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Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am writing this letter in support of LD 2094, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Support Maine's Agricultural and Forestry Sectors.

I own and manage Treeline, Inc., a company I founded in 1981. Treeline is a diversified, forest-based business that directly and indirectly supports well over 100 families.

Like many logging contractors, Treeline is facing rising costs for equipment, fuel, insurance, and labor. It is imperative that we invest in updated equipment and technology to operate more efficiently, more safely, and more sustainably. The squeeze is that markets have been reduced and we are being paid less for the products that we produce. Economics are not in our favor, but LD 2094 will help companies like ours reinvest for the future in face of strong headwinds.

Logging businesses like mine depend on having reliable local markets. When mills close, modernize elsewhere, or reduce capacity, the impact hits loggers immediately. Supporting investment in Maine's logging infrastructure helps keep wood processing here in-state, strengthens demand for Maine timber, and reduces the miles we must haul the wood to.

This bond has an opportunity to fund a new low-interest loan program for loggers, which would be a game changer for small operators and businesses like mine operating on thin margins. Access to affordable capital is one of the biggest challenges in our industry. Equipment loans often come with high interest rates and terms that can be difficult with the seasonal nature of logging work. By investing resources in a low-interest loan program, it will allow businesses like mine to upgrade to safer and more efficient equipment, and invest in technology that improves productivity, while having less impact on the environment. These are not extravagant investments, but they're necessary for loggers to remain competitive with local and global markets that are putting pressure on our industry.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support LD 2094 and encourage investment in the future of our agricultural and forestry sectors.

Respectfully,

Brian Souers
President