



MAINE AFL-CIO

A Union of Unions Standing for Maine Workers
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Testimony of BJ McCollister in Support of LD 1724 “An Act To Create a Logging Dispute Resolution Board and To Require Proof of Ownership Documents To Be Available within 14 Days of Request”

Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor & Housing, my name is BJ McCollister. I am here today to testify on behalf of the Maine AFL-CIO. We represent 40,000 working men and women in the state of Maine. We work to improve the lives and working conditions of our members and all working people.

Loggers and wood haulers work extremely long hours often for low pay and no benefits for large, powerful timber corporations who profit from their labor. It is no secret that logging is one of the most difficult and dangerous occupations in America, all the while they are met with a long standing power imbalance in the industry that forces loggers and forest products haulers to accept unfair contract rates for their services.

At this point, the scales are not equal, instead they are heavily tilted toward land owners. Ninety-five percent of Maine’s forest is privately owned and 61% of it is owned by private companies. This gives a lot of authority to landowners over the roughly 24,000 workers in an industry that annually contributes \$1.8 billion to Maine’s economy. These large landowners are able to exert tremendous power over woods workers, dictating when and how much wood is cut, so loggers have little place to go to address these concerns.

The ability of one employer to use fear and division to create a race to the bottom where isolated workers are forced to accept long hours and dangerous working conditions in exchange for low pay and minimal benefits is real. The creation of a Logging Dispute Resolution Board to hear disputes related to the logging industry, whether it be disputes regarding pay violations, payout amounts, contract violations, or a hiring dispute helps level the playing field, weed out bad actors in the market and provide a clear process to resolve issues.

This balanced board allows labor, land owners, and an equal arbitrator to come together to settle disputes. It’s a proven model that we see work on the state arbitration board. For too long, Maine loggers and wood haulers have been taken advantage of by large landowners, this bill will level that playing field.

We ask you support LD 1724