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February 5, 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 196 “Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 320; Electric Transmission and Distribution Utility Service Standards, a Major Substantive Rule of the Public Utilities Commission” which provides for legislative review of portions of Chapter 320.

Metering requirements, standards, and testing protocols are contained in Sec. 6A. of Rule 320. Sec 6A requires utilities to keep “complete set of records of its meters, by customer account, including meter type, unique meter identification code, and date of installation.” The OPA supports this provision.

Sec. 6B requires that meters conform to national performance standards, and that testing be done upon request of a customer (at no charge if just performed once a year). These are beneficial provisions for consumers and ratepayers and are also supported by the OPA.

Sec. 7 requires periodic independent audits (once every five years) of the utility’s billing and metering systems. This section applies only to investor owned utilities. The Commission may order such audits more or less frequently than every five years as it deems necessary. The cost of the audits shall be allocated between

shareholders and ratepayers “based on the results of the audit.” The provision governing the requirement of a periodic audit and who should pay provides flexible discretion to the Commission. The OPA believes the cost of these audits should fall to the utility, particularly if the audit discovers problems that the utility should have addressed.

The OPA did not participate in the rulemaking process at the Maine Public Utilities Commission (“PUC”) but, having reviewed the rule and the Order adopting the rule, the OPA urges the Committee to consider approval. This is largely a technical rule that adopts existing standards and reporting requirements.

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 196, 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, flowing style.

Barry J. Hobbins
Public Advocate