

To: Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology

From: Hallie Arno

Date: May 20, 2021

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 1708: An Act To Create the Pine Tree Power Company, a Nonprofit Utility, To Deliver Lower Rates, Reliability and Local Control for Maine Energy Independence

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology: My name is Hallie Arno, I am a student at College of the Atlantic and a resident of Lincolnville.

I am currently studying ecology and marine science and plan to stay in Maine for the rest of my life. I love the state, both the people and natural beauty. However, I am worried about that natural beauty and my future as a Mainer being degraded by forces like climate change, being bought up by foreign developers, and the increasing cost of living, especially for modern necessities like broadband and utilities. Pine Tree Power will address all of these concerns.

Climate change is the most pressing issue that my generation will face. We already see its effects, both around the world and here in Maine with sea level rise, changing species regimes, and droughts and floods. I have worked on research projects documenting the effects of climate change, from the extinction of Red Pines from Acadia National Park from Red Pine Scale to sea level rise infringing on Harbor Park in Camden. I am worried about the future.

The only way to curb the worst effects of climate change is to reduce emissions, and a large part of that will be switching to renewable energy. The current investor-owned utilities in Maine are working *against* the shift to renewable sources in the name of profit. We need local control, motivated by our values rather than the bottom line. The first six places in the US to reach 100% renewable electricity are all served by consumer-owned utilities, and many other consumer-owned utilities are far ahead of Maine in terms of renewables. Because of our natural-resource economy, we are incredibly vulnerable to climate change, especially fishermen, farmers, and foresters. Why aren't we leading the way for other states and countries to follow?

The Pine Tree power company will put our grid into local control. Decisions will not be made behind closed doors of multinational corporations' conference rooms; they'll be made by the people affected by those decisions. As a state with a reputation for being independent and self-sufficient, it is unfortunate that the decisions fundamentally affecting our day to day life—access to electricity—are being made thousands of miles away by people who may have never been to Maine.

LD 1708 will help us address the climate crisis while also saving money. There are many other benefits to a consumer-owned utility, such as lower costs, higher reliability, and broadband access. We already have nine consumer-owned utilities that work, and can follow the examples of hundreds of others around the world. I hope to see a future where all Mainers have equitable, affordable, and local clean energy. The Pine Tree Power Company is the first step in achieving this. Thank you,

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