Written Testimony

Tyler Shields, Chief Operating Officer, Bingaman & Son Lumber, Inc.

Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Tyler Shields, and I serve as Chief Operating Officer of Bingaman & Son Lumber, a third-generation, family-owned hardwood products manufacturer headquartered in Pennsylvania.

Our company operates five facilities across the Commonwealth and purchases green lumber from more than 125 sawmills throughout Pennsylvania and neighboring states. We produce a full range of hardwood products - from logs and lumber to chips, pulpwood, and value-added products - serving customers in more than 40 states and 35 countries and generating more than $75 million in annual sales.

Today, I come before you as a proud member of an industry facing significant challenges. U.S. hardwood lumber production has fallen from 12 billion board feet in 2000 to roughly 4 billion in 2025, driven largely by low-cost imports and substitute products. Hundreds of rural sawmills and pulp mills have closed, and in just the last five years the hardwood industry has lost more than 40,000 jobs.

Despite these challenges, I believe our industry remains optimistic about the future of American hardwoods because we understand a simple truth: Americans are deeply connected to their forests, and healthy forests are only possible when strong, reliable wood product markets make active management economically feasible. Well-structured federal programs and policies can rebuild and expand demand for American wood products, supporting rural economies and forest health.

Federal innovation programs already demonstrate what is possible. Efforts like the Farm Bill's Wood Innovation and Community Wood Grant Program help manufacturers modernize equipment, adopt advanced technologies, and bring new value-added hardwood products to market. Bingaman is proud to be Pennsylvania's first manufacturer of thermally modified hardwood lumber, and we are now a partner in advancing emerging hardwood mass timber applications in the construction space.

With assistance from the USDA and U.S. Forest Service, we have invested over $20 million in modernizing our material handling systems, expanding kiln-drying capacity, and implementing AI-enabled lumber inspection technology. These investments have improved efficiency, addressed workforce challenges, and strengthened our ability to remain resilient in a rapidly changing global marketplace.

But innovation reaches its full potential only when paired with strong, reliable markets. That is where federal policy plays a critical role.

Federal procurement is one of the most direct tools available. When federal agencies build, renovate, or furnish facilities American hardwood products should be prioritized. This aligns with recommendations advanced by the National Hardwood Lumber Association, sets an example for state and local institutional investment, and ensures taxpayer dollars support domestic manufacturers, forest landowners, and rural communities. A targeted tax incentive for the use of American hardwoods in residential and commercial construction would further strengthen demand and encourage broader adoption of sustainable, domestically produced wood products.

Wood Innovation Grants strengthen the Real American Hardwood Coalition boost consumer and specifier awareness and demand. Abroad, the American Hardwood Export Council - funded through USDA's Market

Access and Foreign Market Development programs - expands markets, reduces trade barriers, and grows global demand for American hardwoods.

Research investments should be increased and coupled with a stronger, results-driven commercialization strategy to accelerate the transfer of promising Forest Products Laboratory innovations into marketable products.

Workforce development remains essential. Programs like the Jobs in the Woods Act and the Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE) Program will support training models shaped by employers - responsive to modern skill demands and capable of preparing workers for the full forest products supply chain.

Bioenergy and renewable fuel markets offer another opportunity to create demand for low-grade wood, mill residuals, and forest restoration material. Updating the Renewable Fuel Standard to allow woody biomass from public and private lands to qualify as a RIN-eligible feedstock will create exciting new renewable fuel markets while supporting forest resilience.

As we work to strengthen these long-term foundations, short-term stability also matters. The proposed $12 billion agriculture relief package includes $200 million designated for hardwood manufacturers. This will provide critical short-term support as businesses continue to navigate economic uncertainty. We appreciate Chairman Thompson’s leadership in ensuring hardwoods were included in this package and look forward to its passage.

A stronger future for the American hardwood industry depends on vibrant, well-functioning markets that reward innovation, support existing infrastructure, sustain rural communities, and keep forest landowners engaged in the active management our forests need.

Thank you to the Committee for your leadership, support of rural manufacturing, and commitment to America’s working forests. I look forward to your questions.