



To: Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology  
From: Stephanie Clifford, Campaign Manager, Our Power  
Date: May 20, 2021  
Re: Support of L.D. 1708 “An Act to Create the Pine Tree Power Company”

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Chair Lawrence, Chair Berry, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology. My name is Stephanie Clifford and I am the Campaign Manager for Our Power, a coalition of Maine ratepayers, business leaders, energy experts, youth, conservationists and other advocates committed to putting our power in our hands.

We strongly urge you to support L.D. 1708, “An Act to Create the Pine Tree Power Company.”

As background, I have lived in Maine for over 30 years and raised my three kids here. I come from a line of women who’ve owned and operated businesses in Maine from Madison to Kennebunkport for the last 100 years. Following in their footsteps, I have owned and operated my own business for the past 20 years. I’m very excited to be working on this project.

**Put simply, the Pine Tree Power Company will be transformational for our state because it will put us in control of our energy future.**

A consumer-owned utility (COU) operates for the benefit of its ratepayers, that's you and me. It is run locally by Maine people, with its profits being reinvested in our communities, instead of into the pockets of foreign investors and foreign governments.

Speaking of governments running utility companies, I need to make an important clarification. Pine Tree Power company would not be government-run. No offense to all of you, but it will not be run by this Committee or the State of Maine. However, isn't it

ironic that the same opposition-funded astroturf group targeting you with ads, is actually defending our current government-owned utilities. Versant is 100% owned by the Canadian government and CMP/Versant/Iberdrola's majority owners are the governments of Spain, Qatar and Norway.

So, we agree, let's no longer have government-run or government-owned utilities in Maine.

But let's get to the crux of the issue. Just like my great grandmother, grandmother, and mother, who ran stores in Madison and Kennebunkport over the last century, always said - the customer comes first. But CMP and Versant don't operate from this principle-- from the statewide billing fiasco to their constant obstruction of renewable energy policies, they simply don't care about their customers.

**For the last five years, CMP has been dead last in the country for customer service and Versant third worst.**

In addition, the reliability of our grid is the worst in the nation, meaning Maine has the most frequent and longest outages. On the flip side, consumer-owned utilities around the country are twice as reliable as investor-owned utilities.

COUs are not new. In fact, 1 in 3 Americans get their power from COUs and we have 9 in Maine. These nine charge 58% less on average and have better reliability than CMP and Versant.

While you consider this bill, please keep in mind: Utility companies have a privileged position because they are given a protected monopoly by us, the customers. In order to be granted this privilege they promise to deliver reliable, quality service and by being honest and fair to their customers.

**CMP and Versant have failed us because they are operating under a business model that puts its owners and foreign investors first, not its Maine customers. This has left us, literally, in the dark.**

I urge you to pass L.D. 1708. Thank you very much for your time and hard work on this legislation.