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PUBLIC ADVOCATE

Testimony Neither for Nor Against
LD 1160, “An Act to Prohibit Ownership of 6 Percent or More or Control of a Public
Utility by an Entity Providing Aid to a Foreign Terrorist Organization”
April 9, 2025

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology,

My name is Heather Sanborn, here today as Public Advocate, to testify neither for nor against LD 1160, “An Act to Prohibit Ownership of 6 Percent or More or Control of a Public Utility by an Entity Providing Aid to a Foreign Terrorist Organization.”

While we appreciate the sponsor’s intention, we feel that this bill has the potential to create instability in Maine’s utilities, which we believe is fundamentally bad for ratepayers. What qualifies as “a terrorist organization” could potentially shift in the political winds and comes along with it federal legal restrictions regarding asset ownership. The further question of what constitutes giving aid to such organizations is also properly a question of federal law. Despite their many qualifications, we do not believe that the Commission is well suited to doing investigations and making determinations about whether an entity or individual investor has provided material aid to a foreign terrorist organization.

We aren’t sure what problem the bill is trying to solve for, but if the committee is interested in pursuing it further, the bill could perhaps be amended to give the PUC the authority to block a reorganization or order divestiture if **a federal court has determined**, in a final ruling, that an entity with 6% or more or control of a public utility has provided material aid or comfort to a designated terrorist organization.

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 1160 and will be available if requested for the work session to assist the Committee in its consideration of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Sanborn
Public Advocate