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Barry J. Hobbins
PUBLIC ADVOCATE

May 31, 2019

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

RE: LD 1796 – Resolve, To Study Transmission Grid Reliability and Rate Stability in Northern Maine
Work Session – June 3, 2019 @ 1:00 pm

Dears Chairman Lawrence, Chairman Berry and Members:

The purpose of this correspondence is in lieu of formal testimony with regard to LD 1796 “Resolve, To Study Transmission Grid Reliability and Rate Stability in Northern Maine” which resolve directs the Governor's Energy Office to convene a stakeholder group to identify and develop strategies to address the transmission grid reliability and electric rate stability for the northern Maine service territory. The Governor's Energy Office is directed to submit a report that includes its findings, together with any proposed implementing legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, which is authorized to report out a bill to the Second Regular Session of the 129th Legislature.

The Office of the Public Advocate (“OPA”) is in strong support of LD 1796 and would like to first-of-all commend and thank Representative Stewart and President Jackson as well as all other co-sponsors for bringing this matter forward. The OPA is pleased and privileged to be named as a representative in the proposed stakeholder group.

There are three transmission and distribution (“T&D”) utilities that service the Northern Maine area. They are Houlton Water Company, Van Buren Light and Power Company and Maine Public District of Emera Maine. Northern Maine is a part of the New Brunswick Power System Operator and not a part of ISO-NE.

Northern Maine although in the United States is electrically connected to Canada. This results in challenges to the area relating to its electricity supply such as

but not limited to additional transmission fees and costs, supply shortages, higher supply costs and of course price volatility.

The reliance on New Brunswick subjects Northern Maine to risks that could potentially impact the area negatively. The electric transmission system in Northern Maine is aging and needs upgrades and replacement to best assist with reliability.

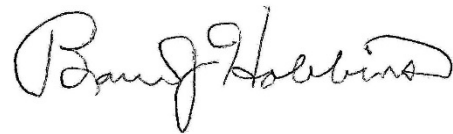
LD 1796 would help move along the discussion of the “bridal path” – the 20-mile corridor which would interconnect Northern Maine with the rest of the State. This would help with accessing generation in Maine and New England as well as reducing costs and reducing the risk of supply shortfalls.

This bill’s proposed stakeholder study is timely. There is and continues to be a need in the northern Maine service territory for reliability and dependability. LD 1796 would help to address the current and projected reliability and rate stability needs of the area.

The OPA strongly supports an ought to pass on LD 1796.

Thank you for your time and attention. The OPA looks forward to working with the Committee on LD 1796 and in being a part of the stakeholder process in assisting the Committee in its consideration of this bill.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barry J. Hobbins".

Barry J. Hobbins
Public Advocate

cc: President Jackson
Representative Stewart
Lucia Nixon