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***Testimony of Rep. Allison Hepler in support of
LD 1008, An Act to Require Joint Use Entities to Establish Permanent Liaisons with All County
Emergency Management Agencies
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology***

Good morning Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry and members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee. My name is Allison Hepler and I represent House District 53, which includes the Towns of Arrowsic, Georgetown, Phippsburg, Woolwich, Dresden, and a small part of Richmond. I am pleased to be a co-sponsor of this bill, and sorry I cannot be with you “in person” (so to speak) to testify in support of **LD 1008. An Act to Require Joint Use Entities to Establish Permanent Liaisons with All County Emergency Management Agencies.**

This bill grew out of a conversation that the legislative delegation representing Sagadahoc County had with our county administrators. We’ve been having regular conversations with county and other agencies that provide services to our constituents.

This bill would require any entity that provides services on our utility poles to appoint a permanent liaison who would be the contact person with each county emergency management agency. The value of such a person became crystal clear after the wind storm in 2017 when many of our towns lost power for over a week. Local Fire and EMS services had a tough time working with cable, telephone and electric companies to remove or deactivate wires as needed because there was no one point person with whom they could communicate and coordinate. Out of this emergency came a bill that required the electric utility companies to appoint a liaison as that person to communicate with the County EMAs.

This has worked well, at least in Sagadahoc County, and provides a good model for the bill before you. After several storms this past winter that damaged lines and poles, the need to apply this same organizational strategy to other organizations that also hang lines on the utility poles became clear. It is a simple and commonsense effort that should reduce redundancy, improve communication, and lessen service interruptions for Mainers in the event of natural disasters.

When I spoke with the Woolwich EMS Director, he reiterated that whenever there’s a significant storm, there is coordination that needs to happen between utilities, Fire Departments, and Public Works. The best place for this to occur, he said, is with the County EMAs. In order for it to be beneficial, everyone has to be at the table. This bill will assist in getting these private companies to the table.

Thank you.