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DATE: 4/17/2025

TO: Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

FROM: Darian Dyer, Deputy Director, Alliance for Green Heat, darian@forgreenheat.org

RE: Public Hearing on LD 1525, An Act to Promote Firewood Banks in Maine

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry:

My name is Darian Dyer and I'm the Deputy Director of Alliance for Green Heat, a national nonprofit working to promote cleaner burning residential wood heat. I'm here today to offer testimony in support of LD 1525, An Act to Promote Firewood Banks in Maine. I'd first like to thank Representative Ray for sponsoring this legislative document and the many co-sponsors that support this effort. Maine is well known for their firewood bank organizations, so it's an honor to be here to speak to the work that they do and vocalize why the State of Maine should formally support that work.

Since the Fall of 2022, the Alliance for Green Heat has been operating the [Firewood Bank Assistance Program](#), in coordination with the U.S. Forest Service, to provide educational resources and small grants to firewood banks across the country. The goal was to help aid existing and start-up wood banks and support the practical use of non-marketable wood in communities by giving wood waste a higher purpose. When the program was launched, we only knew of about 65 firewood banks and after three years we now know there are over 150. We've worked closely with 11 firewood banks in the state of Maine that serve the counties of Cumberland, Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Waldo, Hancock, and Washington.

I cannot say strongly enough how much impact these groups have had in reducing energy poverty. While each wood bank may look or run a little differently, they all fill a critical need in each of their communities: keeping their neighbors warm when options are severely limited. For some, a delivery of firewood from a wood bank means that they'll be able to afford their prescription medication that month or groceries that week. Firewood banks also work diligently to deliver seasoned wood to homes, reducing the likelihood that unseasoned wood would be resorted to in desperate circumstances, reducing smoke and creating better health outcomes for the home and the community.

Maine wood banks have told us that the need is greater than what they can serve. LD 1525 would support existing firewood banks and shine a spotlight on their practical, community-based approach to delivering emergency fuel. With the state's active support of wood banks, we believe this will increase volunteer numbers, heighten fundraising abilities for the programs, and inspire more action on the municipal level.

In conclusion, the collaboration seen in LD 1525 between firewood banks, University of Maine, the Maine Forest Service, as well as involving municipalities, marks a promising direction in creating a stronger network to address wood heating needs within the state. During a time when funding for energy assistance seems to be on the chopping block for many, the support for firewood banks is more important than ever. We strongly support LD 1525 both for what it could mean for those struggling to heat their homes and for firewood banks working to provide assistance.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darian Dyer". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Darian" and last name "Dyer" clearly distinguishable.

Darian Dyer