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Testimony in Support of LD 1313 “An Act to Promote Equity in the Forest Products Industry by Allowing Commercial Wood Haulers to be Eligible for Certain Sales Tax Exemptions and Refunds”

Senator Grohoski, Representative Cloutier and members of the Taxation Committee.,

My name is Chris Fife and I am Public Affairs Manager for Weyerhaeuser. Weyerhaeuser is submitting this testimony in support of LD 1313, which would expand the definition of "commercial wood harvesting" to include equipment and machinery used for "hauling" forest products.

Weyerhaeuser owns and sustainably manages almost 840,000 acres of timberland in Maine. Our timberlands are third party certified to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) standards and support healthy wildlife habitat, clean water, and recreation, while providing a steady supply of logs and pulpwood to forest products mills across the region. We are proud to be part of the forest industry which contributes over \$8 billion annually to Maine’s economy.

However, the forest industry supply chain in Maine faces economic, demographic and workforce housing challenges. We have observed these stressors causing loggers and truckers to retire or leave our industry without a new generation replacing them.

Conditions this winter were favorable for harvesting allowing us to implement harvest plans with numerous logging contractors. These loggers worked hard, taking advantage of frozen ground to harvest and move logs to the side of our winter roads to be loaded and hauled to the mill. In early March, as Spring approached, we started to see log piles building in the woods as loggers struggled to find truckers to haul their wood. Lack of hauling capacity forced us to move wood a few miles to all season roads, loading and unloading the logs, so they would not be stranded until next winter’s freeze. This is inefficient and costly.

Equipment cost is a major barrier to forest products haulers expanding or staying in the business and to the next generation of loggers and haulers entering the industry. By amending the definition of "commercial wood harvesting" LD 1313 will help haulers and loggers make the necessary capital investments to remain efficient and profitable. Including logging trucks and trailers in this important tax exemption program will spur investment in our heritage industry.

We respectfully urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 1313.

Thank you,

Chris Fife

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