



MAINE AFL-CIO

A Union of Unions Standing for Maine Workers

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Testimony of Maine AFL-CIO Legislative & Political Director, Adam Goode, in favor of LD 1459, "An Act To Expand Application of the Maine Agricultural Marketing and Bargaining Act of 1973 to Harvesters and Haulers of Forest Products"

Senator Bellows, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing my name is Adam Goode and I am the Legislative and Political Director for the Maine AFL-CIO. We represent 40,000 working people in the state of Maine. We work to improve the lives and working conditions of our members and all working people. We testify in support of LD 1459.

Loggers and wood haulers work extremely long hours often for low pay and no benefits for larger, powerful timber corporations who profit from their labor. As so-called "independent contractors," loggers are prohibited under anti-trust laws from banding together to bargain collectively over rates, benefits and working conditions. Without the right, they are forced to accept unfair contract rates for their services.

LD 1459 would correct this injustice by allowing loggers to form cooperatives and demand better wages and working conditions.

It's no secret that logging is one of the most difficult and dangerous occupations in America. We believe that loggers deserve the same rights as potato farmers and lobster fisherman, who have been given anti-trust exemptions to form their own cooperatives. Most recently, lobstermen have used their carve-out to form the Maine Lobster Union's (IAM Local 207) cooperative to get a fair share of the profit from their catch. This bill would give loggers and forest products haulers a fair shake by allowing them to voluntarily join a cooperative. That process has worked well, and we see it as the right path forward to help working people in the logging industry.

We fundamentally believe that loggers deserve the same collective bargaining rights as other workers. Without the ability to bargain collectively loggers and forest products haulers are forced to accept unfair contract rates for their services. 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. There should be no legal barriers preventing the working people who work in the forest products industry from joining together to negotiate a good return on their labor.