

Mikki Rice
Freeman Township

Mikki Rice
Freeman Twp.
In Support of: LD 1708
EUT Committee: 05/17/21

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and honorable members of the Energy, Utility, and Technology Committee. My name is Mikki Rice and I live in Freeman Township (Franklin County) Maine. I thank you for allowing me to testify 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

I am a current customer of Central Maine Power company. I am also a resident in a small rural township in Western Maine. When I first moved here about 15 years ago from the Lewiston/Auburn area, my husband warned me that we would lose power an average of 2 to 3 times per winter and it would only happen when the weather was really horrible, I was surprised, coming from living between St. Mary's and CMMC that there were still many places in Maine that didn't have the luxury of reliable electricity delivery. I never in my life would have imagined though, that a decade and a half later I would be dealing with double the number of outages at twice the duration as I did when I first moved in.

I am not joking one bit when I tell you that I have lost power at least 5 times in the past 2 months, and as you know we have had a very mild winter/spring this year. My children's school has even had to cancel school 2 times within the past 2 months for power outages. During remote learning, if the teachers don't have electricity they can't hook up to the Internet and they can't teach their classes. It's not like I'm just in a bad area either. The Energy Information Administration's Annual Electric Power Industry Report says that Maine is one of the 4 worst US states for the number of outages per customer and has some of the longest outages in the nation. CMP and Versant have had decades to deliver reliable power and haven't done it because they are focused on profits over people. They don't want to put money into the Grid because that takes money out of their pockets. They aren't Mainers so why should they care about Mainers? Nationally and locally, consumer-owned utilities provide significantly more reliable power than investor-owned utilities, with COU's having fewer and shorter interruptions.

Consumer-owned utilities do this at cheaper rates for their ratepayers than investor-owned utilities do as well. So I pay more than My neighbors in say Madison, Maine, for worse service. I for one, am sick of paying top dollar for abysmal service.

We have given CMP and Versant long enough to try and fix their reliability issues, but they haven't. Because they aren't in the business of making their customers happy. They're in the business of turning a profit for their shareholders. It is time to have a company that actually works for us.

We give utility companies a monopoly in Maine so that they can successfully operate the utility, but Investor-owned utilities have proven that for-profit businesses can't handle that responsibility. What other business do you know of that could charge you more and more every year for a service that is less and less reliable, and would still be able to stay in business? I can't think of one. So please remember that too, when someone brings up the free-market argument. It's not a free market to begin with. CMP and Versant have been taking advantage of Maine ratepayers for far too long and it's time we deem them unfit as our electric delivery providers and start a new non-profit company to take their place.

It's time to do what is right for Mainers, which is why I urge you to vote Ought to pass on LD 1708 An Act To Create the Pine Tree Power Company. It's time to take control of Maine's electricity future and give Mainers like myself reliable, local, and affordable electricity delivery. The Pine Tree Power Company will be a non-profit electric utility that works for Mainers because it is owned by Mainers.

Thank you,
Mikki Rice