



Maine Forest Products Council

The voice of Maine's forest economy

Testimony in Support of LD 597

"An Act Concerning Energy, Utilities and Technology"

May 21, 2025

Krysta West, Deputy Director

Good afternoon, Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. My name is Krysta West. I am a resident of Readfield, and I am testifying today on behalf of the Maine Forest Products Council in strong support of LD 597, "An Act Concerning Energy, Utilities and Technology."

For 65 years, the Maine Forest Products Council has served as the voice of Maine's forest economy, representing more than 300 members from all facets of the forest products industry. Our members include pulp and paper mills, sawmills, secondary wood processors, foresters, biomass facilities, loggers, and truckers. We also represent commercial landowners sustainably managing more than 8 million acres of forestland.

While LD 597 would achieve a few different goals, a key provision for our industry is the authorization for the PUC to initiate a targeted solicitation from Class IA renewable resources to support the continued operation of existing renewable generators like ReGenerate in Stratton. This 48-megawatt facility is not only a key energy producer, but also an economic anchor for a rural part of Maine. It provides a critical solution for disposing of mill residues from the forest products industry while increasing harvest efficiency. Without it, waste from sawmills, logging operations and landowners would end up in landfills or be left in forests to decompose.

The benefits of this operation extend beyond energy production. As ReGenerate previously shared, it takes forest residuals and sawmill byproducts and converts it into renewable energy. The byproduct from this process creates wood ash. The Stratton facility supports over 90 family farms by supplying clean ash which is used as a safe fertilizer. It's also set to host a promising new biochar project that could help address PFAS contamination, which has emerged as a significant environmental and public health concern within our state. Biomass is an important link in the circular forest economy chain, providing many economic and environmental benefits with residuals that would otherwise be wasted.

Unfortunately, without the opportunity to bid for a long-term contract secured through a competitive process, the Stratton facility will continue to face unsustainable energy costs and could be forced to shut down or significantly reduce operations. While some facilities may weather this for a time, Stratton cannot, and the loss of this facility would have effects that ripple throughout the regional forest industry.

This bill offers a path to stability for Maine's clean energy producers while advancing our long-term climate and economic goals. It helps keep people employed in good-paying jobs and supports rural communities across the state. Long-term contract procurements provide an opportunity to meet climate goals at the lowest costs, and these contracts can be a good approach for energy intensive forest industry businesses.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to support LD 597, and to vote in favor of its passage.