



Testimony of

DANA A. DORAN
Executive Director

Professional Logging Contractors of Maine

**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance & Financial Services,
In Support of LD 1331, An Act To Make Individual and Small Group Health Insurance
More Affordable in Certain High-premium Counties**

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Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance & Financial Services, 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 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.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify on behalf of our membership in support of LD 1331, An Act To Make Individual and Small Group Health Insurance More Affordable in Certain High-premium Counties. I would like to thank Senator Stewart for his support of this important legislation. I am here today on behalf of some of Maine's most hardworking people to emphasize the importance of doing all you can to make health coverage more affordable in Maine.

Last year, the PLC of Maine released the results of a comprehensive study of the economic impact of Maine logging, showing the industry contributed an estimated \$619 million to the state economy in 2017. The study, [The Economic Contribution of Logging and Trucking in Maine](#), conducted by the University of Maine and the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center,¹ revealed that in 2017 logging supported approximately 9,366 Maine jobs either directly or indirectly, generated \$342 million in labor income, pumped an estimated \$25 million into state and local tax coffers, and remains critical to a range of industries and communities across Maine. The study demonstrates the vast impact logging has on the Maine economy and highlights its role as the foundation of the state's entire \$7.7 billion forest products industry. It also shows what Maine stands to lose if the mounting challenges to the logging industry are not overcome. One of those challenges includes health coverage affordability.

The US Department of Labor identifies, by many measures, logging as the most dangerous occupation in the United States.² Maine is also facing a shortage of loggers and log truckers that will grow and which could hinder the growth of the forest products industry in the state if health insurance does not become an affordable option for Maine's small businesses. Our members often reach out to us regarding health coverage issues, indicating that coverage is unaffordable in Maine. I have also investigated association plans but have found the cost of such plans to also be unaffordable at the current time.

¹ <https://maineloggers.com/economic-impact-study-reveals-maine-loggers-contributed-an-estimated-619-million-to-state-economy-in-2017/>

² <https://www.osha.gov/logging>

That is why I am here today in support of LD 13331. We need to do what we can to improve the affordability of health coverage and health care if we want to maintain Maine's longstanding and important industries, while at the same time, do what we can to keep the workers we have healthy, let alone attract new workers.

As you heard from Senator Stewart, Maine is split into four different geographic areas with respect to pricing for individual and small group health policies. Current law allows rates to differ by up to 50% based upon the employer's location. This policy may have made sense in the past when health services were more localized. However, as of now, pricing is arbitrary and capricious, based purely on geographic location and someone in southern Aroostook County might be paying more than someone in northern Penobscot, even if they are only separated by a municipal and county line. I'm sure you can understand how this policy harms small businesses in our industry who operate in those high-cost rural areas.

The pilot program that has been offered by Senator Stewart in this bill will lower the geographic rating and provide data back to this committee on how these changes are impacting insurance markets over the next couple of years. This is an example of responsible public policy which could have an enormous impact on our industry and its ability to offer health insurance to its employees.

LD 1331 might also help our members provide a health insurance safety net to so their employees can be encouraged to lead healthier lifestyles for themselves and their families that live in rural, and sometimes impoverished, forest reliant communities. If that is the end result, then I truly believe that this is a risk that is worth taking.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the opinion of our membership and I would be happy to answer any questions that you might have.