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THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

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Testimony in Support of LD 993
An Act to Facilitate Stakeholder Input Regarding Forest Policy in Maine

Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry
March 20, 2023

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is Troy Jackson, and I have the honor of serving as President of the Maine Senate. I proudly represent Senate District 1, which is northern and central Aroostook County. I'm here today to testify in support of LD 993, "An Act to Facilitate Stakeholder Input Regarding Forest Policy in Maine."

Maine is the most forested state in the nation with a history of trying to achieve sustainable forest management. Ensuring that legacy can continue is key to the future of Maine's economy, environment and culture. However, for too long, the state has only relied on a few voices to shape forest management policies and practices. This puts our workers, industry, environment and region of the state at risk.

It's time for the state to ensure that all the voices in Maine's forest management process — from small woodland owners, to tribal members and the folks doing the dangerous and grueling — are heard. By establishing the Maine Forest Advisory Board, we can shine a light on how the decisions regarding forest management are made and ensure that all relevant stakeholders have a voice in this process.

Right now, the path towards continued sustainable management includes an increasingly complex set of challenges. There is climate change, drought, fire, insects, labor issues, and wildlife and habitat management. Effectively confronting these challenges requires convening a transparent, consistent, and holistic group of stakeholders. This legislation was written to ensure the membership of the Maine Forest Advisory Board includes representatives from the logging industry, wildlife organizations, nonprofits and the Departments of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Inland Fisheries and Marine Resources.

Finally, as a fifth-generation logger and a legislator representing a number of logging communities, I have a responsibility to ensure that those who work in this industry have a voice in ensuring its future. In recent years, this Committee has discussed the challenges facing other natural resource sectors, particularly farming, which faces many of the same issues as the forest products industry. Frequently, farmers and organizations that support them come forth to emphasize the need for *farmers themselves*

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to be included in the decision making process — whether that's on the PFAS Advisory Commission, the Maine Milk Commission, or any other host of boards and commissions. The Forest Advisory Board is aligned with that spirit of participation and cooperation by workers, non-profits, businesses, and the state in that field.

Mainers deserve to know that our forests are managed in a thoughtful and comprehensive way — one that respects the livelihoods and knowledge of working people in the woods, protects our natural habitat and public health, and ensures that future generations can enjoy the beauty that our forests bring to life in Maine. As a fifth-generation logger and a legislator representing a number of logging communities, I feel like I have a responsibility to ensure that those who work in this industry have a voice in ensuring its future.

Thank you for your time today. I hope you will join Rep. O'Neil and me in supporting this proposal. In the meantime, I'd be happy to answer any questions.