



**Contact:** Lucy Hochschartner, Deputy Campaign Manager, 207-200-4207,  
[lucy@ourpowermaine.org](mailto:lucy@ourpowermaine.org)

April 11, 2023

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Pine Tree Power Support Dominates PUC Hearing on CMP's Proposed Rate Hike**

**Saco** - This evening in Saco, supporters of the ballot initiative to create Pine Tree Power, a utility that would be owned by Mainers, showed up to voice their opposition to CMP's recent request for an almost \$100 million rate hike. The crowd cheered at the idea of "taking our power back" from CMP.

**Al Cleveland, campaign manager with Our Power**, the group running the campaign in support of the Pine Tree Power initiative, explained why the group felt the need to show up at the Public Utility Commission (PUC) hearing tonight. "Mainers deserve a power company that works just as hard for us. In recent years, our two wealthiest utility companies were bought up by foreign corporations. Instead of working for Mainers, they've been increasing our bills, standing in the way of clean energy, and threatening our energy security — all while making hundreds of millions of dollars in profit for their foreign shareholders. Central Maine Power has lost all trust with consumers - with frequent outages and poor communication, refusing accountability of the billing fiasco in 2018 that left thousands of Mainers in the red, and some of the highest prices in the country."

Their speech was followed up by expertise from **Wayne Jortner, former Senior Counsel to the Maine Office of the Public Advocate**, where he spent 23 years fighting for consumers and observing utilities and the PUC. From this experience, he knows that consumer-owned utilities work, saying, "**It's already the reality for many people in Maine who are served by one of 10 different non-profit or consumer-owned utilities.**"

Finally, **Jess Falero, Climate Justice Coordinator with Maine Youth for Climate Justice**, a coalition of over 460 youth from across the state who are fighting for bold climate action and a livable future in Maine, spoke on how CMP is standing in the way of climate and economic justice. “I could go on to tell you about my experience of paying 92% of my income on rent and scavenging to pay utilities. I could tell you my experience of renting a room in a house in Portland with five people. Even with our combined incomes, we could not cover our CMP bill. I could go on to tell you the nights I’ve spent shivering in bed with a winter coat on. I won’t go into those details for my own well being and the well being of those listening but what I will say is this: consumer owned utilities are a first step in economic justice and climate justice. And nobody should be profiting off of a state of people trying to survive.”

After the groups’ press conference, the disappointment in CMP continued at the PUC hearing. Over 50 Mainers showed up to the hearing, most of whom came to tell personal stories of their difficulties in paying their rising bills.

# # #

*Our Power is a group of Maine ratepayers, business leaders, energy experts, conservationists, and others committed to putting the Pine Tree State’s energy future in the hands of Mainers.*