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Testimony in Support: LD 995, An Act to Provide Funding for Low-income Electric Ratepayer Assistance

Greetings Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. My name is Alf Anderson, and I am an Associate State Director for Advocacy and Outreach for AARP Maine. AARP is a non-profit, non-partisan social mission organization with more than 200,000 members across the state. We work on a range of energy issues at the state level. The core principles we approach this work with include affordability, reliability, and accountability.

I'm here today to testify in support of LD 995. The purpose of this bill is to appropriate additional General Funds to supplement the ratepayer funding for the Low Income Assistance Program (LIAP), which is woefully underfunded.

This bill will appropriate an additional \$7.5 million from the General Fund to keep LIAP at the current funding level which had a prior similar appropriation in the previous biennial budget. We urge this Committee to support and advocate for this minimum level of funding in a time of increasing electricity rates and bills.

With regard to the proposed definition of "low income," we offer a suggestion that this definition reflect the definition of eligibility for Maine's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) implemented by the Maine State Housing Authority, which refers to 150% of federal poverty level or 60% of the State's median income, as well as those categorically eligible for certain programs implemented by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services.¹ This is important to allow coordinated and efficient entry into LIAP.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our views on this important bill. If I can answer any questions or provide any further information, you can reach me at aanderson@aarp.org or 207.330.1147.

Alf Anderson
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¹ Chapter 24, Maine State Housing Authority.