

Testimony of Catherine Robbins-Halsted
On behalf of Robbins Lumber Company, Searsmont, Maine
In Support of LD 1761
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
January 7, 2026

Good Afternoon Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Catherine Robbins-Halsted. I am here today on behalf of Robbins Lumber Company in Searsmont and East Baldwin, Maine, a family-owned manufacturing business that has operated in this state for six generations. We employ over 200 Maine people, we invest in Maine communities, and we work every day to keep our employees and job sites safe.

I am here to urge you to support LD 1761.

Last year, the Boards of seven self-insured workers' compensation trusts in Maine—including the trust our company belongs to, Forest Products Group Trust—came together to support legislation that would prohibit a deeply unfair and increasingly common business practice: forcing one company to accept liability for another company's negligence as a condition of doing business.

Typically, this happens when a large corporation requires a smaller company to sign a contract that transfers liability for the larger company's own negligence onto the smaller company. The smaller company has little bargaining power. If they want the work, they must sign. That is not free market negotiation. It is economic bullying.

As a result, Maine employers who did nothing wrong can find themselves financially responsible for injuries they did not cause, at job sites they do not control, arising from unsafe practices they did not create. This risk does not disappear—it is simply shifted onto smaller businesses, their insurers, and ultimately their employees.

Maine already recognizes that this practice is wrong. We prohibit it in transportation contracts. Many other states prohibit it in construction contracts. LD 1761 simply extends this basic principle of fairness more broadly.

At Robbins Lumber, we take workplace safety seriously. Like most Maine employers, we work hard to prevent injuries. But we also believe strongly in accountability. If our negligence causes harm, we should be responsible. That responsibility creates a powerful incentive to invest in safety, training, and oversight.

When liability can be contractually transferred away from the negligent party, that incentive is weakened or eliminated entirely. That is bad for workers, bad for safety culture, and bad for Maine's economy.

LD 1761 does not protect careless companies. It does not eliminate responsibility. It simply ensures that responsibility rests where it belongs—with the party whose negligence caused the injury. That is the standard we live by at Robbins Lumber. It is the standard most Maine businesses live by. And it should be the standard for everyone doing business in this state.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support LD 1761 and allow it to move forward.

Thank you for your time and for your service to the people of Maine.