

Good Afternoon,

My Name is Joe Cushman, I am a second-generation logger from Durham Maine, my family has owned and operated a successful logging business since 1993, growing from a 1-man operation to now having over 30 employees running two fully mechanical woods crews, a horizontal grinding crew, and a trucking fleet to transport our forest products.

With an extensive fleet of some of the most advanced forestry machines on the market today, we are no stranger to the ever-increasing price of heavy equipment. The cost of forestry equipment has increased 100% total in the last 15 years, and 16% of which has been in the last 5 years alone. I just received a quote for a new Grapple Skidder for the cost of \$638,000, which the same machine in 2021 we paid \$550,000 – an increase of \$88,000 dollars. This is a machine we will **need** in order to stay lean and efficient.

I could tell you the purchase price for every machine and truck we own and with that the almost crippling high interest rate to go with it. It doesn't take long in this business to learn that you can either continuously buy parts for old equipment, or make payments on new equipment, and in order to keep employees happy, reduce risk, and keep production moving, the only real choice is to make the payments.

This Agriculture, Food and Forestry bond, the first of its kind, would help fund the Low Interest Loan Program, which would provide equipment loans to loggers at a 2% or less interest rate.

Taking the new \$638,000 skidder as an example, an interest rate of 2% rather than the current average of 8% would reduce our

payments by **\$21,000 per year**. When you multiply that by 15-20 different pieces of equipment we use to produce fiber, you're talking hundreds of thousands of dollars saved.

The low Interest Loan Program would give loggers a much needed opportunity to use their already small margin of profits to reinvest in our businesses, employees, and community. This bond will not only help loggers financially, but newer, more efficient equipment helps with lowering the impact on the forest and environment, and keeping employees safer and happier, and more likely to remain working in the industry.

As a heritage industry, Maine's timber and wood fiber production is vital the state's economy. The Agriculture, Food and Forestry bond will help to keep it powering forward through these challenging financial times.

Thank you.

638 at 8% = 12,936 monthly payment

638 at 2% = 11,182