



To: Joint Committee on Electricity, Utilities, and Technology  
From: Andrew Blunt, Our Power  
Date: May 20, 2021  
Re: Testimony in Support of L.D. 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.”

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Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology. My name is Andrew Blunt and I am the Organizing Director for Our Power, a coalition of Maine ratepayers, business leaders, energy experts, youth, conservationists, and other advocates committed to putting the Pine Tree State’s energy future in the hands of Mainers, and we strongly urge you to support L.D. 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.”

I grew up in South Berwick, Maine, and I have been a CMP ratepayer or a member of a rate paying family in Maine for my entire life. Many things make me proud to call Maine home, but, unfortunately, our electric companies are not one of them.

Like many children growing up in Maine, harsh weather, snow, and ice have always defined winter. But 2008 stands out in my memory. That year, a December ice storm that many of you may remember hit Southern Maine hard, putting power out for millions across New England. My family was among them and some of you probably were too.

We spent four nights in our house without power, snow on the ground outside and temperatures well below freezing. With no fireplace, no generator, and no sign of power coming back on any time soon, we were forced to leave. Our house dropped below 40 degrees as I, at eleven years old, started packing my bag to take to the local shelter.

When I joined Our Power, I was motivated by this memory. Even though extreme weather events are unavoidable, I felt abandoned by CMP. Were our electric companies doing everything they could to mitigate risk for us? To constantly improve the service that they are responsible for? To put Mainers first? Learning that, in 2010, CMP fought tooth-and-nail to recover 100% of the

costs of that storm from ratepayers despite evidence that the severity of the damage was, in part, due to their failures to reinvest in our grid, I had my answer.

I share this story with you because it is telling. Maine's investor-owned utility model is broken. To CMP and Versant, electricity is a product, a means to make profit and care for faraway shareholders, not Mainers. But for my family and for people all across Maine, electricity is an essential service.

Our Power has brought together a diverse group of thousands of Mainers and over thirty organizations who recognize that. Republicans and democrats, business leaders and conservationists, young and old, rural and urban. Our unlikely coalition is unique because, amid the many voices identifying the problems with CMP and Versant, we are offering a lasting solution.

A tried-and-true consumer-owned business model based on self-determination, lower cost, both for ratepayers and for financing new investment into our grid, and improved reliability. The Pine Tree Power Company will cost no taxpayer or state bond dollars, and will help us build the grid of the future, one ready to decarbonize and electrify our economy. And even more, L.D. 1708 leaves the final decision up to Maine voters, who will get the chance to vote on it themselves.

It's time to let Mainers steer our own energy future, and for us to leave future generations a utility model that cares for them above all else. For the above reasons, we, at Our Power, urge you to vote ought-to-pass on L.D. 1708. Thank you for your consideration and I welcome any questions that you may have.