



**Testimony in Opposition to LD 194**  
**An Act To Prohibit Contributions, Expenditures and Participation by Foreign**  
**Government-owned Entities To Influence Referenda**  
**March 15, 2021**

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, my name is Tim Pease and I am Vice President for Legal and Regulatory Affairs at Versant Power, here today in respectful opposition to LD 194.

Versant Power is the primary transmission and distribution electric utility serving northern and eastern Maine. Our company serves almost 160,000 customers spanning a service territory of 10,400 square miles. We are proud to employ over 400 highly talented and dedicated Maine people, and are headquartered in Bangor, Maine.

We recognize that this issue is currently the subject of intense political debate, and we want you to know that we understand that. We also want you to understand that our company is laser focused on satisfying and exceeding our core obligation: to deliver reliable, safe, affordable, and clean electricity to our customers.

However, it is also our job to advocate for our customers, employees and other stakeholders – such as residents, nonprofits, property owners, and businesses - here in Maine- something which we do regularly in front of the legislature, state and federal agencies. Today we would like to have a sincere conversation with this committee about why we are concerned about this legislation.

In 2020, our company was acquired by ENMAX, a leading provider of energy services in Alberta, Canada. What you may not know, is that the City of Calgary is the sole shareholder of ENMAX. In other words, as defined by this proposed legislation, we may be considered to have a “foreign government” owner and therefore, under this legislation, not only ENMAX, but Versant Power as well, may be prohibited from participating in referenda, despite being a long-standing locally-operated essential services provider.

Issues that impact our business, customers and employees – including things such as renewable energy, broadband, climate change, rural economic development, taxation and electric reliability, among others – are all critically important issues that receive significant attention in Augusta and statewide on an almost daily basis. As you know, any one of these issues could become the subject of referenda or ballot initiatives at any time in the future. Depending on the issue, Versant Power may feel obligated to participate or have voice in- whether to support or oppose or simply inform- such legislation for the benefit of our customers, employees and businesses generally. We are concerned that this bill would prohibit that. These issues are complex and often intertwined and require all key stakeholders to be



involved in finding solutions that work for the particular geography and demographics of the area. Excluding voices that have expertise and an interest in meaningful collaboration and engagement is not productive to finding the best path forward. To solve the challenges ahead of us, we need to work together.

Instead, this legislation could unintentionally diminish our company's voice from representing concerns of employees and customers in an area of Maine that sorely needs investment, at a time when Maine is trying to make an important transition to a renewable energy future, and when our company is making great strides towards becoming a trusted partner in Maine's environmental, economic, and energy future.

Additionally, we believe our customers, and Mainers generally, are sophisticated enough to decide for themselves what information to rely on when making decisions at the ballot box. Preemptively excluding relevant voices from the public discourse does a disservice to voters.

We think it is also important to highlight that the transaction last year whereby ENMAX acquired what is now Versant Power was thoroughly reviewed and approved by multiple U.S. regulators, including the Maine Public Utilities Commission, the Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S., the U.S. Departments of Justice and Energy, the Federal Communications Commission, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, among others.

During that process, appropriate safeguards were put in place to ensure that customers realize the benefits of this ownership structure and to ensure there would be no inappropriate governmental influence on our company. Importantly, management and decision-making responsibilities remain on the ground in Maine, with a board that includes independent Maine-based directors. Notably, the Maine PUC approval of the merger included findings that the transaction would provide a net benefit to Maine ratepayers and would not entail a loss of local control.

Versant Power remains committed to our customers, employees, and core obligations. We respectfully request that the Legislature continue to provide us the ability to have a voice in important policy matters in the future. Thank you for your consideration.

