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**THE MAINE SENATE**  
130th Legislature

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*Testimony of Senator Craig V. Hickman in Support of*  
**LD 1549 An Act to Establish the Maine Forest Advisory Board**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry*

Thursday, April 29, 2021

Good morning, Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil, and distinguished colleagues on the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Craig Hickman and I represent Senate District 14, 11 towns in Southern Kennebec County, in the Maine Senate. I ZOOM before you today in support of **LD 1549, An Act to Establish the Maine Forest Advisory Board.**

This bill strikes me as a common-sense approach to solving sometimes contentious issues. In my six years serving on the this committee, four of them as House Chair, we found ourselves faced with numerous forestry-related issues ranging from sustainable harvest levels on public lands, to harvesting in the shoreland zone, to forestry practices, including the application of herbicides in commercial forestry. As this committee knows, some of those issues saw opponents squaring off over very different points of view.

This organic farmer got a great education on matters of forestry, but I believe there is a better way to address these complicated, important, and controversial issues. Establishing a Maine Forest Advisory Board would create a forum for those many perspectives to be heard, to look at the forest as a whole, and to find solutions that serve the common good.

Maine is the most forested state in the nation. Our vast forests support not only an \$8.5 billion forest products industry, but also more than half of the largest globally important bird area in the United States. Its cold waters support the last stronghold of wild native Brook trout in the nation. If we expect to leave those assets to future generations, we must take steps now to ensure their long-term health.

Today, as we live with the impacts of climate change, we understand more fully than ever before the importance of our forests to our own survival. Maine's forests absorb 60% of our annual greenhouse gas emissions. They absorb carbon pollution and return to us life-giving oxygen. We

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must ensure their sustainability, for it is inexorably linked with ours.

I think we would all be wise to heed the advice from the great Wendell Berry who wrote, “The care of the Earth is our most ancient and most worthy, and after all our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it and to foster its renewal is our only hope.”

We can do that by bringing together ecologists and loggers, land conservationists and commercial foresters, wildlife biologists and Indigenous people with traditional knowledge. We can charge them with assessing the full picture of conditions and trends in the forest, and with contributing their expertise and perspectives to the development of policy that works for all Mainers, for the forest, and for the wildlife that depends on it.

And so as we go away this morning, let us go away with the knowledge that we came together to value Maine’s forests for all they do. Let us draw upon the knowledge of Mainers from all walks of life in ensuring our forests will remain healthy, vibrant, whole ecosystems long into the future. I humbly encourage your unanimous vote on LD 1549 and I’d be happy to answer any questions you may have.