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Testimony of Representative Gerry Runte introducing

LD 2112, An Act to Authorize Municipalities to Form Community Choice Aggregation Programs to Procure Electricity

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and distinguished members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee, I am Gerry Runte and I represent Ogunquit, Wells, and York. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on **LD 2112, An Act to Authorize Municipalities to Form Community Choice Aggregation Programs to Procure Electricity**.

This bill gives Maine municipalities a tool that is already widely used across the country: the ability to aggregate the electric load of their residents, businesses, and municipal accounts to procure electricity competitively on their behalf, while leaving the delivery, reliability, and billing infrastructure entirely in the hands of existing transmission and distribution utilities.

To be clear, community choice aggregation (CCA) is not a mandate but an option, available only if a municipality chooses to adopt it by local vote and if the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) approves a detailed program plan. Today, ten states authorize community choice aggregation, including Massachusetts and New Hampshire. In Massachusetts alone, roughly half of all cities and towns participate. New Hampshire has rapidly expanded participation through a statewide coalition model. This bill reflects lessons learned from those states, tailored to Maine's regulatory framework.

The bill has several key features:

- Local control and transparency. Municipalities must adopt a plan through a vote of their legislative body, and the plan must be reviewed and approved by the PUC through rulemaking. A municipality can choose to optimize its purchase based on price, stability (long- or short-term), and the percent of renewable energy, if any, depending on what residents want.
- Automatic enrollment. Ratepayers on default service are automatically enrolled, with a clear right to opt out, requiring advance written notice and clear instructions for customers who choose not to participate. Any ratepayer already on third party supply will

have to opt in, ensuring that no existing contractual relationships are impacted by the launch of a program

- Strong consumer protections. CCA customers enjoy the same consumer protections as those offered by the default service providers today.
- Explicit protections for low-income and electric assistance program customers. The CCA program ensures no loss of benefits, no added fees, and continued application of all existing utility-administered discounts and protections.
- Consolidated billing and purchase of receivables. Customers continue to receive a single utility bill, utilities assume collection and bad-debt risk, and CCAs are treated consistently with other competitive suppliers.
- PUC oversight and transparency. The PUC is the rulemaking authority, and annual reporting requirements ensure impacts are visible and measurable.
- Supplier Protections. Because this is a universal access program, suppliers of community choice aggregations will have the same financial protection as a supplier for default service, specifically a payment guarantee as contemplated by the purchase of receivables mechanism. The supplier will pay a fee to the utility company for this service.

Significantly, this bill does not interfere with the utility's responsibility for poles, wires, reliability, outage response, or system planning. Transmission and distribution services remain fully regulated, and utilities are compensated under existing rate schedules.

At its core, this bill is about choice and competition. It allows municipalities that want to pursue price stability, local energy goals, or procurement innovation the option to do so.

The bill places Maine alongside neighboring states by giving local governments a lawful, regulated pathway to aggregate demand and negotiate electricity supply on behalf of their communities.

I urge the Committee to support this bill and look forward to working with you on any technical refinements that improve clarity, consumer protection, or implementation.

Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions.