

Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee
Maine State Legislature
Cross Building, Room 211
Maine State House
Augusta, ME 04330

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.

My name is Robert McHugh-Westfall and I live in Woolwich, Maine. I appreciate this opportunity to discuss what a Consumer-Owned Utility can do for Maine.

I support this legislation because of the benefits it will have for ratepayers. During the Covid-19 pandemic many working people throughout the state have struggled to pay their soaring electrical bills. Unemployment, lockdown restrictions, and the increase in working from home over the last year have caused ratepayers to spend more time at home, using electricity to keep their homes warm and lit, to cook, and run to electronics, increasing costs for ratepayers during a time when many could least afford it. In fact, CMP even requested approval for a rate hike of \$26.5 million in April. The lower rates offered by a consumer-owned utility would have helped to provide stability for many people during this time. While vaccine availability is allowing us to look forward to the end of the pandemic, now is also the time to look back and consider how we can make the electricity we all depend on more affordable for all rate-payers. Now is the time for Maine to move to replace the foreign investor-owned CMP with a consumer owned utility that would ensure that electricity is delivered at an affordable cost for all rate-payers.

On top of this, electricity use is likely to go up even further, putting an additional strain on rate-payers under CMP's for-profit model. For our state to achieve its established climate and clean energy goals, we must shift to electricity from other sources of energy like gasoline and heating oil. For this to succeed, the grid must be upgraded to distribute three times as much power as it does now, at a cost of 10 to 15 billion dollars over the next thirty years. A consumer owned utility will save Maine ratepayers billions on these upgrades because, as a nonprofit, it will borrow capital at about half the interest rate of for-profit utilities.

I support LD #1708 because it would replace CMP and Versant, which are foreignowned, unreliable, and expensive, with a Consumer-Owned Utility that is local, reliable, and low cost. Thank you for listening to my testimony today. I am ready to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,
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