



## **Testimony of**

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**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation**

**LD 1305, An Act to Improve Access to Transportation to Work for Forestry  
Workers and Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers**

**Friday, April 11, 2025**

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Dana Doran, and I am the Executive Director of the Professional Logging Contractors of the Northeast (PLC). The PLC is a regional educational non-profit organization that represents logging and associated trucking contractors throughout the Northeast, predominately in the state of Maine.

As background, the PLC was created in 1995 to give logging and associated trucking contractors a voice in a rapidly changing forest products industry. As of 2021, logging and trucking contractors in Maine employed over 3,000 people directly and were indirectly responsible for the creation of an additional 2,500 jobs. This employment and the investments that contractors make contributed \$582 million to the state's economy. Our membership, which includes over 220 contractor members in the state of Maine and an additional 125 associate members, is responsible for more than 80% of Maine's annual timber harvest.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify on behalf of our membership in opposition to LD 1305, An Act to Improve Access to Transportation to Work for Forestry Workers and Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers. While we respect the sponsor, our understanding is that the intent of the legislation is to assist seasonal farmworkers. However, forestry workers were added as well and as a result, it would have significant unintended consequences on our industry. As a result, we respectfully request that the bill be amended to remove forestry workers from the title and Section 1. Additionally, Section 2 will also need to be amended as a result.

From our understanding, this bill was submitted on behalf of a farmer who needs their seasonal employees to drive to and from harvest areas. However, we have members that have H-2A

bonded labor in Maine that do not have driving limitations as most logging contractors provide a pickup truck to their employees to drive to and from work. Thus, there is no need to apply this bill to forestry workers and provide them with a Class B license.

Some of you may remember an incident in the early 2000's, when 14 migrant forestry workers were killed after a van owned by a large land management company, had a terrible accident on John's Bridge in the Allagash Wilderness Waterway. As a result of this travesty, the Legislature added Title 26, Chapter 7, Subchapter 2-A, Section 643, which disallowed seasonal farm and forestry workers from obtaining a Class B license to drive 15 passenger vans.

In addition, we have concerns that this could open the statute to interpretation of what types of employees are able to do the work and provide a pathway of transportation for individuals not necessarily equipped to do additional work. Forestry worker is defined in statute as, "a person employed on a temporary or seasonal basis to perform reforestation activities, including, but not limited to, precommercial thinning, tree planting and brush clearing." Under this definition, there is no limitation on what equipment can be used for activities such as pre-commercial thinning. While seasonal forestry workers are generally employed by a landowner and provide manual labor, if the legislation before you passes, the landowner could take the step of employing forestry workers to operate mechanized equipment on more consistent basis, especially if they can move these workers with an expanded license.

With H2A bonded labor in logging, the logging contractor traditionally holds the H-2A bond and hires the foreign worker. As a result, there are few bonds hired, and all are provided with pickups to get to and from the job site.

If a large landowner was to hold the bond and be provided the change in the original bill, they would be allowed to bring in more migrant workers to use and operate logging equipment to do precommercial thinning and jobs of that nature, including moving those workers with a Class B license. We think this is unsafe and could produce a similar event as with John's Bridge.

Again, we are respectful of the sponsor, but this legislation is unnecessary and could have a significant impact on logging contractors and the safety of operating in the North Maine Woods. Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.