

## SUPPORT LD 2067

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology,

My name is Kiera Reardon of Bowdoin. I offer this written testimony supporting LD 2067, “An Act to Make Permanent the Arrearage Management Program for Low-income Residential Electricity Customers.” Many of you have heard me testify on this program in an official capacity, but today, I offer my testimony as a constituent who has engaged with this program and believes in the bridge out of poverty it offers to my friends and neighbors.

I have had the privilege of working on the Arrearage Management Program (AMP) for many years. It taught me how to craft thoughtful and effective support mechanisms for Mainers in need. Never before had I engaged in a social program that required buy-in from the participants while offering them a way to eliminate debt. Year in and year out, this program improves. Three times, I have come before this committee to testify and fight for the preservation of this program. Three times, we have succeeded. However, we have failed to earn the committee’s support to make this vital program permanent. While I am no longer intimately involved with AMP, I was hopeful that **this** was the year, the time, the chance to establish AMP as the backstop for Mainers that it deserves to be. Unfortunately, the proposal was amended to extend AMP for a few more years.

*The AMP is a tremendous success in showcasing intelligent public policy.* From its inception, AMP has brought diverse stakeholders together to critically evaluate, revise, and improve program implementation. Unlike many benefit and support programs, AMP is unique because participants earn benefits through on-time bill payments. AMP has been stuck in a pilot phase for ten years. Every few years, the stakeholders and public gather before this committee to fight for the survival of this critical program. Each time, it is met with the same questions: Why aren’t more participants completing the AMP? Why aren’t more customers enrolling in AMP?

These are good questions. They are essential questions. They are answered every time. But the committee typically says, “We need this program to be more successful,” without

defining success. I urge you not to let AMP fail over the mindset that 100% completion is proof of success. I urge you to act definitively and make AMP permanent or to provide the framework needed to make it so. This program continues to innovate and support the most vulnerable of Mainers without drawing on the general fund or federal dollars to do so, is a success. Any amount of debt forgiven for these households successfully eliminates stress and worry. AMP operates in the public eye. Every quarterly report showing debt forgiven, enrollment data, and participation rates is available on the Public Utilities Commission's case management system. AMP operates with transparency, accountability, and financial responsibility.

The AMP community has done everything the legislature has challenged and asked, and then some. Now is the time to ensure this program continues supporting our residents. AMP deserves to be made permanent. Should you delay that decision, please define the parameters needed to accomplish permanency. This state of flux is unfair for a program that proves its worth each session.

AMP and its stakeholders have been impactful and responsive to every committee request. What is lacking is direct guidance for determining if the program is a success or what the committee feels is needed to make it permanent. We need to take action. We need to acknowledge that this program is essential. The stakeholders are committed to being good stewards and helping those most vulnerable in our society. I urge you to revisit the original proposal for LD 2067 and make AMP permanent.

Sincerely,



Kiera Reardon