



State of Maine
Office of the Public Advocate
112 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333-0112
(207) 624-3687 (voice) 711 (TTY) www.Maine.gov/meopa

Janet T. Mills
GOVERNOR

Barry J. Hobbins
PUBLIC ADVOCATE

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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 2031 “An Act To Require a Cable System Operator To Provide a Pro Rata Credit When Service Is Cancelled by a Subscriber” which would require a cable system operator to grant a subscriber a pro-rata credit or rebate is that subscriber requests service disconnection during the first two weeks of a monthly billing period.

Let me begin with a small clarification. I am sure that you have all heard references made to both Spectrum and Charter. Spectrum or Charter Spectrum is a trade name of Charter Communications. Following the acquisitions of Time Warner Cable and Bright House Networks by Charter these operations assumed the Spectrum brand.

In May of 2019 Charter Communications notified their customers that they would no longer be pro-rating the final month billing for those who chose to cancel their service. The following was included in the May bill - “Effective on or after June 23, 2019, and consistent with the Terms and Conditions of Service, Spectrum will no longer provide a pro rata credit for services sold on a monthly basis that are canceled prior to the end of the current billing month”. When service is canceled after a monthly billing cycle has begun the entire monthly bill amount is still due. Customers

were unable to get a full refund for days they paid for in advance. Before this change – bills were pro-rated, and you only paid for the days you still had service.

In July of 2019 the OPA had direct experience with this change which was brought to our attention by a EUT committee member and Co-Sponsor of this bill, Representative Grohoski. She was contacted by a son whose elderly parents were dealing with not only relocating after 59 years in the same home but serious medical issues. Their billing cycle began on the 28th of the month and they cancelled service on the 5th. They received a billing statement for \$525.00 - \$325.00 was associated with equipment return and satisfied by the son returning the equipment. That left a remaining a balance of \$200.00. When the son contacted Spectrum, he was told that Spectrum no longer provides any prorations of their service when cancelled once the billing cycle has begun. Service needs to be cancelled at the beginning of the billing cycle for no charge to be assessed. My office promptly contacted a representative of Charter who confirmed that prorations were no longer given and the account and/or services were available during the entire length of the billing cycle. The representative did indicate this was a recent change and was most likely attributed to the rise of streaming services and many people opting out of traditional cable services. This as you can imagine did not sit well with the son. He believed his parents were being “gouged” and forced to pay for a service that was unneeded and unwanted. As an aside my office was able to work with Charter to get these charges reversed which was a unique resolution and not the norm and for that we do thank Charter.

LD 2031 would require a pro rata credit or rebate be issued after the subscriber requests service disconnection during the first 2 weeks of a monthly billing cycle period. The OPA sees this as a good compromise and we thank Representative Berry and all the Co-sponsors for bringing this matter forward.

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 2031, 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, appearing to read "Barry J. Hobbins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Barry J. Hobbins, Public Advocate