

To: Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and Members of the Committee for Energy Utilities and Technology

From: Bradley Sawyer, Director of Government Affairs

Date: April 6, 2021

Re: Testimony in Support of L.D. 1008, An Act To Require Joint Use Entities To Establish Permanent Liaisons with All County Emergency Management Agencies

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and Members of the Joint Committee for Energy Utilities and Technology, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Brad Sawyer, and I am the Director of Government Affairs for the Maine Rural Water Association.

Rural Water supports L.D. 1008 and feels this is a simple bill that will help ensure the health and safety of the people of Maine. This legislation would guarantee that during a disaster or emergency local authorities will have up-to-date and accurate contact information with utility personnel. Water and wastewater utilities are often overlooked during conversations about first responders until there is a problem with their systems. However, when these systems fail, support is requested, and expected, immediately. This bill recognizes that our membership is critical to a healthy society and ensures proper channels of communication when a disaster happens.

The one change that we think the committee should consider is adding a reciprocal requirement that county emergency management agencies be required to provide equal contact information to all joint use entities and public utilities that submit information due to this legislation. When emergencies happen, there is no time to dig through emails and files to find that information. These utilities are often the first ones to be aware of issues within their systems and should have all necessary contact information on hand.

This bill will be beneficial in times of emergency, but we believe it can be made stronger with a reciprocal requirement. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at Bradley.Sawyer@MaineRWA.org or 207-737-9014.