

Good afternoon,

My name is Justin Shaw. I am the President of local 9, United Steel workers at the Sappi Somerset facility in Skowhegan Maine. We have approximately 480 members at this facility, consisting of Wood Yard operations, Pulping Operations, Boiler Operators, Paper Machine Operators, Shipping and Receiving departments, Wastewater Treatment, Quality Control Labs, and Maintenance crews. We have 2 hog boilers and a recovery boiler, as well as 3 paper machines. I have worked there for 15 years, and off and on before that as a contractor for about 11 years. I am a pipefitter/welder by trade.

I am here today to express my support for LD #1794, An Act to Enhance the Predictability of Mandated Overtime for the Pulp and Paper Manufacturing Facility Employees.

For almost 10 years our Union has expressed to Sappi the need for recruitment, hiring and training at our facility. The steady downsizing and reduction of crews was a safety concern as well as a threat to the business as our workforce neared retirement age. We had a high percentage of individuals in their 60's and early 70s forced to work 12-hour shifts for weeks/months on end as we did not have the staffing or qualified individuals to cover vacations, medical vacancies, life events, or a mate calling out because they had been stuck/drafted for 60 something days/nights. Over the last few years, we have taken advantage of the State language, granting us a day off if we are forced to work 84 hours a week over a two-week period.

More recently we had an issue with forced 24-hour shifts. For us we can be forced to work a 24-hour shift if they cannot find coverage. Some facilities do 18-hour shifts, which was proposed to us and declined. An 18-hour shift for myself is not viable. I live 70 minutes away from the mill. With travel, eating, and cleaning, I have about 3 hours of head on the pillow, less in the winter, before doing it all over again. It's not only a hazard to me but every person I meet on my 70-minute drive. I've had many drives home that I can't recall over half the ride. We have had many individuals in the ditch or wreck vehicles trying to keep up with the demands. If we work a 24, we get a full 12 hours off before being required to return.

Throughout COVID we struggled with 24's as people were sick, tested positive, had contact with someone who tested positive or just used it to get time off because they were forced for weeks on end. We Had one individual who worked 30 plus 24-hour shifts in 2022. I can't say how many were forced as we were not tracking them last year. We recently started tracking voluntary and forced 24-hour shifts. Since the start of 2023 we have had 16 voluntary 24-hour shifts and 17 forced.

It's easy to forget, if you do not work shift work, we do not have weekends, typically. Our holidays and family events are scheduled around the needs of the business. Most do not talk about the mental and physical toll working multiple nights or hours takes on us and our families. A little respect and empathy would go a long way.

Now the solution for us. We recently started increasing our staffing levels. Filling in the workforce at the bottom allowed us to step up and train through the lines of progression. With adequate staffing levels

we have been able to do proper cleaning and housekeeping chores. It allows for proper training time without interruption. Operators can get rest and focus on the task at hand, without fear of interrupted training schedules or possible drafts. It's not perfect yet but going in the right direction.

Our labor force needs to be set up for success, not failure. Overworked employees can be a hazard to the company as well as everyone around them. The success of the business is dependent on a well-trained workforce, a well-rested and mentally focused, safe workforce. Seems like common sense but here we are proposing language to protect our people.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this very critical issue.