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

My name is Barry Hobbins and I am the Public Advocate with the Office of the Public Advocate and I am here today to testify neither for nor against LD 1079 “Resolve, To Review the Effects of the Deregulation of Maine Utilities.”

The impacts of deregulation are many and wide ranging. Markets have evolved in response to deregulation, so the economic impacts are significant. The bill is broad and general, making a comprehensive study a large undertaking. If the study is to yield useful information, a snapshot in time would help to focus the discussion. For example, the report could focus on a specific state goal, studying how deregulation has affected Maine’s ability to reach that goal and what changes can be made to improve Maine’s efforts to reach its goals.

With all of the interest in the topic and the variety of the stakeholders that would participate, without a more narrow focus, it is possible the Commission would be swamped with stakeholder input that would be difficult to organize or react to. Instead, the likelihood of creating productive output would be improved if specific topics of study were chosen. Also, if the committee deems it appropriate, other topics could be explicitly excluded. For example, where the Commission already has opened 2020-00344 (Commission Initiated Inquiry into Performance Metrics and Regulatory Mechanisms for Transmission and Distribution Utilities) and 2021-00033 (Inquiry into Small Generator Interconnection), those topics could be carved out.

The Office of the Public Advocate has also distributed two studies to the committee for reference; “Electric Industry Deregulation: A Look at the Experiences of Three States” by Public Sector Consultants from 2013 and the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission’s “Report on Investigation into Potential Approaches to Mitigate Wholesale Electricity Prices” from 2015. The OPA would be happy to discuss these reports with the committee at the work session.

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 1079, and will be present at the work session to assist the Committee in its consideration of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,



Barry J. Hobbins  
Public Advocate