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Statement in Opposition to LD 1964, An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program.

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing:

Our Association is a standard trade association incorporated in the State of Maine. Our members include Maine's four heating pellet manufacturers, located in Ashland, Athens, Strong, and Sanford; a major pellet heating equipment assembly firm in Bethel; a number of heating system installers, and several non-profit organizations concerned with the economy of rural Maine.

Our pellet manufacturing firms provide an important market for what is essentially the waste wood from Maine's sawmills. The FOR/Maine forest opportunity roadmap identifies the importance of our sector to Maine's rural economy.

However, as a survey of wood pellet retailers will readily reveal, our product faces stiff competition from wood pellets manufactured in Quebec and New Brunswick Provinces. The International Trade Commission provides for an anti-dumping countervailing duty on Canadian softwood lumber entering the U.S. but this duty does not apply to wood heating pellets from right across Maine's border.

Our manufacturing members, who greatly value their employees especially during the current workforce shortages in Maine, strongly oppose the far-reaching mandates incorporated in LD 1964 and urge the Maine's Legislature's defeat of this economically threatening proposal.

William Bell
Executive Director