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First, my sincere thanks to the Committee for considering my testimony.

I live in Southwest Harbor and make my living as a technical writer and editor, working from a home office. Entrepreneurs like me depend on power and data to keep us in business. When the power goes down, our jobs go dark.

But even when the power is on and the Internet is up, I'm on the edge of what is functional for a modern online business. I have DSL, but that's not "high-speed" by today's standards; to make my bandwidth suffice I constantly have to play tricks like turning off Dropbox sync so I can have a Zoom meeting.

I could pay thousands to have cable extended down the road to my house, and I could install a backup generator, at least \$5,000 more. I can't afford those fixes and I shouldn't have to.

The fact that Maine is an iffy place for home-based businesses that rely on the Internet is a recognized problem. The owners of such businesses tend, unlike me, to be under 40 — the sort of people that Maine, the most elderly state, needs to attract. But many are going to think twice about setting up shop — or even staying! — in a state with frequent outages and the fifth-slowest average Internet speed in the country.

The Public Utilities Commission has been chasing CMP and Versant with sticks and carrots for decades, and it simply hasn't worked. Not only does Maine still have abysmal reliability, but CMP's and Versant's high make-ready and other fees have been identified as an obstacle to the growth of high-speed Internet in Maine.

Meanwhile, consumer-owned utilities, both nationwide and in Maine, have a track record of supplying more reliable electricity than investor-owned utilities. And increasing reliability and opening the way for high-speed Internet would be among the statutory missions of the new COU proposed by LD1708.

It will be a happy day for me when I can pay my first power bill to a company of which I am part owner, whose board I help elect, and that has reliability and high-speed Internet written into its DNA.

I support LD1708 because it will replace CMP and Versant, which have drastically failed to provide reliable service or support high-speed Internet for Maine, with a Consumer-Owned Utility dedicated to these and other aspects of the public interest.

Thank you!