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THE MAINE SENATE  
131st Legislature

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**Testimony in Support of LD 1794**  
***An Act to Enhance the Predictability of Mandated Overtime for Pulp or Paper***  
***Manufacturing Facility Employees***

**Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing**  
**Thursday May 18, 2023**

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Troy Jackson. I serve as President of the Maine Senate and proudly represent Aroostook County in the Legislature. Please accept this written testimony in support of LD 1794, *An Act to Enhance the Predictability of Mandated Overtime for Pulp or Paper Manufacturing Facility Employees*.

This bill is designed to ensure the safety and equity of workers in pulp or paper manufacturing facilities. The proposal would prohibit facilities with 50 or more employees from requiring workers to work mandatory overtime without at least seven days' notice. The bill defines mandatory overtime as more than two hours of forced overtime per day.

Workers at these facilities already work incredibly long days. In practice, shifts can be up to 18 hours long, followed by a six-hour break, and then a 12-hour shift the following day. The schedule is already grueling enough without mandatory overtime. However, there have been occasions when workers, without prior notice, have been forced to stay past their 18-hour shift due to staff shortages or a colleague calling out sick. It's downright dangerous.

These individuals work with heavy and dangerous equipment — machinery that should not be operated by someone who is overtired or exhausted. This is clearly unsafe, and it puts both workers and the company at risk. Capping mandatory overtime at two hours and requiring prior notice will allow workers to plan accordingly.

The notice requirement will not only allow workers to plan accordingly so they can operate machinery safely, it will ensure they can plan in regards to family obligations, pre-approved vacations and other holidays. Too many workers have missed out on graduations or birthdays and lost money that had already been expended for family outings after being forced at the last minute to work overtime. This proposal seeks to strike some sort of middle ground so

employees can plan their lives around their work schedules while ensuring the work can still get done.

Finally, this bill accounts for management concerns by providing an exception for emergency situations — when there is an immediate danger to life or property. It also allows for voluntary overtime. Some pulp or paper facilities boast more than 600 employees. With more training opportunities, there are likely a number of workers willing to take on more hours when needed. What this bill seeks to prevent is forced mandatory overtime or the unfair treatment of workers who refuse to stay past their scheduled shift.

Statutory limits on mandatory overtime are not new. They have been part of labor and industry standards for decades. There are exceptions for a small number of workers during state emergencies, but it does not make sense to include those who work in pulp and paper manufacturing in this group.

For these reasons, and the reasons those in the field will share, I ask you to join me in supporting LD 1794. Thank you for your time and consideration.