

1/21/25

Senators Rotundo and Talbot-Ross, Representatives Gattine and Plueker and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee, my name is Eugene Mahar. I am a Maine licensed Professional Forester; a small landowner; resident of Hermon; and the Timberland Region Manager - Maine for LandVest, Inc. I am writing you in support of **LD 209 Part U of the Supplemental Budget that includes the \$2 million to "address the management and early intervention of Spruce Budworm."**

I have 25 plus years in the forest industry and in my current role as Timberland Region Manager for LandVest, Inc. I represent and have management responsibilities for over 1 million acres of forestlands in the state of Maine covering a wide range of ownerships sizes and management objectives, all of which could be impacted by spruce budworm if early intervention strategies aren't implemented to help prevent spruce budworm populations from reaching epidemic levels.

The health of Maine's forests and our rural forest economy are at stake. The University of Maine Spruce Budworm Lab has confirmed that Maine is on the cusp of a widespread Spruce Budworm outbreak in Maine with between 200,000 to 250,000 acres at or above the threshold of overwintering larvae (L2s) indicating the need for treatment this May. This is landscape-scale issue, with dozens of landowners being impacted including commercial landowners, ENGOs and roughly 40,000 acres of small woodlot owners, and will likely spread further if action is not taken.

Landowners, through the Maine Budworm Response Cooperative, are working closely with the Maine Forest Service and the University of Maine to quickly implement an early intervention program based on New Brunswick's proven management strategy. The plan and funding must be in place before the larvae emerge this spring and begin to feed on northern Maine's abundant spruce/fir forests. For some areas of northern Maine, this will be the second year with defoliation, unless landowners act quickly this spring.

This funding, along with a private match, is required to draw from the \$14 million in federal funds recently championed by Senator Collins for 2025 Spruce Budworm response efforts as part of the Disaster Relief bill. These funds are critical, as they will fund the early intervention strategy (EIS) response this spring.

I thank you for your consideration and respectfully ask you to support **LD 209 Part U of the Supplemental Budget.**

Respectively submitted,

Eugene Mahar

Hermon, ME