

**Testimony of Ashley Luszczki
Before the Joint Standing Committees on Energy, Utilities and Technology
In Opposition to L.D. 1949, An Act Regarding Energy Fairness
May 15, 2025**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Ashley Luszczki. I am testifying on behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, representing a network of more than 5,000 businesses. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to L.D. 1949, An Act Regarding Energy Fairness.

Ensuring Mainers can afford and access energy services is something that we should all support and strive for. Like residential consumers, businesses of all types and sizes are dependent on reliable and affordable energy. While the objective for fairness is important, the Chamber is concerned about the unintended consequences that L.D. 1949 could present – added operations and costs, which could discourage infrastructure investments.

Specific to Sections A-1 and 2, utilities follow disconnection procedures outlined in the Public Utilities Commission's (Commission) Chapter 815 Rules. This legislation goes a step further by prohibiting a utility from disconnecting or terminating service for nonpayment if the customer or a member of the customer's household meets certain criteria – such as being 65 years of age, under 12 months of age, or has been certified by a medical professional or government authority within the last 12 months as having a medical condition or disability. Essentially, utilities would need to obtain and retain personal data on customers and others within their households. This would add to utilities administrative operations. On this point, we believe that continued coordination with agencies who administer HEAP and LIAP will ensure that utilities aren't tasked with holding and verifying personal information of customers – adding an administrative burden - that some may view as a privacy concern.

In recent years, the legislature has taken steps to reduce utility's ability to recover certain costs – educational, political and lobbying expenditures, specifically. Section B-2 would further restrict their ability to do so by including compensation for any employee of a public utility who has spent time lobbying, attended rate case proceedings, etc. This is a concern as the expertise of specific individuals is at times required to assist in informing policymakers and the Commission. This proposed requirement could deter utilities from bringing that expertise forward, which could ultimately have an impact on Maine policies.

Section C-2 introduces another administrative burden by defining “administrative charge” and requiring utilities to add a description of these charges to customers' bills. This would add complexity to the billing process as new descriptions would need to be described for any infrastructure work utilities do. Section C-5 of the legislation would require a transmission and

distribution utility to provide an “accurate and comprehensive description of the costs and benefits of the components of public policy charges if such charges are included on a customer's bill.” As this Committee has heard before, not all utilities billing systems are designed in a way that allows them to break out this information and level of detail on each customer's bill.

Disconnections are never the goal - they aren't beneficial for customers or the utilities that must do them. The Chamber believes Maine already has strong requirements that utilities must abide by when it comes to disconnecting customers and the Commission enforces rules that prevent disconnection for financial hardship, medical hardship, and extreme temperatures – including a winter disconnection moratorium period. Adding to utilities operations will add new layers of administrative operations that will further increase costs – and would do so at a time when infrastructure is aging and in need of investment. For these reasons, we urge you to oppose L.D. 1949. Thank you for your consideration.