

Testimony of Rebecca Rundquist *Kenneth ME*
Cumberland Woodbank Manager, Cumberland, Maine
Maine Woodbank Network Co-founder
LD 1525

Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Pluecker, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of LD 1525.

My name is Rebecca Rundquist and I am the manager of the Cumberland Woodbank and Co-founder of the Maine Wood Bank Network. I would like to express support for LD 1525.

I am here representing 1000s of hours of volunteer labor and 1000s of miles of volunteer deliveries done by many volunteers who are not here. We split and haul wood together. Some volunteers are also recipients of firewood assistance. It isn't just about the firewood fuel that woodbanks provide but also the community strength that occurs with neighbors helping one another.

Support of this bill would build awareness of woodbanks statewide and integrate state, local, and volunteer efforts to effectively utilize our resources for fuel assistance.

From my experience running the Cumberland Woodbank for many years and fielding emergency assistance requests and calls from all over the state it became clear we needed to build a statewide network. The Cumberland Woodbank can only serve about a 10 to 15 mile radius from Cumberland and we always run out of wood trying to meet just those local needs.

To address this problem, in the last 12 months the Maine Woodbank Network has served as the non-profit entity for the creation of the Freeport Woodbank and the Midcoast Woodbank. The Maine Woodbank Network's existence prevents the obstacle of each new woodbank having to have its own non-profit status. The Maine Woodbank Network has been responding to inquiries from people interested in starting a woodbank in other parts of the state such as Bridgton, Skowhegan, Hollis, York and many others. Support of this bill would expand awareness and strengthen this network with vital infrastructure support.

The Maine Woodbank Network is all volunteer. We do not provide financial support but offer administrative support and expertise to overcome startup obstacles such as insurance, non-profit status for donations, and development of infrastructure.

As managers of our individual woodbanks and co-founders of the Maine Woodbank Network we appreciate the awareness that this legislation offers. We would like to point out our need for volunteers and funding for the essential equipment such as splitters and trailers.

If you want to learn more we invite you to our first Maine Woodbank Roundtable that will occur on April 29th from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm in Orono. We plan on having three or four other regional woodbank roundtables statewide to help raise awareness of the value of woodbanks for communities. For more information you can email us at woodbanks207@gmail.com. Thank you for your time and consideration of supporting LD 1525.