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May 18, 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 744 “An Act To Extend the Right-of-way Surrounding Power Lines for the Purpose of Tree Trimming.”

The OPA has reviewed the sponsor’s proposed amendment to change the bill to a resolve and will be commenting on that language. The OPA appreciates Representative Pickett submitting this legislation. Ensuring service reliability is one of the core missions of the Office of the Public Advocate.

Vegetation management is a significant financial burden for Maine ratepayers and the OPA would like to acknowledge the Commission’s thorough review of vegetation management cost strategies in rate and service cases. The PUC is already doing this to a certain extent on a utility by utility basis, but perhaps it is time for a more holistic review of the process.

However, if it is the pleasure of the committee, the OPA believes that a study with a report back may be more appropriate than an inquiry by the Commission. With that said, the OPA would like to reiterate how important vegetation management is for safe and reliable electric service.

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

744, 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