

Testimony of James Robbins Sr. before the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee in Support of LD 1202 An act to establish a wood-fired combined heat and power program.

Chairman Lawrence, Representative Berry and members of the Energy, Utilities and Technologies Committee, my name is James Robbins Sr. I am here today representing Robbins Lumber Inc. and Georges River Energy from Searsmont, Maine. Robbins Lumber has been in business since 1881 and my three children now own and run the company. We employ 135 men and women. We produce 30 million board feet of eastern white pine lumber per year. In 2018 we built an 8.5 megawatt combined heat and power plant to solve our sawmill residual problem. I am sure you are aware that during that time period the state of Maine lost six paper mills in five years. This has created a tremendous problem for sawmills having to dispose of their sawmill chips. At our mill we make four trailer loads of chips per day, which are a very important revenue source for us and create a huge disposal problem if we can't sell them or use them in some other way. Therefore, we built the power plant, which now gives us a guaranteed market if we can't sell the chips to the paper mills. With this power plant we provide power to about 7500 homes and at the same time use the steam after it goes through the turbine to heat our buildings and provide steam to our dry kilns to dry our lumber. We burn 13 trailer loads of chips and biomass every day. This gives us a market for our sawmill chips, sawdust and bark if we can't sell those products elsewhere in the market. We prefer, however, to burn whole tree chips, which we purchase from the loggers. This helps them since they lost a lot of their pulpwood markets when the paper mills shut down.

We badly need more of these combined heat and power plants here in Maine and I hope you will vote in favor of LD 1202 to support this program for the following reasons:

- 1) It helps solve the residual problem for our sawmills and other wood product manufacturers.

- 2) It is great for silviculture of our forests as it provides a market for the loggers when they are harvesting low-grade trees and thinning the forest for better growth.
- 3) It will help with carbon sequestration, as it will allow us to thin our forests better and thereby increase the growth of the trees and thereby sequester more carbon.
- 4) The more of these small power plants that we have will help us have a more dependable power system, as there is safety in numbers.
- 5) These plants enable the wood industry to have another source of income and also keep our residuals out of the landfills.
- 6) These plants help solve the loggers pulpwood problem. At our plant we buy a lot of tree length pulpwood and chip it up for fuel.
- 7) These power plants create new jobs but more importantly than that, they help preserve the sawmill jobs and woods workers jobs that are already here. If mills can't get rid of their residual products they have to shut down.
- 8) Sawmills require a tremendous amount of electricity and steam and these plants allow us to provide both with our residuals and renewable biomass produced right here in Maine- we don't burn any non-renewable fossil fuels that have to be brought in from foreign countries or other states.
- 9) This is dependable power that is produced 24 hours per day every day- we don't have to depend on the sun to shine or the wind to blow to produce power.

Thank you allowing me to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions

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