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PUBLIC ADVOCATE

February 14, 2019

Chairman Lawrence, Chairman Berry and Members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee,

The Office of the Public Advocate (“OPA”) testifies in support of LD 347 “An Act To Provide Sustainable Funding for Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure” which would provide ongoing funding for improvements to water and wastewater infrastructure statewide, including but not limited to, funding to support the State Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Fund.

The OPA sees a number of smaller water utilities as well as some of the larger ones that have enormous infrastructure needs to deal with, such as aging pipes, treatments facilities and other such matters. Funding for these necessary repairs and replacements can be and will be very expensive. It will be almost impossible to do with just the funds that utilities can raise from ratepayers. Access to loans and grants will be critical to address aging infrastructure.

On a personal note, I would like to acknowledge the sponsor of this legislation, Representative Jennifer DeChant who has capably and skillfully represented the City of Bath since 2012 until most recently. As some of you know and for those who don’t Rep. DeChant was a previous valued member of this Committee. As a State Senator, I worked closely with Ms. DeChant on numerous difficult and important issues in her prior role at Maine’s Department of Economic & Community Development (“DECD”). I wish her well in her new endeavor and thank her for her past service to this committee and the Maine Legislature.

Thank you for your time, attention and consideration of this testimony. The Office of the Public Advocate looks forward to working with the Committee on LD 347, and will be present at the work session to assist the Committee in its consideration of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Barry J. Hobbins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B' and a long, sweeping underline.

Barry J. Hobbins
Public Advocate