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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION, AND FORESTRY
IN SUPPORT OF LD 39**

An Act to Require Forest Landowners to Report Their Participation in a Forest Carbon Project

January 28, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Morten Moesswilde. I am the Director of Forest Policy and Management for the Maine Forest Service (MFS) within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry (DACF). I am speaking in favor of LD 39, *An Act to Require Forest Landowners to Report Their Participation in a Forest Carbon Project*.

This proposal has a simple premise: we need to understand how Maine woodland owners are participating in the emerging forest carbon market, given both Maine's forest-based economy and its climate change initiatives.

This bill would establish a simple Maine database where woodland owners participating in forest carbon projects report basic information. In the emerging global forest carbon market, these projects are typically registered with national or global public or non-profit registries. Several national and international registries currently manage this information, each providing public data in varying formats and levels of detail.

Existing registries have limited searchability and are inconsistent in the formatting and detail of information available. Project information is often found only deep in supporting documents, and for some projects, multiple landowners are bundled together. To address these challenges in this evolving market, a state-level database with individual landowner self-reporting would provide a more streamlined and accessible solution. This approach improves data consistency and organization, but requires landowners to report only basic information.

The Maine Forest Service would create regular summary reports—either annual or biannual—using aggregated data while keeping individual landowner information confidential. These reports would track key metrics: the number of landowners and projects, acres affected, and credits issued. Similar to how MFS monitors harvesting activities and wood usage, tracking forest carbon project participation over time would provide valuable data to guide public understanding and policy discussions about Maine's forests.

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The forest carbon credit market is growing rapidly, both globally and in Maine. Demand and prices are expected to increase significantly in the next five years, while new forest carbon developers and programs continue to emerge. Forest carbon credits offer both opportunities and potential constraints for landowners and managers, alongside their primary purpose of carbon storage and sequestration. The same registries that issue forest carbon credits have projects to address carbon emissions in multiple sectors, from agriculture and oceans to energy and industrial processes. However, none of these sectors in Maine has generated the level of interest in carbon credits as Maine's forests.

While several states have considered creating similar state registry systems, only New Hampshire has implemented one. Our approach is straightforward and would place minimal requirements on landowners, as they will have already prepared the necessary information while enrolling in forest carbon projects.

Input received since the bill's original drafting has helped develop the sponsor's proposed amendment, which reduces landowner reporting requirements from the original proposal, while preserving the bill's core purpose. We greatly appreciate the collaboration with woodland owners and environmental organizations on developing this amendment.

Thank you for considering this bill. I welcome any questions you may have.