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*Testimony of Representative Laurie Osher in support of*  
**LD 417, An Act Regarding the Confidentiality of Certain Records  
Belonging to the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and  
Forestry Related to the Bureau of Forestry**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry*

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker and honorable members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee, I am Laurie Osher, and I represent House District 25, which is most of Orono. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today as a cosponsor in support of LD 417, An Act Regarding the Confidentiality of Certain Records Belonging to the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Related to the Bureau of Forestry. It is great to be back in the committee I had the privilege to serve on for the past four years.

LD 417 seeks to correct two separate but closely related issues regarding confidentiality that are not currently specified in statute. First, it ensures that a logging contractor's information remains confidential during the course of a Forest Practices Act investigation. Second, it specifies that a logging contractor's information that is shared with the Maine Forest Service will not then be shared with the public unless required by statute.

Currently, our laws explicitly protect the privacy of landowners and mills, but there are no similar provisions protecting the privacy of Maine's logging contractors. I believe that logging contractors deserve similar protections. In short, if a contractor is the subject of or party to a complaint of a potential violation, they deserve protections to prevent their privacy and reputation being compromised before the investigation process is even complete and a decision is made.

The intention of this bill is to create these protections and safeguards without interfering in the course of any investigation. It simply puts commonsense guardrails around when contractors' information can be shared with the public.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.