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**Testimony In Opposition to  
LD 1791, “An Act to Make the ConnectMaine Authority Responsible for Attachments  
to and Joint Use of Utility Poles and to Establish Procedures for Broadband Service  
Infrastructure Crossing Railroad Tracks”**

May 2, 2023

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

My name is William Harwood, here today as Public Advocate, to testify in opposition to LD 1791, “An Act to Make the ConnectMaine Authority Responsible for Attachments to and Joint Use of Utility Poles and to Establish Procedures for Broadband Service Infrastructure Crossing Railroad Tracks.”

The bill proposes transferring jurisdiction over utility poles from the PUC to the ConnectMaine Authority. Utility poles and wires are critical to providing electric and telephone service and, accordingly, have been under PUC jurisdiction for the past 100 years. The PUC has extensive experience in conducting adjudicatory proceedings (hearings) to resolve disputes over access to utility poles. I am not aware that ConnectMaine has such experience or expertise.

Electric rates are already too high. It is important that this Committee not put any upward pressure on rates by putting CMP and Versant at a disadvantage in protecting its access to the poles and wires it installed and its ratepayers paid for.

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 1791 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