Testimony in Opposition to LD 2212, Part O, BETR elimination

Good Morning Sen. Rotundo & Rep. Gattine, Sen. Grohoski & Rep. Sayer and Members of both the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation. My name is David Barber, Business Development Manager at Tyson and former CEO of Barber Foods in Portland. I am testifying in opposition to the elimination of the BETR Program, in Part O of L.D. 2212, An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations From the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027.

My family's business, Barber Foods, has invested heavily in Portland in the frozen food manufacturing space. While food-grade facilities are expensive, much of the highly specialized, custom built, food equipment which comes under BETR and now BETE is even more so. While some of our 1st generation robotics have become obsolete in just a few years and have been replaced, we have legacy equipment that is still running for our new owners, Tyson Foods. We have relied on the promise of no tax on business equipment and that has driven many decisions in the improvements to our state-of-the-art manufacturing processes in Portland. While I understand this does not touch the BETE program which we also use heavily, the thought that BETR is on the chopping block is disturbing to me as I have been very close to the BETR BETE programs since inception. Our corporate parents make comments about the high costs of doing business in the state. It may seem like its time to retire BETR but clearly it is not. The effect this will have on future investment in the state is chilling. Please don't do it.