



Testimony in Neither for Nor Against LD 873
An Act to Expand Municipal Authority over Utility Pole Permits

March 18, 2025

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the committee, my name is James Cote and I am here on behalf of Versant Power neither for nor against LD 873.

Current law allows municipal officers of a municipality with more than 40,000 residents, after notice and hearing, to revoke the location of a utility pole in a public way for public safety and welfare. Currently, only Portland is eligible for this authority.

LD 873 would reduce the municipal threshold from 40,000 to 30,000 residents, providing this authority to the cities of Lewiston and Bangor, in addition to Portland. We would like to highlight that Versant believes its relationship with the City of Bangor is a very positive one, and that we proactively work with them on problematic pole locations periodically.

Versant has not been made aware of any issues that would require a change in statute.

We believe that if a solution can be reached without a statutory change than maintaining current statutory requirements provides the most predictability for all parties and reduces the potential of customers shouldering the costs for unnecessary pole relocation work.

We would be happy to participate in a discussion with the PUC and relevant stakeholders should the committee ask us to do so.

Thank you for your consideration and we would be pleased to provide any supplemental information for the work session.

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Our position truly stems from a lack of understanding about what the bill seeks to achieve and concern for unintended consequences. We have not been made aware of any issues that would require a change in statute.

Being directed to move the location of existing poles could potentially cause unintended consequences. For example, if a municipality of this size were to require the relocation of a pole away from the street to the backside of a sidewalk it could place utility lines in close and unsafe proximity to residential and commercial buildings. Without appropriate training and education it would be difficult for municipalities to make these determinations without conversations with pole owners.

Additionally, requiring that poles be removed and relocated can sometimes be costly to customers and disruptive to residents of the municipality.

In light of these concerns, and our lack of awareness of current municipal concerns, we would urge the committee to instead direct the pole owners, concerned municipal stakeholders, and the Public Utilities Commission to have a discussion about what the objective of this legislation is and whether or not it can be resolved without statutory change. Consolidated Communications would be pleased to participate in that discussion. If no resolution can be agreed upon, the committee could then deliberate on appropriate amendments to existing statute and rule to accommodate any necessary changes. We believe that if a solution can be reached without statutory change than maintaining current statutory requirements provides the most predictability for all parties.

Thank you for your consideration and we would be pleased to provide any supplemental information for the work session.