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THE MAINE SENATE  
132nd Legislature

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**Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology on  
LD 1963, An Act to Protect and Compensate Public Utility Whistleblowers  
May 15, 2025**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology: I am Senator Rick Bennett of Oxford, and I have the honor of serving 14 communities in Western Maine in the State Senate. I am here to testify in support of LD 1963, "An Act to Protect and Compensate Public Utility Whistleblowers."

As a response to 2008 financial crisis, Congress enacted the Dodd-Frank Act in 2010 to reform the financial regulatory system. This legislation set several whistleblower protections into law. These protections include eligibility for monetary awards, the ability of complaints to remain confidential, and protections from retaliation, among others. The bill before you is largely based on those proven protections.

The Maine Public Utility Whistleblower Protection Act will keep Mainers safe from potential harm caused by utility companies. It uses a tried and true approach to ensure the people are informed of bad practices by utility companies without jeopardizing the safety and careers of whistleblowers.

There is little doubt that such a proposal is needed. Utilities—such as electricity, water, gas, and telecommunications—are essential services that significantly affect the health, safety, and economic well-being of Maine's residents. But these essential services barely meet minimum service standards in our state.

As a matter of fact, for the past decade, Maine's two investor-owned electric utilities have had the lowest customer satisfaction rating in the country—even lower than a California utility that has been blamed for causing massive wildfires that destroyed thousands of structures and killed more than 80 people. At the same time, utility rates and corporate profits have shot up rapidly and reliability has plummeted.

Unfortunately, current whistleblower protections are wholly inadequate. Under current statute, someone who intends to blow the whistle must report within the company initially. If the employee doesn't follow this step, he/she can be fired immediately. But whistleblowers should be rewarded, not punished, for their bravery and the risk they accept for their careers.

My private sector work over the past 30 years has been in the field of corporate governance. I have seen the power of whistleblower protections in the area of securities law.

At a time when consumer protections are weakening in Washington, the least we can do is to reinforce them here in Maine. Thank you for your consideration today. I urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1963.