



Testimony of the American Lung Association

In Opposition to LD 502

An Act to Promote Clean and Affordable Maine-sourced Bioenergy by Amending the Law Regarding Outdoor Wood Boilers and Outdoor Pellet Boilers

Good afternoon Chairs Tepler and Doudera and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. My name is Lance Boucher and I am the Assistant Vice President, State Public Policy for the American Lung Association working out of our Augusta office. The Lung Association is the nation's oldest voluntary public health organization with a mission to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. We do this through education, advocacy, and research.

The American Lung Association appreciates the opportunity to offer comments to you regarding LD 502. We are in opposition to the measure which would greatly increase the amount of exposure to harmful particulate emissions and risk the health of Mainers. The title of the legislation is misleading as wood combustion energy production is not clean and increases particulate matter pollution subjecting individuals to the well-documented health harms of this criteria air pollutant. One of the most common calls that the American Lung Association receives is from folks being impacted by their neighbor's wood combustion. While for many people, the smell of a wood fire evokes the feeling of coziness and nostalgia; for others, it could literally be the cause of an emergency room visit.

The measure before you exempts wood boilers with an emissions level of 0.32 British Thermal Units (BTU) from already established setback requirements – essentially allowing more polluting boilers to be closer to neighbors and increasing the risk of health harms.

The American Lung Association's 2024 State of the Air report showed that 2 of the 7 Maine counties with particulate matter data had days with high levels of PM2.5. The health harms of particulate matter from wood smoke and other sources are serious, especially in people with lung disease, heart disease, children and the elderly, and include:

- Increased respiratory symptoms and hospital admissions for lower respiratory infections;
- Decreased breathing ability and exacerbation of asthma and COPD symptoms;
- Increased Emergency Room visits;
- Greater school absenteeism; and
- Premature death

We would urge the committee to look at ways to reduce health harms from heat and energy production and not to increase health risks to Mainers by relaxing these health-protective standards. We urge your unanimous opposition to LD 502.