

Testimony by James Robbins on LD 1423

4/23/202

My name is James Robbins. Robbins Lumber Inc. owns white pine sawmills in Searsmont and East Baldwin, Maine. We employ 200 Mainers. We produce about 50 million board feet of eastern white pine boards per year.

We use paper wrap to protect our boards in shipping. We also use both paper and plastic bags to bag about 3000 bags of shavings per day.

I am concerned that we may have to pay a tax on our wrapping materials when we bring them in, and then again, when they are shipped out containing our products. This will make us less competitive with other states and other countries that we compete with.

It is very hard to do business here in Maine. We already have some of the highest taxes and electrical costs in the nation. Last year you passed the Paid Family Medical Leave law which I believe is going to be a disaster for us businesses to deal with. Now there is this proposal to tax us on our packaging materials. I think we are getting close to "the straw that breaks the camel's back." All the above are incentives for businesses to leave Maine, or if they are looking to relocate, to go to some other state.

The paper companies here in Maine are huge economic engines that many people in Maine don't have an appreciation for. We need these paper companies that are critical to all of us in the forest industry and to rural Maine. These paper companies must deal also with high labor costs and some of the highest fiber costs in the world. A short time ago, we lost six paper companies here in Maine over a five-year period. In recent years they have developed wonderful new products using renewable wood fiber to replace undesirable plastic packaging. Let's not tax them on these new products that will benefit our society by replacing plastic. We are fortunate to have these paper companies in Maine. Let's not keep adding on more and more costs that will force them to leave.

There are thousands of loggers and woods workers that supply these mills with pulpwood. Those same loggers cut the sawlogs for our sawmills. If the paper mills go down, we won't have the loggers to cut the logs we need for the sawmills.

I urge you to support LD1423.

Thank you.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

James Robbins Sr.