



## Maine Municipal Association

60 COMMUNITY DRIVE  
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04330-9486  
(207) 623-8428  
www.memun.org

### Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

#### In Support For

LD 1048- *An Act Regarding the Authority of Municipalities to Regulate Timber Harvesting*

March 20, 2023

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Sen. Ingwersen, Rep. Plucker and distinguished members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am submitting testimony in support for LD 1048, *An Act Regarding the Authority of Municipalities to Regulate Timber Harvesting*, on behalf of Maine Municipal Association which represents the interests of municipal government before the legislature. The positions of the Association are determined by our 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) who are elected by the councils and selectboards in each of Maine's 35 Senate districts.

Many of Maine's towns and cities have opted to adopt the state timber harvesting regulations and benefit from the department's enforcement of the state standards as a result. Some communities have opted for more stringent regulations due to their unique geography and a competing regulations around sensitive shorelands and waterbodies. Generally, even if they are unenforceable ordinances, officials have take this path at the direction and in consultation with their residents. It can be challenging to separate the difference between forestry activity and clearing for development in the mind of adjacent neighbors and affected parties.

Municipal officials benefit from a strong communication and technical resource partnership between state regulatory bodies and when those activities are under resourced, this adds to the frustration at the local level. Officials feel that having a centralized information source for timber harvesters and forestry professionals who may or may not be connected to the community in which they undertake operations, is a sensible path to offer clarity of expectations for everyone. Where ordinances are problematic, they equally benefit from the technical support that the bill seems to indicate will be in place to amend them in ways that can address concerns and manage appropriate operations.

That said, some municipal officials are seeking clarity around the intent of the language that in Sec. 1.. Some officials interpret this language "'Timber harvesting activities" does not include activities that result, within 5 years of the completion of such activities, in a change of land use as defined by the bureau by rule." to mean that the department will not aid in enforcement of activity that uses the timber harvesting statute to clear in resource protection areas to create new development spaces that would otherwise not be possible.

However, officials generally believe a central location for both the industry and communities will help all parties navigate operations in more densely populated areas.