



**Solutions for a
Toxic-Free Tomorrow**

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Director of Advocacy, Defend Our Health, 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,” before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology.
May 20, 2021

Good Morning Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry and members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the director of advocacy for Defend Our Health. Defend Our Health works to make sure everyone has equal access to safe food, safe drinking water, healthy homes and toxic-free, climate-friendly products. I am here 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”.

LD 1708 will create a consumer-owned utility, the Pine Tree Power Company, giving Maine more control over our energy grid. The Pine Tree Power Company will be a not-for-profit organization that will be run by an elected board of directors who will represent the diversity of Maine. Revenue will be re-invested back into the power grid, helping to keep the grid updated and reliable. Consumer-owned utilities have been found to be more reliable and, in those communities that have COUs, they are incredibly popular, enjoying high approval ratings from customers. As someone who has experienced several power outages in the past couple years, it would be nice to have more reliable service.

As an environmental health non-profit, we care about impacts of climate change on our health and the environment. Transitioning to a consumer-owned utility will help to move Maine more quickly towards a clean energy future. If you look at communities that are moving towards or have achieved 100% renewable energy, all of those communities have consumer-owned utilities. In addition, as we move away from fossil fuels and towards more electricity-powered items such as cars and heat pumps, we will need a modern, reliable energy grid.

Consumer-owned utilities will provide reliable, affordable and energy-efficient services to Mainers. Therefore, we urge you to vote unanimously “ought to pass” on LD 1708.

Thank you.