



Ending the choice of whether to eat or heat

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

Thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of LD1525. My name is Bruce Wildes and I founded the Cumberland Wood Bank in 2007 and the Midcoast Wood Bank in 2023. I am also a co-founder of the Maine Wood Banks Network.

The Cumberland Wood Bank started with a neighbor, who was a new widow, with no furnace or firewood for her wood stove, started burning her furniture.

Later, a young mother with 3 young children was burning the kitchen cabinet doors to keep her pipes from freezing. Both were residents in one of the wealthiest towns of Maine.

In 2020 I saw the need within the greater Brunswick area. It took 3 years and over \$15000 of grants and donations to become operationally efficient, thanks in part to Crooker Construction providing the land for the work site, logs from their land, and financial support.

A wood bank has 4 key functions:

1. Volunteers collect or acquire hardwood logs from donors
2. Process, or cut, split, and stack the hardwood
3. Dry or season it to 20% moisture content or less.
4. deliver the wood with volunteers' trucks and trailers

Efficiency requires expensive equipment, safety training, and dedicated volunteers. In less than 2 years of operation we will do over 100 cords of donated hardwood with over 50 volunteers. In Cumberland, it took 7 years to achieve 100 cords/year

We are supporting LD 1525 because we are trying to make it lower cost, faster, and easier to start new wood banks across the state.