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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ENERGY, UTILITIES AND
TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE January 22, 2024

LD2077 An Act Regarding Customer Costs and the Environmental and Health
Effects of Natural Gas.

-In Opposition_

Good morning Senate Chair Lawrence, House Chair Zeigler and members of
the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology.

My name is Richard I. Parkhurst and I the owner of PARKHRST, LLC, THE
LOFTS AT 226, LLC, and DOWNTOWN, LLC. I am a developer of
commercial and residential properties in Augusta and Waterville, Maine.

In regards to the promotional allowances provided by natural gas suppliers:

During the past twelve years I have renovated buildings that were
condemned, bank acquired, and underutilized in Augusta and Waterville.
I have created 22 residential apartments, 7 retail businesses, and 4 service
based businesses.

The installation of natural gas at no cost to me along with the
promotional credits provided were a major contributor to the success I
have experienced over the past several years. Without the support of the
natural gas industry much of my development would not have taken
place.

While I do feel that the rate payers should not carry the costs of
continued extension and installation of natural gas lines, I believe that
natural gas will be a viable energy supplier for many years to come and
should not be limited or restricted by Legislation. The industry stock
holders should be free to invest in expanded service and promotional
campaigns as long as it does not negatively impact the rate payers.
Natural gas seems to be pro-development while the alternatives continue

to become more expensive. The natural gas industry has been a great partner in the robust redevelopment of Downtown Augusta during the past twelve years.

Until the Electrical Grid becomes more reliable and more affordable I will continue to use natural gas to keep my buildings from freezing in the Maine winters. My future developments will be influenced by the affordable accessibility of natural gas.

In regards to the Environment and Health Effects of natural Gas:

I the two Kennebec River floods during 2023 as I watched oil slicked water from ruptured and leaking oil tanks along Front Street, Augusta enter my building and as I watched leaking LP gas tanks float by my building experienced no natural gas leaks or ruptures. Unlike many who live and work on Water Street, my tenants had no interrupted gas service. While the State Fire Marshall's Office and the City of Augusta instructed Central Maine Power to cut power to Water Street for fear of explosions and fires caused by leaking LP gas and oil tanks, my natural gas never had to be turned off. The negative Environmental impact of gas and oil leaks in Augusta alone must have caused staggering and undeniable pollution of the Kennebec River. The negative air quality in Augusta from oil and gas was still present three weeks after the December 2023 flood. If Environmental and Health Effects are a major concern of LD2077, restricting the use of natural gas is NOT the solution.

Sincerely:
Richard I. Parkhurst