

Dwight Hobbs
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Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry and distinguished members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in support of LD #1708, An Act to Create the PineTree Power Company. My name is Dwight Hobbs and I live in Whitefield, Maine. I appreciate this opportunity to discuss what a Consumer-Owned Utility can do for Maine.

I am a 32 year old living in Lincoln County, the oldest in the country by median age. Just below 40% of Lincoln County residents over the age of 60 live alone, close to the state average. These Mainers are currently serviced by the least reliable utility in the country, which is simply unacceptable. Our family, friends and neighbors deserve better reliability, and the security that comes with it. I note my age in comparison to illustrate an additional problem for Maine - the need to attract young people to the state, and the ability to convince young Mainers to either stay or make their way back. Safety for older Mainers on one hand and competitiveness for younger Mainers on the other, are two major issues where we can do better - and where a consumer-owned utility can play an important role.

The complete lack of public trust in CMP, according to JD Power surveys from 2018-2020 [3], is an obvious embarrassment. It underscores that we should seek a better, more accountable alternative. The creation of a utility managed by an elected board of fellow Mainers would go a long way in demonstrating the importance of public goods and services that are managed democratically for the benefit of its users, not for profit.

I support LD #1708 because it would replace CMP and Versant, which are foreign owned, unreliable, and expensive, with a Consumer-Owned Utility that is local, reliable, and low cost. No matter your age, Mainers deserve a democratic say in the running of an essential public service. Thank you for considering my testimony.

Citations:

[1] "Maine Data Glimpse: Share of Householders Age 60+ Living Alone", John T Gorman Foundation,
<https://www.jtgfoundation.org/resource/maine-data-glimpse-share-of-householders-age-60-living-alone/>

[2]
<https://www.mainepublic.org/business-and-economy/2020-11-18/cmp-earns-worst-in-nation-customer-satisfaction-marks-for-third-consecutive-year>