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*Testimony of Representative Sophie Warren Presenting*  
**L.D. 1473, An Act to Require Utilities to Monitor Meters for Natural Gas Leaks**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology*

Good afternoon, Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and respected colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. My name is Sophie Warren, and I represent House district 124. Thank you for the opportunity to present L.D. 1473, An Act to Require Utilities to Monitor Meters for Natural Gas Leaks and for your consideration of the accompanying sponsor amendment attached to this bill testimony based on feedback from the public after the printing of this bill.

Approximately 50,000 Maine customers rely on natural gas in the year 2025, made possible by four<sup>i</sup> gas utilities operating in the state. And I am here to tell you they are doing a tremendous amount of work monitoring gas leaks.<sup>ii</sup> And I commend them for it. This work is obligated by the federal government and monitored by the Public Utilities Commission through rulemaking. Despite all this good work, there is no obligation in *state law* requiring this work. Regardless of shifting political winds, my constituents, many of whom rely on natural gas infrastructure, would like to be rest assured this work continues in perpetuity. That is one of two core functions of this bill. Consistent with this intent, I seek to ensure the language reflects the current scale and scope of action and so request your consideration to use the language of “gas system” rather than a narrower focus on only “meters” as reflected in the bill as drafted.

Second is the one new piece of action being introduced through this bill, to require public record of leaks and repair on a regular basis. Methane emissions that come through natural gas leaks are an incredibly harmful greenhouse gas that can leak from throughout the system from distribution mains to service lines. The goal here is transparency related to greenhouse gas emissions. Without clarity as to the rate of leak and efficiency of repairs, it is difficult to be assured that we have an accurate record of greenhouse gas emissions in the state of Maine. There is an understanding in the scientific community that these leaks can be underestimated in modeling<sup>iii</sup> and therefore it is difficult for even entities like the EPA to gain a true accounting of our state’s greenhouse gas emissions without public reporting.<sup>iv</sup> While the bill as written directs this reporting on an annual basis, I have had many discussions with both industry, large consumers, entities that represent business interests and the PUC, and I believe it is consistent with the intent of this bill to have this reporting on a three-year basis and to clarify an intent to protect customer information, and to have this reporting to the PUC and our committee. A broader snapshot provides a more comprehensive overview, while reflecting the immense reporting that is already done to the PUC on a monthly and annual basis.

District 124: Part of Scarborough

For a broader context, other states<sup>viii</sup> have led on this issue and provide useful information in their efforts. Massachusetts has a comprehensive record and accounting of leaks made available publicly,<sup>viii</sup> which the public can be aware of, and climate advocates, legislators, and scientists alike can follow in a transparent and publicly facing way.

Though this work, especially in Massachusetts, is extremely comprehensive and interactive, the pieces of this bill before you are much more modest. I do not seek comprehensive databases, and in the attached proposed amendment seek to offer clarity at the protection for customer specific data. I am very open to language protecting location specific information. This bill seeks merely the data regarding the scale and scope of leaks within a utility's service area and the record of how these are addressed. With more information, we can do a better accounting for where we are at as a state related to emissions reductions, improve public trust in these numbers, and appreciate better the work our gas utilities are doing and support they may need to reinforce their work.

Natural gas infrastructure may be a relatively smaller contributor to Maine's greenhouse gas emission profile, but while this sector is by all available evidence doing good work, we ought to ensure it continues regardless of the federal government and be sure we fully understand this sectors' impact within our emissions accounting in the fight against climate change.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support this measure, and I thank you for your time and consideration. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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<sup>i</sup> Until (d/b/a Northern Utilities), Bangor Natural Gas, Maine Natural Gas (Avangrid), and Summit Natural Gas.

<sup>ii</sup> The reason they do so is myriad, but include federal regulation, economic incentive, and safety implications.

<sup>iii</sup> "Mapping urban pipeline leaks: Methane leaks across Boston." Phillips, Nathan G.; Ackley, Robert; Crosson, Eric R.; Down, Adrian; Hutyra, Lucy R.; Brondfield, Max; Karr, Jonathan D.; Zhao, Kaiguang; Jackson, Robert B. Environmental Pollution, November 3, 2012, <https://jacksonlab.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj20871/files/media/file/ep2013.pdf>.

<sup>iv</sup> "Designing Better Methane Mitigation Policies: The Challenge of Distributed Small Sources in the Natural Gas Sector." Environmental Research Letters, April 19, 2017, <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/aa6791>.

<sup>v</sup> "Repair Failures Call for New Policies to Tackle Leaky Natural Gas Distribution Systems." Environmental Science & Technology, May 3, 2021, 55, 10, 6561–6570, <https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.est.0c07531>.

<sup>vi</sup> Colorado Code of Regulations. 5 C.C.R. §§ 1001-1009, 2014.

<sup>vii</sup> California Code of Regulations. 17 C.C.R. §§ 95665-95677, 2017.

<sup>viii</sup> See <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXXII/Chapter164/Section145> per Massachusetts General Laws Annotated. An Act Relative to Natural Gas Leaks, ch. 164, § 145, 2014.