

To: Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
From: David Gibson
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 Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology: my name is David Gibson, and I am a resident of Morrill. I am offering this testimony in enthusiastic support for: *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.*

I am a Certified Energy Manager and LEED Accredited Professional for Building Design and Construction through the US Green Building Council. I have more than a decade of experience leading efficiency and clean energy projects, including 2 years leading the implementation of efficiency programs for the Nevada Governor's Office of Energy.

Throughout my career, I have seen Investor-Owned Utilities (IOUs) oppose clean energy initiatives. In Nevada, IOUs led an effort to devalue electricity from rooftop solar by both increasing monthly service charges and cutting the value of net-metered electricity by 75%. In Maine, CMP, Versant, and now Emera have opposed or attempted to weaken clean energy legislation for decades. At the same time, the IOUs extract hundreds of millions of dollars in profits from our local economy.

It is absurd that regulated utilities are guaranteed such high rates of return. In a regulated environment, they are exposed to zero risk. The Public Utilities Commission lets them recover costs (from customers) when there are storms or other impacts on the transmission and distribution grid. At the same time, they are guaranteed 10-12% profits when they build new infrastructure. A consumer-owned utility will be able to build infrastructure at much lower interest rates (~2.5%-4.5%), saving 6-8% annually on financing costs. This may not sound like much, but when there is tens of billions of dollars of investment needed in the state's electric grid in coming decades, this results in billions of dollars of savings for Maine's ratepayers!

At the same time, this puts control of the electric grid into the hands of Maine citizens. For far too long, foreigners have made all the decisions relating to our electrical infrastructure. This profit-driven decision-making has led to

deterioration of our infrastructure, while hard-earned dollars continue to flow out of the state from the pockets of Maine families.

We can have better, more reliable electrical infrastructure, make the transition to 100% clean energy, and save money too! This is truly a win-win for Maine families and businesses. Please 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!

Thank you Representative Berry for bringing this legislation forward.

I ask the committee to vote
LD 1708 Ought to Pass.