



March 15, 2021

The Honorable Senator Mark Lawrence, Chair
The Honorable Representative Seth Berry, Chair
And esteemed members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: **Letter of Support LD 597**, 'An Act To Establish the Wood Energy Investment Program'.

Dear Members of the Committee on Energy Utilities and Technology,

I represent the Aroostook Partnership, a unique private-public partnership of nearly 100 businesses, the Northern Maine Development Commission and the four colleges in Aroostook County. The mission of the Partnership is to grow Aroostook County's economy and, in that capacity, support our natural resource-based economy.

The Aroostook Partnership has always promoted smart, practical and sustainable uses of our vast rural lands and natural resources. Being geographically removed from many of the benefits of diversified business investments and entrepreneurship found in the more populated areas of the state, Aroostook County's economy relies heavily on our two major industries of agriculture and forestry. We believe LD 597 provides an important program to incentivize the purchase of high-efficiency, renewable, wood heating systems. In turn, these systems will help Maine achieve its GHG reduction goals, put more people to work in the forest industry and further bolster the industry through increased production of wood pellets and chips from low-grade wood and mill residues.

As our forest products industry leans into the FOR/Maine initiative, intended to grow the industry from \$8.5B to \$12B by 2025 and supported by Maine's 10-year Strategic Economic Plan, this bill would directly support that initiative by increasing the value of otherwise low-grade wood and mill residues. The Wood Energy Investment Fund will be critical to helping Alternative Compliance Payment funds administered through Efficiency Maine to be focused on the expansion of high-efficiency wood energy systems across Maine. Why import heating fuels when we can produce them right here in Maine?

Our rural communities across Maine continue to rely on our legacy sustainable forest products industry for good jobs. I ask that you help us grow this industry GDP by voting OTP on LD 597.

Respectfully,

Paul Towle
President & CEO
ptowle@aroostookpartnership.org
Direct: 207-551-6601



www.aroostookpartnership.org

11 West Presque Isle Rd., PO Box 779, Caribou, ME 04736
Voice: (207) 551-6601, Toll Free in ME: 1-800-427-8736, Fax: (207) 493-3108, TTY: (207) 498-6377