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## **Testimony in Support of LD 1080, An Act Prohibiting Public Utilities from Requiring Deposits Based Solely on a Residential Customer's Income**

**Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology,**

My name is Will Hayward, and I am an associate at Moose Ridge Associates, delivering testimony on behalf of the Maine Community Action Partnership, a statewide organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of Maine people by advocating for, promoting and supporting the work of the Maine community action agencies. We respectfully submit the following testimony in support of LD 1080, An Act Prohibiting Public Utilities from Requiring Deposits Based Solely on a Residential Customer's Income.

Our state's greatest resource is our people, and our state's policies shape people's possibilities. In Community Action, we create conditions that invite children to learn and adults to apply their skills, tapping into the potential in our communities.

Maine Community Action Partnership supports this legislation because it ends the unjust utility practice of requiring deposits solely based on income. Utility deposits can represent a substantial burden for families and individuals in Maine that are already managing tight budgets to meet their essential needs. Requiring upfront deposits for utilities creates another cost for utility access for the families and individuals that can afford it least, creating a perverse circumstance where those facing the greatest challenge to fitting utilities into their budgets are the ones being asked to pay an additional cost, despite no prior history of nonpayment. Again, this deposit requirement is not based on previous nonpayment: it is simply discriminating based on income.

We would also like to highlight what this deposit actually entails: under Public Utility Commission rules, the deposit can be up to the "two highest consecutive billing periods incurred within the previous 12-month period at that location." This is an exorbitant cost for any household on a tight budget; we believe this is an unfair requirement for any customer asked to pay a deposit. Community Action Agencies across Maine frequently work with clients struggling to establish utility service due to deposit requirements. Ultimately, we believe for Maine families to be able to thrive these deposit requirements must be lowered. However, we believe LD 1080 represents a strong starting point by removing a category of customer from being subject to these deposits based on an unfair and solely income-based justification.

We know Maine families are positioned to thrive when they have the tools and resources necessary to sustain themselves and grow their potential. Requiring utility deposits based solely on income stunts that potential. It's time to end this practice. We urge the committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1080.