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PUBLIC ADVOCATE

Testimony Neither For Nor Against
LD 1963, “An Act to Protect and Compensate Public Utility Whistleblowers”
May 15, 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 1963, “An Act to Protect and Compensate Public Utility Whistleblowers.”

We appreciate that the sponsor’s amendment is responsive to the concerns raised about the original draft. We agree that establishing an anonymous reporting mechanism—modeled after existing federal whistleblower programs—is the most effective approach. It strikes an important balance: encouraging the reporting of waste or fraud while minimizing the potential for misuse by individuals with frivolous or retaliatory motives.

In a small state like Maine, the real or perceived risk of retribution can discourage individuals from coming forward with valid complaints. At the same time, when public officials receive such complaints, it is often difficult and frustrating to lack a clear, confidential process through which legitimate concerns can be properly investigated.

We recognize the intent of LD 1963 to address both of these challenges. We appreciate that the most recent sponsor’s amendment excludes OPA staff from the whistleblower compensation provisions of the bill as it is literally our full-time job to find savings for ratepayers and investigate mismanagement when we find it.

I welcome your questions and would be pleased to provide additional information for the work session.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Sanborn
Public Advocate