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Maine's Rural Development Council

**Testimony of Nancy Smith, CEO of GrowSmart Maine  
In Support of LD 546, Resolve, to Require the Preparation of Preapproved  
Building Types**

March 4, 2023

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and Honorable Members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing and Economic Development,

My name is Joe Oliva, offering testimony in place of Nancy Smith, and I work with GrowSmart Maine. We are a statewide non-partisan non-profit organization helping communities navigate change in alignment with smart growth. We advocate for comprehensive policies and funding for smart growth practices and outcomes.

[Policy Action 2025](#) follows [Policy Action 2023](#) from the 131st Legislature. Each session we strive to meet this goal, ***“to address barriers to and create incentives for equitable, sustainable growth and development that strengthens downtowns and villages of all sizes while pulling development pressure away from productive and open natural areas.”***

This testimony reflects the positions of GrowSmart and Build Maine.

Many of these bills are coming to your committee, and I am pleased to support this bill, as well as share context with an overview of Policy Action 2025. Some, like this proposal, offer pragmatic, incremental steps while others are provocative and will call for us to examine assumptions that have led to the unsustainable growth patterns of the past sixty years. All of them will improve economic, social, and climate outcomes across the state.

To the specifics of this bill, which is a refresh, presented to you in the nearly same language as LD 1752 last session. That bill passed and was funded, but died on the Governor's desk on Veto Day. It is an important concept and we are bringing it back, with thanks to the sponsor. LD 1752 had support from Maine Realtors Association, MEREDA, the Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Good Shepherd Food Bank, the Maine Center for Economic Policy, the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition, and the City of Presque Isle. When you have all those groups come together to show support for a bill, it's clear this is a good idea.

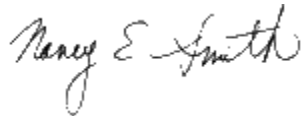
Specific to this bill, LD 546 proposes a catalog of building plans from which municipalities can adopt for use within their locally-designated growth areas. Because the community will have already approved these designs through a public process, the developer is eligible for an expedited review process for projects where these building types will be constructed. This cost and time savings is a meaningful benefit for the developer while also supporting the interests of the local community.

As an additional clarification, this bill is intended for building types that include housing, such as small single family homes, duplexes, small apartment houses of three to ten units, small apartment buildings of six to twelve units, and “shophouses” with retail on the first floor and residential above.

We also support allowing additional building designs to be approved once the initial set of pre-approved building designs is available. This brings additional flexibility and choice for communities as they determine what fits in their downtowns and village centers.

This is voluntary for municipalities, adding a tool to increase the speed and quality of housing construction for residents without sacrificing the work already underway to address climate change and without creating the next crisis of access to farmland and open space.

GrowSmart and Build Maine will assist the committee in any way that is helpful.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Nancy E. Smith". The signature is written in dark ink on a plain white background.