



**Testimony of**

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**Before the Committee on Education and in Support of LD 313 – An Act to Advance Career and Technical Education Opportunities in Maine**

**Friday, April 9, 2021**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Dana Doran, and I am the Executive Director of the Professional Logging Contractors of Maine. The Professional Logging Contractors of Maine (PLC) is a trade association that represents logging and associated trucking contractors throughout the state of Maine. The PLC was formed in 1995 to give independent contractors a voice in a rapidly changing forest industry.

As of 2017, logging and trucking contractors in Maine employed over 3,900 people directly and were indirectly responsible for the creation of an additional 5,400 jobs. This employment and the investments that contractors make contributed \$620 million to the state's economy. Our membership, which includes 200 contractor members and an additional 100 associate members, employs over half of the individuals who work in this industry and is also responsible for 80% of Maine's annual timber harvest.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify on behalf of our membership in support of LD 313 – An Act to Advance Career and Technical Education Opportunities in Maine. I would also like to thank Senator Woodsome, Speaker Fecteau and the other co-sponsors for their unwavering support for trade-based education and training at Maine's CTE Centers in the past and with respect to this bill.

As of right now, LD 313 is not a specific solution, but it is the beginning of a conversation that needs to take place with respect to trades-based education and training in the state. Yes, it is only a concept draft, but it provides the framework for doing something differently in our state to encourage young people to consider trades-based occupations, to get the business community more involved in CTE's, and to find alternative ways to provide trades-based education.

As I stated before in this committee earlier this session on another bill, the forest products industry in Maine is amid a reinvention process. From 2011 to 2016, Maine experienced the closure of five pulp and paper mills and the periodic idling of two wood energy electric facilities. Between 2014 and 2016, the total economic impact of the forest products industry fell from \$9.8 billion to \$8.5 billion, and more than 5,000 jobs were lost.

**Forest Products Industry**

	<b>2011</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2016</b>
Total Economic Impact	\$8.5 billion	\$9.8 billion	\$8.5 billion
Total Jobs	38,789	38,956	33,538

However, from 2017-19, there was positive progress as over \$1 billion of new investment in

manufacturing upgrades had been announced with new markets for cross laminated timber and insulation made from wood. To achieve even greater results, our industry needs trades people to fill both new and existing job openings.

In the spring of 2016, members of Maine's Congressional delegation convened a working group of the forest products industry, affected communities, and other stakeholders to develop shared strategies to strengthen and diversify Maine's forest industry and rural economies. Together, this group, which is now called the Forest Opportunity Roadmap for Maine (FOR Maine), has prioritized a path forward to achieve prosperity for the state.

Goal 1 of the FOR Maine effort is to sustain and grow the forest products economy from \$8.5 billion to \$12.5 billion by 2025. To achieve Goal 1, Goal 3 was focused on workforce development. "Maine needs to provide the skilled workforce employers need to attract new forest products opportunities. This includes providing incumbent workers with new skills as well as attracting new workers to replace retirees and to fill new jobs created in emerging products manufacturing." Desperate times require desperate measures, and I can assure you that the CTE's and our industry are in desperate need of the ideas and changes that this bill may provide.

Adding specific context as it relates to our industry, in March 2019, an employment availability and wage analysis prepared by the Maine Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Southern Maine for the PLC determined that logging and heavy-duty trucking will need to replace 2,000 workers over the next 10 years because of looming retirements. Maine's logging workforce is aging and qualified applicants for open logging positions are limited. With only a handful of programs currently available in Maine's CTE's to provide training to create entry-level logging skills and help ensure there is a future workforce, the entire industry will suffer. We must do more.

With your help in 2015, funding was provided in the state budget to help the PLC, in conjunction with three institutions in the Maine Community College System, start a new entry-level mechanized forest operations certificate program, which began operation in June 2017 to help train the next generation of logging operators. This is helping to fill a large void for our industry. However, this will not solve the entire labor shortage that currently exists both now and, in the future, and we need a more holistic pathway approach from our CTE's to achieve our goals.

Our industry casts a wide net and we rely heavily upon the CTE's in the state that provide training which is relevant to our member companies. More specifically, the five CTE's in the state that offer logger training as well as any/all of the CTE's that provide training in automotive, welding, diesel hydraulics, heavy equipment operations and electronics are critical to our member companies. We need to start addressing these shortages, encouraging more young people to consider our industry as well as other trades and we need to do things differently or we are doomed to get the same results.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the opinion of our membership before you today and I urge you to move this conversation forward and establish a more diversified and comprehensive approach to CTE education.