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Barry J. Hobbins
PUBLIC ADVOCATE

May 12, 2021

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 1659 “An Act To Create the Maine Clean Energy and Sustainability Accelerator.”

Representative Zeigler’s bill contemplates a broader range of projects than outlined by LD 1634, which was heard by the committee last week, but would not be limited to generation. In addition, it can make use of financing sources other than state funds and can partner with other parties in investments. Finally, it does not require the creation of an entirely new agency, but rather delegates administration of its investments to EMT.

Despite these differences, it would have some of the same strengths and weaknesses. It could lower the cost of projects by using lower cost government capital, but it also interferes in the competitive energy market, which has been the cornerstone of state energy policy for 20 years.

As with LD 1634, if there is interest in it, it may be advisable to designate it for further study, possibly by the same commission that is proposed in LD 1556. The OPA recommends these issues be subject to further study to ensure that such a venture is not cost-prohibitive and that any proposed project of this scale does not negatively impact Maine ratepayers.

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 1659, 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 style with a large, prominent initial "B".

Barry J. Hobbins
Public Advocate