

March 15, 2022

Hon. Senator Mark Lawrence, Senate Chair  
Hon. Representative Seth Berry, House Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

**RE: Proposed Amendment to L.D. 318:** *An Act To Provide More Options to Maine Electric Service Customers and Support Maine's Climate Goals*

Dear Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee:

My name is Ben Lucas, and I am submitting this letter on behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, a statewide business organization consisting of a network of more than 5,000 large and small employers across Maine. I apologize for being unable to deliver our testimony in person, however, due to a work session in another committee at the same time, I am unavailable. We believe it important to be on record as neither for nor against the proposed amendment to LD 318.

To start, I want to indicate that part of the reason for our neither for nor against testimony is given the fact this amendment was made public for the first-time late yesterday afternoon. With the public hearing schedule for 9:00 AM, I have not been able to discuss the amendment with my full policy committee. Once I have had a chance to do so, if there is a change in position, I will be sure to relay that to this committee. But again, given the subject matter, we felt it was important to engage in the discussion.

Regarding section one, we support any efforts to bring stakeholders together to evaluate how we can better improve our electric rates. We would be happy to participate in the stakeholder group formed by the Public Advocate. We also would be happy and would encourage our membership to participate under the line that indicates, "representatives of small and large businesses and industries." We felt it was important to relay that to this committee, the sponsor, and the public advocates office to please keep us in mind as we are willing to participate in the stakeholder group.

Right now, Maine businesses, like everyone, are seeing substantial increases in their electric bill due to the demand and price of natural gas and the reliance of the New England grid on natural gas and oil. We are hearing from some of our members who are seeing 30%+ increases on their energy and electric bills. Businesses employ hundreds of thousands of Mainers, and the increased costs they are currently experiencing could impact future investments to their business, their employees, and future job creation.

If the electric bills keep going up, that will drive up the costs of doing business in Maine, leaving Maine employers in a tough position about the future of their business. Any piece of legislation that might lead to lower electric costs is worthy of thorough debate and consideration.

Again, we appreciate the intent of the legislation and would respectfully ask the committee to consider how the Maine State Chamber of Commerce could participate in these conversations with the stakeholder group. If the committee has any questions, my contact information is below and please reach out before the work session and I will do my best to provide the answers the committee needs. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Benjamin R. Lucas  
Government Relations Specialist  
Maine State Chamber of Commerce  
Phone: 207-441-9333  
Email: [blucas@mainechamber.org](mailto:blucas@mainechamber.org)