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

Re: LD 1708

Date: 5/19/21

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

My name is Jonathan Fulford. I have been a building contractor in Waldo County for 33 years. In that time, I helped create three successful businesses, so am no stranger to the competitive marketplace.

Imagine if, no matter how poorly I built the homes and how inaccurately I billed my customers, I was given exclusive rights to every construction job for every building in Waldo County. Now imagine I was also guaranteed a 10% profit through no-bid government contracts, even if my customer satisfaction rating was the worst of any builder in the country. No one would think that this system was logical, fair, or even remotely related to free market capitalism. It would be a monopoly. This is how the investor owned utilities operate now. CMP/Avangrid/Iberdrola and Versant/Enmax present themselves as effective, local, free market businesses being threatened by a "government takeover." These claims are laughable.

In reality, these Investor Owned Utilities are actually government-regulated monopolies that are subsidiaries of huge, multinational corporations. They are offered exclusive access to their territory and guaranteed approximately 10% profits. The goal of an Investor Owned Utility is to maximize profits to their shareholders. There is no real incentive for Investor Owned Utilities to provide good service and lower costs to consumers. This is why we have such an expensive and unreliable electrical grid.

If I operated my businesses with such disregard for quality and customer satisfaction, they would have failed in short order.

A Consumer Owned Utility is the way to end this failed experiment in socialized costs and socialized risk for privatized profits.

The Consumer Owned model creates a utility that is owned by ratepayers and managed for their benefit. Decisions will be made by Mainers and the process will be transparent to all. It is not a "government takeover." It is the ratepayers taking their utility back from a for-profit monopoly.

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."