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To: Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and Members of the Committee for
Energy Utilities and Technology

From: Bradley Sawyer, Deputy Director

Date: April 23, 2025

Re: Testimony in Support of L.D. 1686, An Act to Clarify, Align and Amend
Provisions of the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 35-A

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today in support of L.D. 1686. The Maine Rural Water Association is a member-driven nonprofit organization based in Richmond, dedicated to providing training, technical assistance, and advocacy on behalf of our approximately three hundred members. The majority of our membership consists of water and wastewater utilities from across the state, all of whom are deeply committed to ensuring clean, safe drinking water and protecting the environment through the proper treatment of wastewater.

Today, I would like to express our support for Section 10 of L.D. 1686. This proposed change reflects the original intent of the regulated community when the concept was first discussed. By setting a fixed percentage increase, as proposed in Section 10, the process becomes more transparent and easier for both utilities and ratepayers to understand. For example, if a customer has a \$100 water bill, a 1.5% increase clearly translates to \$1.50—simple and straightforward.

In contrast, the current method based on annual revenue is significantly more complex. It introduces uncertainty due to fluctuations in funding sources, loan payments, and other financial variables. These factors make long-term planning more difficult and obscure the actual impact on ratepayers. Section 10 simplifies the statute while preserving its core intent. We believe this change strikes the right balance between clarity and fairness and will benefit both utilities and the communities they serve.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions and respectfully urge the Committee to support Section 10 of L.D. 1686.