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Mainers show strong support for state energy effort to help low-income families (1 attachment)

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(Augusta, Maine) As an October cold snap is hitting Maine hard, the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) has announced that it recently commissioned a poll indicating strong public support for efforts by the State of Maine to help control energy costs for the state's low-income residents.

The 2-question poll, conducted by Pan Atlantic Research in Portland, sought to gauge attitudes about a cooperative initiative to promote energy efficiency, and attitudes about a separate effort by the OPA to secure \$50 million from Central Maine Power (CMP) to assist low-income energy consumers in Maine.

The question about Central Maine Power referred to recent news related to CMP's effort to build a \$950 million high-voltage transmission line from Quebec through Maine, to carry hydroelectricity to Massachusetts. The OPA learned that CMP has set aside \$50 million to help low-income energy customers in Massachusetts, but not in Maine. After discovering this, the OPA took the position that low-income customers in Maine should get "not a penny less" than low-income energy customers in Massachusetts, since CMP is actually building the project in Maine. The poll question asked, "Do you support or oppose the position of the Office of the Public Advocate on this matter?"

Sixty percent of those responding supported the position of the public advocate, while 27% expressed mild or strong opposition.

The second question described a recent initiative, a cooperative study by the Office of the Public Advocate and Efficiency Maine, aimed at improving the state's energy efficiency programs. Those taking the poll were asked, "Do you support or oppose such efforts by the State of Maine to help low-income customers reduce energy costs by increasing efficiency?"

Almost 84% expressed support for helping low-income residents with energy efficiency, while 9.9% reported some degree of opposition. Barry Hobbins, Maine's public advocate, said knowing how the people of Maine feel about helping low-income families reduce their energy costs helps to properly orient advocacy efforts by the OPA.

"The public advocate's office has finite resources, so directing them wisely is a high priority," said Barry Hobbins, Maine's public advocate. "Everyone knows that energy costs can put low-income residents into a hole that is almost impossible to climb out of.

Clearly the people of Maine have a lot of empathy for their neighbors caught in that cycle, and want us to help. That's what we're going to do."

The poll was conducted between October 1st and October 7th, 2018, at a cost of \$1,200. It has a margin of sampling error of approximately $\pm 4.4\%$ at the 95% confidence level. **A PDF copy of the Pan Atlantic report is attached to this press release.** Citizens may download the report by visiting: www.maine.gov/meopa.

In pursuit of affordable, high quality utility services, the Office of the Public Advocate represents Maine utility consumers in any matter reviewed by the Public Utilities Commission, as well as in proceedings before state and federal agencies and courts. For additional information, please contact the Office of the Public Advocate by phone at 207-624-3687 or via email at opa@maine.gov.

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