



February 19, 2026

Testimony in Support

LD 2203 – An Act to Limit Rates Charged to Low-Income Electricity Consumers

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, my name is Kathleen Bowman, Vice President of Government Affairs for Central Maine Power Company, here today in support LD 2203 – An Act to Limit Rates Charged to Low-Income Electricity Consumers.

CMP supports this bill to prohibit competitive energy providers (CEPs) from charging low-income customers more than the standard offer rate. This bill addresses a longstanding and well-documented concern: low-income customers who receive ratepayer- or taxpayer-funded assistance who are enrolled in CEP contracts that charge higher rates than the standard offer.

From the perspective of a regulated utility and a steward of the ratepayer assistance programs that the Legislature has created, our support for this bill is simple. Assistance programs exist to reduce a customer's energy burden, not to offset overpriced supply.

Low-income programs such as Low-Income Assistance Program (LIAP), and the Arrearage Management Program (AMP) are funded by all ratepayers and in some cases by taxpayers. These programs are carefully designed to make energy more affordable. It undermines the intent of those programs when a low-income customer receiving support to pay their bill uses a competitive supplier charging more than the standard offer.

Low-Income households may have less ability to weather fluctuating or above-market supply rates. The numbers from the Electric Ratepayer Advisory Council (ERAC) report show a potentially higher likelihood of low-income households being subject to door-to-door or telemarketing sales that can be confusing or misleading—offering gift cards or other enticements to enroll.

When CEPs charge substantially higher rates, these customers absorb the harm immediately. When they cannot keep up, ratepayers and taxpayers ultimately bear the cost through increased arrearages and higher program funding needs, especially with the low-income program moving to a bill discount rate effective October 1, 2026.

Maine has invested significant effort into consumer protection in the energy sector, yet gaps remain, particularly around competitive supply.

Ensuring that low-income customers are never charged above the standard offer is one of the simplest, most effective consumer protections the Legislature can enact. We respectfully urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass.