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**Testimony of Public Advocate William Harwood In Support of
LD 3, “An Act to Establish the Winter Energy Relief Payment Program to Aid Residents
with High Heating Costs and to Finalize the COVID Pandemic Relief Payment Program”**

December 21, 2022

President Jackson, Speaker Talbot Ross and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs,

My name is William Harwood and I am the Public Advocate, here today to testify in support of LD 3, “An Act to Establish the Winter Energy Relief Payment Program to Aid Residents with High Heating Costs and to Finalize the COVID Pandemic Relief Payment Program.”

On January 1st Standard Offer prices will increase by approximately 49% for CMP ratepayers and 35% for Versant ratepayers. These increases are on top of increases of more than 80% in 2022. While these increases are on the supply portion of the bill; CMP and Versant have both proposed increases of over 30% on the Distribution (delivery) portion and there are likely future increases in the Transmission and Stranded Cost portions. This will certainly add to this winter’s misery as Maine consumers, especially low-income consumers, face energy prices that are extraordinarily high.

The Office of the Public Advocate is in full support of this emergency legislation. We must lessen the financial burden for Mainers trying to stay warm this winter as quickly as possible. This bill is a step in the right direction and will provide relief for those who need it the most during these difficult months.

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

Respectfully submitted,

William S. Harwood
Public Advocate