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Testimony In Support of
LD 1008 – An Act To Require Joint Use Entities To Establish Permanent Liaisons with All
County Emergency Management Agencies

April 6, 2021

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, honorable members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, the Public Utilities Commission (Commission) testifies in support of [LD 1008](#), *An Act To Require Joint Use Entities To Establish Permanent Liaisons with All County Emergency Management Agencies*. This legislation requires joint use entities, including consumer- and investor-owned public utilities, voice service providers, dark fiber providers, wholesale or retail competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs), cable television systems, unlit fiber providers, telecommunications service providers, and information service providers, to establish liaisons in any county in Maine where the entity has facilities. The bill establishes that the purpose of these liaisons would be to assist in the coordination of efforts during a disaster or civil emergency.

The Commission supports this legislation as we believe it will improve communications between Emergency Management Agencies (EMAs), transmission and distribution (T&D) utilities and all other utilities. Commission staff support the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) when major storms impact utility customers. We have seen firsthand how enhanced communication and coordination improve restoration efforts and improve safety issues associated with these events. The Commission also understands that MEMA supports this legislation.

By way of background, the Commission provides the following information on Commission activities related to this legislation. In December 2017, the Commission opened an investigation to gather information on T&D utilities preparedness and response to the October 2017 storm that caused approximately 467,000 CMP customers and 90,000 Emera Maine customers to lose power.

The Commission's Order (Docket No. [2017-00324](#)), in this case noted a lack of a coordinated, commonly understood, and consistently followed set of protocols for information exchange and activity responsibility among the utilities, municipalities, county EMAs and MEMA. This appeared to have

resulted in delays in addressing unsafe conditions, e.g., wires in the road, making roads passable, and, generally, introduced uncertainties and inefficiencies that may have impeded restoration efforts.

Both CMP and Versant (formerly Emera Maine) recommended embedding utility employees at MEMA during future events involving significant power outages. While this recommendation was not acted upon to operational concerns, both utilities actively participate in all MEMA calls during storms. Both utilities also expressed a desire to improve coordination with county EMAs during storm events.

For example, Versant committed to improved communication with EMAs but did not go as far as committing to providing a liaison at each county EMA. They do have a participant in the MEMA storm planning calls. CMP's Storm report indicates the many steps the company took to communicate and coordinate with EMAs, including "activating Liaison officers in five county EMA offices (Lincoln, Knox, Cumberland, York, Sagadahoc) to coordinate road openings and improve coordination at the regional levels." Although this is an ongoing effort, there is not a formal requirement to provide a liaison.

Because utility poles and equipment are often jointly owned, it is sometimes necessary to contact other utilities, and some of them currently have no formal contact with state or municipal government agencies. In some cases, the T&D utility has pole replacement and maintenance responsibility, and, in other cases, that duty lies with the telecommunications or cable company who own the poles. The Commission noted in the Order cited above inefficient communications between T&D utilities and telecommunications companies, resulting in significant restoration delays.

The Commission is available to answer any questions related to this legislation and will be happy to participate in any work session.

Sincerely,



Garrett Corbin
Legislative Liaison

cc: Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee Members
Deirdre Schneider and Daniel Tartakoff, Legislative Analysts