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Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
130th Maine State Legislature

Re: LD 1708
Date: 5/19/21

Dear Senator Berry and Representative Lawrence,
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology,

Good afternoon, Thank you for providing the opportunity to speak before you. I urge you to vote ought to pass on 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.”** The time has come to replace the current investor-owned utility which has an abysmal record of customer service, maintenance and reliability. Foreign owned and bottom dollar incentivized public utility providers have **no** reason to address the needs of our citizens and businesses. They have actively worked to prevent local initiatives such as solar and wind development, energy efficiency measures and local micro grids. Little to no effort has been made to use the income they have pocketed to address reliability and thus many citizens have suffered weeks of unnecessary outages. The customer service department is extremely weak in response time and is woefully understaffed. The London School of Economics has finally debunked the trickle down, Reagan era, financial model that has been the death of the middle class, the loss of huge numbers of local jobs and it hasn't improved service. Investor owned utilities in Maine prove the point.

I am a member of Fox Islands Electric Coop- a consumer-owned electric company that provides North Haven and Vinalhaven islands with electricity. We, too, suffer from storm related outages. What I have experienced with my electric company is wildly different from that experienced by friends and relatives all over Maine. Fox Island Electric maintenance crews prune trees that threaten power lines during the summer. They watch the weather. When a storm is predicted, repair crews are available on both islands to do repair quickly. Over the past 16 years, I have rarely had an outage that lasts longer than three hours, the longest being seven. We have an able crew. They live in our community and thus are much more responsive to our needs as we are to theirs.

I am proud to say that 69% of my power is generated by the three wind turbines on Vinalhaven and the rest is provided by my grid tied solar panels. My power company willingly supported my

renewable installations unlike so many CMP and Emera customers who were hampered or prevented.

A consumer owned utility has the advantage of being much more responsive to local needs. But perhaps the most important aspect beyond the reliability factor is that the money generated by the system stays locally. Profits for CMP/Iberdrola/Avangrid and Emera accrue to foreign investors. That money does not circulate in Maine. A locally owned utility will employ Mainers who work for Mainers and are participating in Maine's local businesses. We will not have to pay the exorbitant interest rates to investor owned utilities. A non-profit, consumer owned utility would be charged much lower interest rates.

For all these reasons, I strongly urge the EUT members to vote ought to pass LD 1708. I realize that you are receiving ample lobbying efforts from the big monied foreign utilities to oppose this bill. Please see through their well oiled masks to the facts and vote "yes." It will make a big difference to Maine's economy going forward, give much greater reliability to our citizens and will support the growth of locally generated power. LD 1708 is a win-win-win for Maine.

Respectfully submitted

Becky Bartovics
Penobscot Occupied Territory
known as North Haven.