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Environment and Natural Resources Committee
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**Testimony of Senator Richard Bennett
before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and
Forestry**

LD 1549, An Act To Establish the Maine Forest Advisory Board
April 29, 2021

Senator Dill, Representative O’Neil and esteemed colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry: My name is Rick Bennett, I live in Oxford, and I have the honor of representing the beautiful foothills and lakes region of western Maine in the Maine Senate. I am pleased to cosponsor LD 1359, “An Act To Establish the Maine Forest Advisory Board.”

This bill creates the Maine Forest Advisory Board to advise the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Forestry. The Board will consist of 18 individuals, each having a unique interest in how Maine maintains our forests. The Board will be tasked with advising the bureau on conditions and trends in the forests, facilitating dialogue among diverse interests, and promoting cooperation among state agencies, among other duties.

I believe the formation of this Board will allow for a better means of mediating issues relating to the Maine forests, which I hope results in fewer issues coming before the Legislature. In my career as a businessman and in my service as a state legislator, I have always found that promoting dialogue and finding common ground is the best way to solve problems. Too often when the issues reach the level of the Legislature, differences become battlelines, and resolution becomes difficult. I believe the creation of this board will help foster conversation and compromise, where possible.

I thank the committee for your consideration of this bill.