFFICE
March 11, 2025**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology (EUT): My name is Caroline Colan, and I am the Legislative Liaison for the Governor's Energy Office (GEO).

The GEO testifies neither for nor against L.D. 197.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on this legislation. We appreciated the opportunity to engage with the sponsor last year to more narrowly target this bill.

We agree that the future of electric transmission infrastructure, particularly the need to upgrade Maine and New England's distribution and transmission systems, is an important and complex issue that has significant implications for the ability to meet the state's climate and clean energy goals in an efficient and cost-effective manner. We also understand that planning and getting transmission infrastructure built can be challenging in Maine and New England due to the size and geographic extent of projects which can have natural resources and property implications.

As illustrated by the Technical Report of the Maine Energy Plan, there will be two primary drivers that necessitate distribution and transmission expansion in the near term. First, the higher electricity demand that accompanies widespread heating and transportation electrification will increase overall peak loads on the distribution and transmission system. Second, transmission upgrades will be necessary to maintain and enhance system reliability and resiliency, interconnect new renewable generation, establish new and higher capacity links with neighboring systems, and move power across new and expanded routes.

GEO, working in close coordination with the Maine Public Utilities Commission (Commission), is currently involved in several strategic transmission planning efforts to address current infrastructure issues and to proactively identify and address future needs in a least-cost approach for Maine ratepayers. Key planning principles in each of these efforts include enhancing reliability and resiliency, proactive "right sized" projects, prioritizing the use of existing rights-of-way (ROWS) and careful use of advanced transmission technologies to maximize the value of new or upgraded infrastructure and avoid unnecessary utility buildout. Enhancing opportunities for proactive regional planning will also assist in reducing costs to Maine ratepayers and materially improve system reliability and resiliency.

These efforts include GEO and Commission engagement with the New England States Committee on Electricity (NESCOE), on which Chair Bartlett serves as the Maine representative, and ISO-NE to conduct long-term transmission planning including important regional transmission upgrades in Maine that address existing system congestion and stability concerns. Projects identified through this planning effort will materially improve transmission capacity, reliability and resiliency in Maine and the region and the costs will be allocated regionally. Second, GEO is actively working with the U.S. Department of Energy and the national laboratories to evaluate how advanced transmission technologies can be cost-effectively employed to improve Maine's existing transmission system capacity to allow the system to serve higher peak loads. Lastly, GEO is preparing a request for proposals seeking consulting services to assist GEO in preparing a thoughtful, comprehensive, forward-looking strategy to address the full range of long-term transmission-level needs expected in Maine and that takes into account likely generation needs as identified by the Maine Energy Plan, the need to interconnect new resources, and opportunities to maximize the efficiency of the existing grid to meet those needs through the deployment of advanced transmission technologies and non-wires alternatives at least cost.

We believe these efforts will address many of the items listed in the infrastructure needs study proposed by this legislation. We are willing to work with the sponsor and the committee to consider how the intent of this legislation could be achieved through workstreams already planned or in process at GEO.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Colan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Caroline Colan, Legislative Liaison
Governor's Energy Office