

## Testimony of Grant Provost in Support of LD 1459

Good morning,

My Name is Grant Provost, I am the business agent for Ironworkers Local 7, and I rise in favor of LD 1459. A bill that would allow loggers and Forestry product haulers to organize and form cooperatives for better wages and better contracts.

A good percentage of my family on my grandmother's side is from Eustis, Maine. The Hatch family, as many in olden times was large with 10 children. My grandaunt and granduncle worked in logging camps as cooks for years until they became Maine guides. Almost all my grandmother's siblings worked the Maine woods or married someone who did. Not a lot has changed in the north since those early days. Logging remains one of the only of the industries and means of providing for a family up there.

The hearty people in these northern towns deserve the same rights we all enjoy. Currently, haulers and wood cutters are held down by oppressive land owners and often don't know what the market value they will receive for the wood they harvest until after the work is done. They are at the mercy of the industry giants. Wood cutters and haulers work long hours, often seven days a week, to provide for their families and maintain payments on massive equipment, machines that run upwards of half a million dollars. They can't miss a day of work because they can't afford to.

I have a hard time understanding why this situation cannot be remedied. Lobstermen and women work independently on large equipment with boats and gear totaling upwards of half a million dollars. They are allowed to form coops and have organized into the first lobstermen and women's union. Independent farmers have long pooled into local coops in search of better prices for their goods.

To me one of the worst things is how easily large land owners can punish the wood cutters and haulers just for asking each other what they're receiving for pay. When I lobstered, my captain would crate lobsters and leave them tied to his bait skow until the price came up or would just stop fishing for a few days to attend to broken gear waiting on price movement.

Wood Cutters and loggers deserve a fair chance and the right to organize if they so choose. They have been the backbone of Maine's economy for over a century and right now they need our help. I urge the committee to vote ought to pass on LD 1459. Thank you.