

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

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Office of the Consumer Advocate FY 24/25 Budget –House Division I Budget Hearing

Pursuant to RSA 363:28, the Office of the Consumer Advocate (“OCA”) represents the interests of residential utility customers before the Public Utilities Commission (“PUC”) and elsewhere. As our name suggests, we are an advocacy organization – i.e., we appear as a party before the PUC and, if necessary, before courts as well as other regulatory bodies where the interests of the state’s residential utility customers are at issue.

In other words, our main job is to help the PUC make the best possible decisions. As specified by RSA 363:17-a, the PUC serves as the arbiter between the interests of utility shareholders and utility customers. Utility shareholders are well-represented by those companies’ lawyers and experts; the OCA adds weight to the other side of the scale by participating in all aspects of PUC proceedings. In other words, we file pleadings, we conduct discovery, we present expert testimony, and we appear at PUC hearings.

Both at the state and federal levels, the electric industry has been restructured so as to rely as much as possible on competition and open markets. New England’s transmission grid, as well as its market for wholesale electricity, are operated by the nonprofit regional transmission organization ISO New England. It is at ISO New England, and its stakeholder advisory body known as NEPOOL, where many of the most consequential decisions affecting New Hampshire’s electricity are increasingly made.

Therefore, the OCA is a voting member of NEPOOL. As such, our involvement in regional electric matters complements the executive branch’s engagement with ISO New England, which occurs via the New England States Committee on Electricity (“NESCOE”). We strive to align our NEPOOL positions with those taken by the Commissioner of the Department of Energy in his capacity as New Hampshire’s NESCOE representative.

Meaningful participation in NEPOOL requires approximately nine days of meetings per month, and much research and discussion between meetings, on various aspects of market rules, market operations, and transmission issues. Therefore, like our counterparts in the neighboring states, we have concluded it is necessary to dedicate a fulltime staff person to this work. The budget proposed by the Governor includes a sixth fulltime member of our staff which would add a third attorney to our office to do regional electricity work fulltime – including, if necessary, participation in proceedings of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which oversees ISO New England and NEPOOL.

The Governor also approved the addition of a part-time position to our budget to allow us to acquire the assistance of someone with expertise in accounting. Our experience suggests that this would help us participate more meaningfully in utility rate cases at the PUC.

Thus, the proposed budget for the OCA in FY 2024/2025 consists of the Consumer Advocate (who must by statute be an attorney), two other lawyers, two expert analysts, and a legal assistant. We will remain one of the smallest ratepayer advocate offices in the nation among the roughly 44 states that have one.

Office of the Consumer Advocate FY24/25 Budget Highlights – House Division I Budget Hearing

Position Overview:

	<u>FY23 Adj Auth</u>	<u>FY24 Agency Req</u>	<u>FY25 Agency Req</u>
Permanent Classified	4	5	5
Unclassified Positions	1	1	1
Total Positions	5	6	6

Budget Comparison Highlights:

	<u>FY23 Adj Auth</u>	<u>FY24 Gov Rec</u>	<u>FY25 Gov Rec</u>
Current Permanent Positions	\$434,414	\$476,723	\$486,773
Other Personnel Costs	\$0	\$55,531	\$56,000
Benefits	\$229,665	\$183,590	\$191,080
Operating Expenses	\$188,673	\$347,911	\$342,826
Other Expenses	\$6,479	\$9,438	\$9,469
Transfers	\$69,658	\$35,871	\$36,607
Total Appropriation	\$928,889	\$1,109,064	\$1,122,755

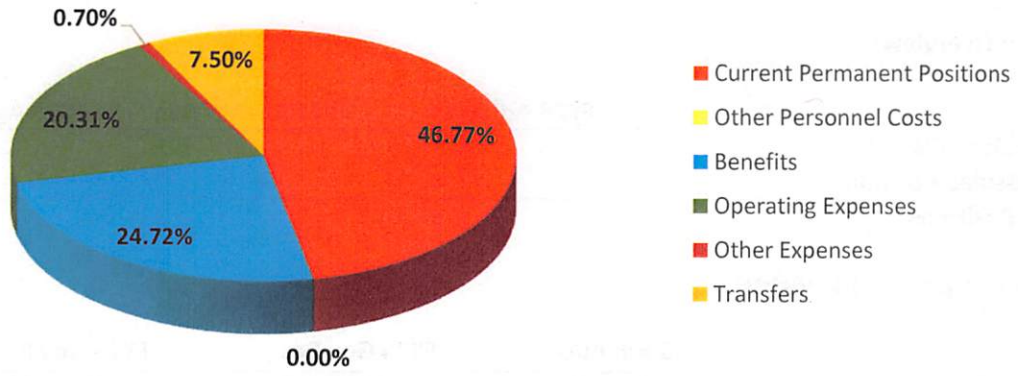
	<u>FY23 Adj Auth</u>	<u>FY24 Gov Rec</u>	<u>FY25 Gov Rec</u>
009-Agency Income	\$928,889	\$1,109,064	\$1,122,755
Total Funding	\$928,889	\$1,109,064	\$1,122,755

Percent Change from FY23 → FY24 = 16.25% Increase

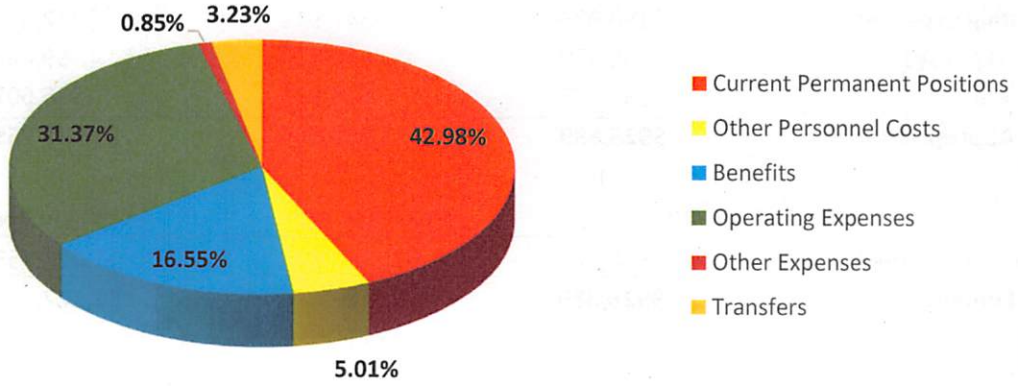
Percent Change from FY23 → FY25 = 17.27% Increase

Percent Change from FY24 → FY25 = 1.22% Increase

FY23 Adjusted Authorized



FY24 Governor Recommended



FY25 Governor Recommended

