



PINGREE ASSOCIATES, INC.

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**Testimony in support of LD209 (Proposed Section U)
An Act Making Unified Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the
Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain
Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the
Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025**

January 21, 2025

Senators Rotundo and Talbot Ross, Representatives Gattine and Pleucker, and members of the Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Alex Ingraham from Hampden, Maine and President of Pingree Associates. I am testifying in support of LD 209, Part U, which proposes the transfer of \$2,000,000 from the General Fund to provide one-time funding to address the management and early intervention of Spruce Budworm.

The Pingree family ownership dates back to 1841 and today consists of 820,000 acres of timberland in northern and western Maine. During that time, our ownership has seen several budworm epidemics amid changing wood-processing technologies and markets. Today we have the benefit of advanced monitoring tools, targeted treatment options, and lessons learned from previous outbreaks. As one of Maine's largest landowners, with a longstanding interest in the sustainability of Maine's forests, we have taken a leading role in the coordination effort with private, State, and Federal partners and developed a strategy to combat the issue. This funding is crucial to that effort.

Prior budworm damage in Maine is well documented and the 1970s and 1980s outbreak showed that untreated, budworm killed 84-97% of balsam fir, and 30-66% of spruce in three-years' time.¹ Seven million acres of fir and spruce in Maine were affected, with a negative economic impact of hundreds of millions of dollars.

Quebec, currently in the midst of a budworm epidemic themselves, chose to use a minimal intervention tactic. There are now over thirty-three million acres of forest affected², and treatment cannot keep up with the outbreak. New Brunswick, on the other hand, is using an Early Intervention Strategy (EIS) which detects hotspots and treats early. They have successfully decreased the population of budworm down 60-80% to endemic levels.

Pingree and other landowners across the State have been monitoring the budworm population. Areas of our ownership along the Quebec border are now showing "hotspots" of budworm

¹ "Spruce Budworm in Maine 2019-2024" presentation by Maine Forest Service – FRA Forestry Forum Meeting

² Maine Spruce Budworm Taskforce, Executive Summary, 2023 update <https://www.sprucebudwormmaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-SBW-Executive-summary-03162023.pdf>

activity, and defoliation is visible. The scale of infestation is growing more quickly than expected, and it is critical that we control the spread early, similar to treating a wildfire. Close monitoring allows for a very targeted approach, but only if treatment is done early when the budworm is feeding in known locations, and the population can be prevented from increasing to epidemic proportions. Forest landowners have been watching budworm trends for years, sampling sites, and processing data. We feel confident that this is the most economically prudent and effective strategy to prevent damage to our forest health and forest economy.

Part U proposes \$2,000,000 from the General Fund surplus to be used to address early intervention of Spruce Budworm. Early treatment is expensive, but doing nothing, or trying to catch up later, will have a much higher price tag. This funding is critical to the effort to maintain the health of the forest, and failure to act quickly will be detrimental to much more than just forest landowners. Forest industry jobs by the thousands, wildlife habitat, water quality, carbon sequestration potential, and recreational opportunities would all be negatively affected by an outbreak, while wildfire risk would increase with so many standing dead trees. Not acting now would mean an estimated \$794 million economic cost annually.³

This effort is collaborative and coordinated, as it must be. Partners include the Maine Forest Service, the University of Maine, private landowners, conservation groups, and our federal delegation – all working together to act swiftly. We urge you to join Governor Mills and our Federal Delegation in this effort with your support of the funding outlined in Part U.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Alexander R. Ingraham

³ https://maineforest.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/SBW_full_report_web.pdf

