

Nikolas Letendre-Cahillane
Deer Isle

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and distinguished members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee, Thank you for allowing me to speak 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

My name is Niko Letendre-Cahillane and I live in Deer Isle, Maine. I appreciate this opportunity to discuss what a consumer-owned utility can do for Maine.

Maine families below the federal poverty line spend 24% of their income on energy. In addition to the crushing financial burden, much of this money is used on expensive fossil fuels for heat. We need to shift away from heating fuels and towards electric heat pumps, and we need affordable and reliable electricity to power them. A democratically accountable COU will speed electrification at the lowest cost, without concern for profit, while also delivering cheaper power. This will enable low-income Mainers to escape energy poverty.

In addition to cost, one of my greatest concerns is the environment. I live on an island that depends on Maine's fisheries, and we are already seeing the effects of global warming. The Gulf of Maine is warming faster than 99% of the world's oceans. Shrimp, scallops and cod populations have declined dramatically as the water heats up. We may be in a lobster boom now, but what's good for lobstering in Maine now will not continue to be as the lobster populations are pushed farther North. Without a serious change in carbon emissions we are looking at an existential threat to the industry. A non-profit COU with a mandate to seek out low carbon energy sources would be a key weapon in our shared fight against a rapidly approaching climate catastrophe.

I support LD #1708 because it would replace CMP and Versant, which are foreign-owned, unreliable, unaccountable and expensive, with the Pine Tree Power Company, a Consumer-Owned Utility that is locally and democratically controlled, reliable, and low cost.