

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and distinguished members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee, thank you for allowing me to speak in support of LD 1708 An Act to Create the Pine Tree Power Company. My name is Kristina Catomeris and I am calling in from Portland, Maine.

I am a special education teacher, and access to reliable internet is a necessity for both myself and my students. The field of teaching has changed dramatically this past year, and many students still face uncertainty with their return to school. Others are at risk of being held back. Access to the internet is now a determining factor for student success, and an investor-owned utility can enable the much needed high-speed internet rollout that CMP and Versant can't. Reliable broadband is no longer just necessary for on-site education. It is now critical for facilitating education itself, allowing students and teachers to fully participate in online learning, and access required tools such as digital textbooks and online assessments. According to a recent study, 30% of US public school students live in households without broadband access¹, yet broadband considerations influence fundamental education decisions ranging from determining curricula to implementing instructional models.² On a much more personal level, many of my students are nonverbal, and rely on devices with consistent internet access to be able to communicate their needs. Constraints to bandwidth access therefore threaten to undermine these students' fundamental rights to education, along with decades of investments towards making schools more accessible and equitable for all. A growing differential in broadband access threatens to perpetuate further educational and digital inequities between rural, urban, rich, and poor.

This bill has the potential to not only address, but actively reduce these inequalities. By giving Mainer's a say in establishing broadband and energy infrastructure based on local needs, we can begin evening the playing field for all students and educators regardless of income or zip code. This is why I adamantly support LD ###, and urge you to consider the need for public power. Thank you for your time, if you have any questions I would be happy to answer them.

¹ Jargon, J., (2020).

² State Educational Technology Directors Association, (2012).

References:

Federal Communications Commission (2014). Summary of the E-Rate modernization Order. Retrieved from <http://www.fcc.gov/page/summary-e-rate-modernization-order>

Jargon, J. (2020). Schools Work to Speed Up Internet in Rural Homes for Remote Learning. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/schools-work-to-speed-up-internet-in-rural-homes-for-remote-learning-11608037202>

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for Colleges and Careers (2014, May). Technology Guidelines for PARCC Assessments: Version 4.2. Retrieved from <http://www.parcconline.org/technology>

State Educational Technology Directors Association (2012, May). The Broadband Imperative: Recommendations to Address K-12 Education Infrastructure Needs. Retrieved from <http://www.setda.org>.

Governor Mills ~ 207-287-3531 then select option 4

Hi, my name is _____ and I live in _____. I'm calling to urge Gov. Mills to support replacement of CMP and Versant with a consumer-owned utility. This change would give us better service while saving Maine money. The buy-out of CMP and Versant will be funded by bonds backed by electricity sales, so it won't use any tax dollars. Plus Maine ratepayers will save billions over time because we won't be paying for CMP and Versant's profits and because the new consumer-owned utility will borrow at half the interest rate CMP and Versant do. Given what it's going to cost to beef up the grid to meet Maine's climate goals, Maine can't afford not to do this. I urge the Governor to become a champion for a statewide consumer-owned utility. It will cost us less and give us more.