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PUBLIC ADVOCATE

April 25, 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 1557 “An  
Act To Authorize an Additional Position in the Office of the Public Advocate” which  
would allow the OPA to hire an additional employee changing the number of  
employees from 9 to 10.

The OPA routinely hires a summer intern usually thru the Maine Government  
Summer Internship Summer Internship Program of the Margaret Chase Smith Policy  
Center at the University of Maine. Due to the statutory amount of staffing positions  
at the OPA we have had to use an outside temporary staffing company to hire and  
compensate the intern at a cost greater than that of an employee.

In addition, the OPA would also like to propose an amendment to LD 1557  
which would better adjust the staffing and resources of the OPA. This amendment  
would provide for a statute change to eliminate the current research assistant position,  
salary range 30, referenced in 35-M.R.S. 1701, sub-§3(D) and reinstate the prior  
position of an economic analyst, salary range 36, 35-A M.R.S. 1701, sub-§3(C) which  
would align with the compensation with the assigned duties and qualifications.

The position of economic analyst was removed from the OPA in 2011. This  
position was originally established as resource providing valuable internal analysis of  
utilities in pending proceedings. Reinstatement of this position will provide valuable

support in utility cases.

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 1557, 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 that reads "Barry J. Hobbins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "B".

Barry J. Hobbins  
Public Advocate