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Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, thank you so much for the opportunity for me to present LD 88, An Act to Improve the Weights and Measures Law and Enhance Consumer Protection. This is the Department's bill so I will only speak briefly to the bill before giving the hearing over to them to discuss the bill in greater detail.

The Division of Quality Assurance and Regulation (QAR) enforces state and federal laws to protect consumers in Maine, particularly through Weights and Measures inspectors who ensure retail compliance, such as accurate fuel pumps and scales. However, the current enforcement process is limited, requiring all violations to go through the Attorney General's Office, which often cannot prioritize these cases. This has left consumers vulnerable, especially in cases like firewood sales, where inaccurate deliveries often go unpunished.

QAR also faces challenges enforcing price verification, as error rates on scanned items can exceed 35%, with many items scanning for more than 10% over the advertised price. Without penalties, retailers are not incentivized to correct these issues, burdening consumers.

The proposed bill would empower Weights and Measures inspectors to issue fines for violations and provide an administrative process for contested penalties. This approach, based on Vermont's successful law, would improve enforcement and consumer protection in Maine.

Thank you for the time.