

To: Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology

From: Cassie Cain

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 Cassie Cain and I reside in Saco, Maine. I am writing in support of LD 1708 - An Act to Create the Pine Tree Power Company.

I work for 350 Maine and Maine Climate Action Now, two organizations advocating for climate justice and a just transition in Maine. I work as a Youth Engagement Coordinator and help co-facilitate the coalition Maine Youth for Climate Justice. I support LD 1708 and the formation of the Pine Tree Power Company because of the work I do. Youth are inheriting this climate and environment. Much of youth advocacy in the climate movement is informed by the knowledge that if the climate crisis is not addressed with urgency and justice, our futures are at stake. To play our part in the state of Maine, we must greatly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and transition to just sources of renewable energy. In order to do this, CMP and Versant must go.

CMP and Versant have had opportunities to support renewable energy in Maine, but have instead chosen to inhibit progress to a renewable energy future. The Pine Tree Power Company would do the opposite, by accelerating Maine's use of clean and green energy and electrifying the grid. This is evident in that all six US communities (including Kodiak, AK; Greensburg, KS; Burlington, VT; Aspen, CO, Georgetown, TX; and Rock Port, MO) that have reached 100% renewables are powered by consumer-owned utilities. Additionally, the Pine Tree Company would support a just transition. With access to low-interest capital, the Pine Tree Power Company could invest in a renewable energy future without being accountable to profit-seeking shareholders. This would save Mainers billions of dollars while also building out the grid we need for the transition off of fossil fuels. The Pine Tree Power Company would also match what CMP or Versant pays towns, and Maine's existing consumer-owned utilities could choose if they would like to join. Lastly, utility workers currently at CMP and Versant would keep their pensions, benefits, and seniority, receive 10% transition bonuses, and have greater job security and working conditions. New jobs would be added to improve service, reliability and emergency response. This is what a just transition looks like.

Another reason I support this bill is that I grew up in Kennebunk, Maine, in the Kennebunk Light & Power (KLP) District, one of 97 consumer-owned utilities in Maine. I now live in Saco, where CMP is the utility provider. From this I can say that being a customer of a consumer-owned utility is a far better experience. I rarely remember the electricity going out growing up, and when it did, KLP responded quickly and efficiently. Alternatively, the electricity frequently goes out in Saco on a sunny day for seemingly no reason, taking hours to be restored.

My experience is consistent with larger data on consumer-owned utilities. According to a [2020 J.D. Power Residential Customer Satisfaction Study](#), of the 13 top-rated utilities in the nation, 12 are consumer-owned utilities. Meanwhile, CMP and Versant are ranked worst and 3rd worst respectively, out of 142. According to the [U.S. Energy Information Administration \(EIA\)](#), in 2019, nationwide investor-owned utility customers were out of power an average of five hours (including outages due to severe weather events), while consumer-owned utility customers were out of power for only two hours. As the climate crisis escalates and contributes to more severe weather events, it is important to have utility providers that Maine residents can count on. This is even more so true when considering that CMP requested a rate increase amounting to approximately \$3/mo for an average bill to pay for 2020 storm damage in April 2021. Maine residents deserve utility providers that do not increase rates after severe weather events, support a just transition to renewable energy, and care about Maine residents and future generations.

As someone who has experienced the benefits of a consumer-owned utility and works to support future generations in their advocacy for climate justice, I urge you to pass 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. Thank you for your time and consideration.