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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

An Act to Align the Schedules for Climate Change Protection Plans and Grid-enhancing Technology Review with the Integrated Grid Planning Process L.D. 1240

GOVERNOR'S ENERGY OFFICE
April 3, 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. 1240.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this legislation, which will primarily focus on Sec. 1 of the bill text

Recognizing the critical threat of climate change, in February 2022, Governor Mills introduced legislation which was enacted with bipartisan support as Public Law 2021, Chapter 702, *An Act Regarding Utility Accountability and Grid Planning for Maine's Clean Energy Future*. Among other provisions, this legislation requires the Public Utilities Commission (Commission) to initiate a proceeding every five years to identify the priorities to be addressed in filings by the state's large investor-owned transmission and distribution utilities regarding a grid plan that will assist in the cost-effective transition to a clean, affordable, and reliable electric grid. The Act defines the grid plan as a 10-year integrated grid plan designed to improve system reliability and resiliency and enable the cost-effective achievement of the greenhouse gas reduction obligations and climate policies of the state. The legislation also requires utilities to file climate change protection plans to ensure utility infrastructure is resilient to extreme storms and other climate-related impacts. The establishment of Climate Change Protection Plans is an innovative approach to require the incorporation of the effects of climate change on utility infrastructure and assets into planning. Those first plans were filed in December 2023 and per current statute, will be filed every three years.

Public Law 2023, Chapter 553 established a requirement that the Public Utilities Commission conduct a review or contract with a consultant to conduct a review of available grid-enhancing technology that may be implemented by the state's large investor-owned transmission and distribution utilities to reduce or defer the need for investment in grid infrastructure in the state.

GEO certainly supports the intent of this legislation to better align various utility planning requirements on a timeline that will enable the Commission and other stakeholders to evaluate and apply those plans in an efficient and holistic manner. In making this change, however, we would like to understand how



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extending the planning cycle for utility climate change protection plans from three years to five years can contribute to maximizing the value and robustness of the exercise.

In comments submitted to Docket No. 2023-00282 regarding Climate Change Protection Plans (CCPP), GEO made several suggestions for Commission consideration of additional requirements to strengthen future plans.¹ Suggestions included providing further clarity on what utilities should include in vulnerability assessments and required stakeholder engagement efforts to understand on-the-ground impacts of severe weather events; lists of intended investments in the next 5-10 years and descriptions of how each investment aligns with the CCPP; descriptions of how the plan incorporates grid modernization such as microgrids, dispatchable resources, and grid enhancing technologies; and additional detail of how CCPPs align with ongoing and related efforts of the state including MEMA's State Hazard Mitigation Plan; the Resilience and Rebuilding Commission; the Maine Climate Council's climate action plan; technical analysis supporting the State Energy Plan; and stakeholder-led Integrated Grid Planning; among other suggestions to strengthen future CCPPs. In making these suggestions, we do recognize that the state's large utilities have more capacity and resources to support these planning efforts than the state's municipal and cooperative utilities.

Though seemingly simple in nature, we think this is an opportunity to ensure that the change results not just in better aligned planning processes and timelines, but also stronger plans that deliver greater value. GEO is not suggesting significant language amendments or additions to the bill text, but would like to work with the Commission and the Committee to ensure it does just that.

Thank you for your consideration.

Caroline Colan, Legislative Liaison
Governor's Energy Office

¹ <https://mpuc-cms.maine.gov/CQM.Public.WebUI/Common/ViewDoc.aspx?DocRefId={60BE428D-0000-CA11-B66D-A0156509DA3C}&DocExt=pdf&DocName={60BE428D-0000-CA11-B66D-A0156509DA3C}.pdf>