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## Testimony in Support of LD 209, Part U

### **“An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025”**

Distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee,

Weyerhaeuser owns and sustainably manages almost 840,000 acres of timberland in Maine located primarily in central Somerset and Piscataquis counties. Our timberlands are third party certified to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) standards and support healthy wildlife habitat, clean water, and the capture and storage of carbon, while providing abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation. We are part of the forest industry supply chain in Maine which contributes over \$8 billion annually to Maine’s economy.

Weyerhaeuser is submitting this testimony in strong support of Part U of the Supplemental Budget, LD 209, which includes \$2 million to “address the management and early intervention of Spruce Budworm.” These funds, along with direct expenditures by forest landowners, are essential to draw down \$14 million of Federal disaster funding that Senator Collins was able to secure for treatment of Spruce Budworm (SBW). The health of Maine’s forests and forest economy are at stake.

In 2016 the Spruce Budworm Taskforce released a report, [Coming Spruce Budworm Outbreak: Initial Risk Assessment and Preparation & Response Recommendations for Maine’s Forest Community](#), describing the potential impact of the next SBW outbreak and laying out a roadmap for addressing the areas of highest risk. As part of the process, forest landowners identified forest areas with high risk of infestation, committed to monitoring of SBW larva populations and increased communication with New Brunswick and Quebec to learn from their experience and share monitoring information.

Analysis of Weyerhaeuser’s timberland showed that approximately 40% of the forest is fir and spruce with 5 million tons of high-risk fir and spruce. Since 2016 we have worked to incorporate harvesting in these areas to mitigate risk however, the composition of fir and spruce in our forest remains relatively constant, dictated by climate and soils.

In 2024 we increased the intensity of our SBW lava monitoring across our timberlands in response to significant moth flights from Canada into Maine and reports of high larva counts and defoliation on timberland in Maine. Although we have not seen increased larva counts from our surveys, we are concerned. Weyerhaeuser is committed to a coordinated early intervention strategy to reduce the impact of SBW on Maine's forests and forest economy. Past SBW outbreaks demonstrate that the moths are agnostic to who owns the fir and spruce trees they eat.

During the last SBW outbreak landowners implemented salvage and pre-salvage harvest operations on millions of acres. Large scale salvage is not possible today due to reduced logging and processing capacity. Unchecked, this SBW outbreak could result in millions of acres of dead and dying trees. These dead trees combined with climate driven drought, have the potential to create extreme wildfire danger.

A recent [study from Canada](#) indicates the potential for increased large wildfires after multiple years of defoliation:

*Potential interactions between spruce budworm and wildfire have long been inferred from the observation of frequent large fires occurring shortly after a period of several years of severe defoliation. The process involved the accumulation of what has been referred to as "ladder fuel", i.e., broken dead tree crowns and other dead tree components after several years of severe defoliation. This particular type of fuel dramatically increases the connectivity between the forest floor and the canopy, thus allowing surface fires to reach the canopy easier and quicker. ([Natural Disturbance in Central Canada's Forests: Spruce Budworm – Wildfire Interactions in a Changing Climate. Fewster, V.; MacQuarrie, C.J.K. and Candau, J.-N. Great Lakes Forestry Centre, Canadian Forest Service, Natural Resources Canada](#))*

An early intervention strategy will limit the extent of mortality by preventing multi-year outbreaks of SBW and reducing the acreage impacted.

Weyerhaeuser asks you to support the health of our forests, forest economy and communities by voting 'Ought to pass' on LD 209 Part U.

Thank you,

*Chris Fife*

**Uploaded separately - Weyerhaeuser Maine Fact Sheet with map**