

**Testimony of the Industrial Energy Consumer Group  
In Opposition to L.D. 1309,  
*An Act to Increase the Membership of the Public Utilities Commission to 5 Members*  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology  
April 8, 2025**

Good afternoon, Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy Utilities and Technology. I am Steven Hudson, an attorney with the firm of Preti Flaherty, here today on behalf of the Industrial Energy Consumer Group (IECG). IECG has been representing medium and large sized consumers of energy in Maine for more than twenty-five years at the state, regional and federal level. We advocate for policies that reduce the cost of energy for our members and cost-effectively help Maine achieve its climate goals. We share the concern of many of the people and organizations in this room about the work needed to adequately address climate change. That is the reason we emphasize cost-effective measures, in order to ensure that our collective resources are able to meet the challenge. IECG invites legislators, interested parties and the public to visit our website, <https://www.getmaineclimateright.com/>, to learn more about the IECG and its advocacy for cost-effective climate mitigation.

IECG testifies in Opposition to L.D. 1309, *An Act to Increase the Membership of the Public Utilities Commission to 5 Members*. While we appreciate the sponsor's good intentions in offering this bill, we believe that passing it would be a terrible policy decision to make. It would increase electric and gas bills for consumers, at a time when we are considering the creation of a cabinet-level department of energy resources. It would put Maine out of step with the other states in New England. It would inject special interest requirements for commissioners. Finally, we believe that it would encumber decision making at the Commission.

First some background. All six new England states ((Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island) only have commissions with three members. The majority of states have commissions with three members. These include both rural states like Maine as well as states with sophisticated economies, strong commitments to renewable energy and the clean energy transition. These three member states include: Colorado, Hawai'i, Idaho, Michigan, Nevada, Oregon, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. Five member states like California, Florida, New Jersey, New York, Illinois, and Louisiana, all have little in common with Maine.

Adding two more members, at the salaries and benefits of Maine judges would directly cost Maine ratepayers more money. In 2023, it was reported that Maine commission members earned just over \$152,000 in salary with a retirement and benefits package as described in the attached page from Maine.gov, with 13 paid holidays, a starting 3 weeks of paid vacation, 12 days of sick leave and soon Paid Family Medical Leave. Over the last 5 years, commissioner salaries have increased about 3%/year. We do not question the value and work ethic of Maine's three commissioners, present and past; however we question the value of adding 67% more members.

The proposed requirements for the two new members are an unbelievably bad idea. It is not clear to me whether some of Maine's finest commissioners would have qualified for one of these special interest positions. Would Tom Welch have qualified? Vendean Vafiades? In fact the current chair, which IECG was proud to support for renomination, arguably might not have qualified for either of these special interest positions at the time he was first nominated. Special interest requirements are an especially bad idea for positions which are often exercise quasi-judicial functions. By the way, we note that at least two of the three existing commissioners already seem to have the type of experience that this bill calls for.

It beggars belief to think that adding more people to any decision-making body actually increases the efficiency of that body. Often, we accept the inefficiencies of additional members to ensure diversity of viewpoints. However, for a quasi-judicial commission, that diversity of viewpoints is provided by the diversity of parties appearing before them, whether utilities, low-income advocates, industrial consumers, environmental groups, and local citizen activists. A smaller commission will be a more efficient and rapid acting commission.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments. IECG is happy to answer questions now or provide additional resources for the Committee at the work session.