



Testimony of

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Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and House, In Opposition to LD 827, An Act to Allow Employees to Request Flexible Work Schedules

Thursday, March 23, 2023

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Dana Doran, and I am the Executive Director of the Professional Logging Contractors of Maine. The Professional Logging Contractors of Maine (PLC) is a trade association that represents logging and associated trucking contractors throughout the state of Maine. The PLC was formed in 1995 to give independent contractors a voice in a rapidly changing forest industry.

As of 2021, logging and trucking contractors in Maine employed over 3,000 people directly and were indirectly responsible for the creation of an additional 2,500 jobs. This employment and the investments that contractors make contributed \$582 million to the state's economy. Our membership, which includes 200 contractor members and an additional 120 associate members, employs more than 75% of the individuals who work in this industry and is also responsible for 80% of Maine's annual timber harvest.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify on behalf of our membership in opposition to LD 827, An Act to Allow Employees to Request Flexible Work Schedules. The PLC also testified in opposition to LD 938 in the 130th Legislature and our position has not changed. While we respect the sponsor's intent with this legislation, this is not a mandate that Maine's small businesses, especially those in logging and trucking, can afford. This also seems to be a case where the bill sponsors don't believe that employers and employees can work amicably together, that employers cannot be trusted and therefore, they need the government to intervene on their behalf.

Most logging and trucking firms in Maine are family-based businesses that pride themselves on providing stable places of employment. They are committed to their rural place and the people that work for them. It is not in their best interest to rule with an iron fist and not work with their employees to accommodate schedule requests. If they did, this reputation would precede them, and it would be impossible to retain employees.

The logging industry in Maine was in the midst of a resurgence until the onset of COVID 19 and the digester explosion at the Jay mill in 2020. As a result of mill closures, curtailments and inflation created by the response to COVID 19, we are estimating that Maine has lost 30% of its harvesting capacity since 2020. In just four years, the industry has shrunk from an annual

economic impact of \$620 million to \$582 million and total jobs have been reduced from 9,000 to 5,500.

Maine is facing a shortage of loggers and log truckers that will grow and could hinder the growth of the \$8.5 billion forest products industry in the state if bills like LD 827 become law. Employers in logging and trucking accommodate schedule changes all the time and there is nothing in this bill that will help them remain profitable or viable places of employment in rural Maine.

Again, I am respectful of sponsor, however this is not a productive piece of legislation and further, this is no time to add cost and burden to an already strained small business community. I encourage you to vote ought not to pass on LD 827 and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.