

Testimony in Support of LD 1649 – Resolve, to Establish the Blue Ribbon Commission to Study the Operations of the Legislature and LD 1673 – Resolve, to Establish a Pilot Project to Facilitate the Inclusion of Economic Impact Statements in the Legislative Process

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Chairpersons, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of LD 1649 and LD 1673. My name is Catherine Robbins-Halsted, and I own and operate a small sawmill in Maine that employs 200 hardworking people. I'm here not just as a business owner, but as a lifelong Mainer deeply invested in the economic future of our state.

Maine has long suffered from short-term, fragmented policymaking. For years, we've seen legislation debated and passed without a clear sense of its long-term consequences or how it fits into any larger economic vision. We don't consistently ask how a bill contributes to better jobs, more innovation, or stronger communities. We don't ask how it affects our workforce, our tax base, or our kids' chances of building lives here. Too often, we vote in isolation—without a strategy, without research, and without context.

The result? One disconnected decision after another has led to what we're seeing today. Maine consistently ranks near the bottom in national economic indicators. Dozens of successful, homegrown Maine companies have been sold to out-of-state owners. We're losing young people, struggling to attract investment, and watching communities hollow out.

LD 1673, with bipartisan sponsorship, offers a small but powerful step in the right direction. It proposes a pilot project to begin including economic impact statements in the legislative process. In other words, it asks: *Before we pass a law, what will it do to our economy?* How will it help—or hurt—our long-term goals for productivity, competitiveness, and prosperity?

As a small business owner, I make decisions every day based on long-term planning, risk analysis, and the health of my workforce. I can't afford to guess or hope things will work out. I need data. I need strategy. And I believe the same should be expected of our lawmakers.

LD 1673 will help us get there. It doesn't mandate outcomes—it simply provides information. Information that can help us build a more coordinated, thoughtful approach to legislation that actually grows Maine's economy and supports working families.

And LD 1649 is just as important. A Blue Ribbon Commission focused on studying how the Legislature operates—and how it might function more strategically—is long overdue. If we want better outcomes for our people, we need to be honest about the process and committed to improving it.

The future of Maine depends on our willingness to be smarter, more strategic, and more forward-thinking. These two bills won't solve every problem overnight—but they're a meaningful and necessary start.

Please support LD 1649 and LD 1673.

Thank you.