



# Maine Forest Products Council

*The voice of Maine's forest economy*

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## Testimony Neither For Nor Against LD 2222

### **“An Act to Establish Municipal Cost Components for Unorganized Territory Services to Be Rendered in Fiscal Year 2026-27”**

March 5, 2026

Ellen Parent, Deputy Director

Good afternoon, Senator Grohoski, Representative Sayre and distinguished members of the Taxation Committee. My name is Ellen Parent and I serve as the Deputy Director of the Maine Forest Products Council. We are offering testimony neither for nor against LD 2222 “An Act to Establish Municipal Cost Components for Unorganized Territory Services to Be Rendered in Fiscal Year 2026-27.”

For 65 years, the Maine Forest Products Council has served as the voice of Maine’s forest economy, representing hundreds of members from all facets of the forest products industry. Our members include pulp and paper mills, sawmills, secondary wood processors, foresters, loggers and truckers. We also represent commercial landowners sustainably managing more than 8 million acres of forestland, much of which is in the Unorganized Territory (UT).

In essence, this bill is a budgeting process, not unlike that which occurs in each of your organized towns. One of the differences is that a full, detailed budget for the entirety of the UT is not available to the public to allow for a robust and full debate.

Without a clear breakdown of the municipal cost components for the service rendered in the UT, we cannot take a stance on the bill. Without having a view of the cost breakdown, there is no way for us to analyze the increases and discuss the issues with the taxpayers we represent in the UT. The Office of the Auditor prepares a detailed booklet of analysis on the budget breakdown for the state components, including a six-year cost comparison. In past years we have had access to the details of this document to weigh our stance on this bill. We have been informed that this year we cannot access this information until after the end of the legislative session with the official publication of the booklet. This does not seem to be a transparent or effective way to obtain public input on a public budget.

County residents have the opportunity to view and speak on their county budgets within their regions. However, the opportunity to speak to the budget as a whole and to speak to the cost components that the State takes on as though it were the municipality, is at this public hearing. This is exceedingly difficult when no individual outside the State Auditor’s Office has seen the full budget. This goes against the laudable efforts of this body to increase transparency and to reduce the number of hearings held at the eleventh hour without the insights of those most impacted by the legislation. We would urge the committee to work to find a path forward where interested parties can provide meaningful testimony.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our insights, limited though they may be, and are happy to answer any questions given the limited information available.