



To: Joint Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry

From: Andrew Blunt, Maine Youth for Climate Justice

Date: March 2, 2021

Re: Testimony in support of L.D. 125 **An Act To Prohibit the Aerial Spraying of Glyphosate and Other Synthetic Herbicides for the Purpose of Silviculture**

Senator Dill, Representative O’Neil, and Members of the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is Andrew Blunt and I proudly write as a representative for Maine Youth for Climate Justice (MYCJ), a coalition of over 300 youth from across the state who are fighting for bold climate action and a just transition to a livable future in Maine. Conservation and transitioning away from ecologically-destructive industry practices is key to that mission, and as such, we strongly support L.D. 125.

Glyphosate is a dangerous chemical. The International Agency for Research on Cancer has classified glyphosate as “probably carcinogenic to humans.” Beyond its carcinogenic properties, evidence suggests that the chemical may also cause chromosomal damage, harm fetal development, reduce liver and kidney function, and lead to endocrine disruption.

Beyond the public health risk that the chemical poses to humans, the EPA just this November found that glyphosate is likely to adversely affect 93% of threatened and endangered species. Only a quick look at a landscape where glyphosate has been applied provides a clear understanding of the impact that these chemicals can have. The herbicide desimulates undergrowth that animal species rely on for food and shelter, and as glyphosate remains in their habitat, chronic and persistent exposure continue to impact them.

The risks associated with glyphosate are unquestionably alarming. What is more alarming still is that these chemicals are then aerially sprayed, a technique that, while regulated, is not a restrained use of herbicide. It relies on blanketing a landscape in order to reach the desired result: a fully barren undergrowth. This practice of excess that results in chemical drifts over

great distances that extend the risks I've described to more Mainers and forested land beyond the targeted plots.

This excessive application also diverges from herbicide philosophy required by existing statute. MRSA 22 §1471-X reads: "It is the policy of the State to work to find ways to use the minimum amount of herbicides needed to effectively control targeted pests in all areas of application." Herbicide usage under Maine law is meant to be discriminate and targeted, and aerial spraying of glyphosate is a practice that clearly does not meet that standard. As such, failing to act to prohibit aerial spraying of herbicides like glyphosate would be in direct contradiction to existing Maine state law.

It is the state's responsibility to curb silvicultural reliance on aerial spraying of glyphosates and other synthetic herbicides. Dumping chemicals from the sky to create more "productive" growing land for harvestable species is not an appropriate forest management tool. It encourages clear cutting and monocultural plantation forestry, techniques that prioritize profit over ecological health, and in the case of glyphosate use, human health as well.

And alternatives to aerial spraying, such as ground application and manual thinning, exist, and while they come with costs, they are far lesser than continuation of the status quo. Transitioning to ground application and more targeted use of these chemicals would reduce environmental risk and chemical drift, but it would not eliminate the health risks associated with these chemicals, especially for workers. Manual removal of competing species, while labor intensive, is another option that cuts out these herbicides completely. While alternatives may be less cost effective, they would also lead to more jobs in rural Maine, a consequence that is clearly worth supporting.

Ultimately, we must pursue more sustainable ways to manage our state's forest product industry. As youth, we support land management practices that future generations will be proud to inherit, and reckless usage of herbicides through practices like aerial spraying does not fit into a future forest product industry that is sustainable and ecologically-friendly.

For the above reasons, we at Maine Youth for Climate Justice, urge you to vote "ought-to-pass" on L.D. 125.