

To: Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
From: Marina Melo de Miranda
Date: 03/20/2023
Re: **Testimony in Support of LD 993: An Act to Facilitate Stakeholder Input Regarding Forest Policy in Maine**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Marina Melo de Miranda. I am testifying as an individual currently living in the town of Fort Kent. Fort Kent is a beautiful town surrounded by forest and is located at the southern shore of the Saint John River, that separates the United States and Canada. There are beautiful rivers. While Fort Kent is surrounded by beautiful nature that is worth preserving, Fort Kent's greatest source of income is logging. I am very passionate about combating climate change while simultaneously providing a just and sustainable economy for Fort Kent, which means helping environmentalists build a working relationship with loggers. To that end, I urge you to support LD 993: An Act to Facilitate Stakeholder Input Regarding Forest Policy in Maine.

After finishing my degree, I decided to fulfill my dream of 20 years of adopting Maine as my home. When I relocated to Maine in the Fall of 2020, I had no awareness of the North Maine Woods. The first time I ever traveled to Fort Kent was when I got to learn about North Maine Woods. It was late at night that I decided to leave and go back to Houlton where I was staying at the time. After taking a wrong turn, I ended up in North Maine Woods and struggled to find my way out. Running out of gas forced me to spend the night in those woods. After waking up in the car in the middle of the woods, I saw what the North Maine Woods looked like during the day and fell in love with it. This experience changed me significantly. It hadn't occur to me to advocate for forest conservation, but I have become passionate ever since.

I moved to Fort Kent about eight months later after falling in love with the town itself, the nature surrounding it, and making friends there. When I shared with one of my friends my passion about conservation of the North Maine Woods and the nature around it, they advised me that the overwhelming majority of the adult population are loggers and that I would be alienating them. I have always wondered if there was a way for environmentalist and loggers to find common ground, because it is something that clearly needs to be done to combat climate change.

Mud seasons have been getting longer, meaning loggers would be without work for longer since logging is impossible during mud season. When I was working as a Customer Service Agent for the Maine Department of Labor, I took a call from many

loggers who told me that they were without work for longer than usual and that mud season is lasting longer. Family of loggers tend to have loggers of many generations. Children of loggers will likely become loggers themselves when they grow up. For this reason and for the future of Fort Kent and Maine's economy, I believe it is important to extract wood in a sustainable way.

I would like everyone to understand that I am not here to propose taking away the livelihood of loggers. I am here to pass to the committee knowledge I have acquired from a course taken while in graduate school. Whether we like to think it or not, humans have always been and will always be part of a human-environment system. The goal stakeholders should have been making our human-environment system resilient. Being resilient means extracting goods without allowing the system to lose its equilibrium, which in this case would be to preserve some of the old growth while allowing extraction of woods in a sustainable way to feed the economy in Fort Kent. Combining knowledge and experience from an academic expert in forest ecology, wildlife biologist knowledgeable in forest habitat, an Indian nation representative, loggers, farmers, landowners, and other stakeholders will make it more likely that Maine will have a more just and sustainable economy while making our human-environment interaction resilient for many generations to come.

For this reason, I urge you to Support of LD 993: An Act to Facilitate Stakeholder Input Regarding Forest Policy in Maine. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Marina Melo de Miranda
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