

**Written Testimony in Support of LD 870**

**An Act Regarding the Membership of Maine's Land Use Planning Commission**

**To the Select Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry**

**By Elizabeth Swain**

**March 20, 2025**

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry.

My name is Elizabeth Swain, I live in Pownal, and I am pleased to submit this testimony in support of LD 870 – An Act Regarding the Membership of Maine's Land Use Planning Commission.

I am a Registered Professional Forester, and my career has been in the fields of environmental permitting, conservation and communications. I have a Master of Forestry degree, and a B.A. in land use planning. I have served on many boards and committees, including the Forest Society of Maine, Maine Huts and Trails and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Oversight Committee.

I also served as a member of the Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC) for eight years, from 1984 to 1992, including four terms as Chair. This was the most demanding time in LURC's 50-year history, as we dealt with hydro regulations and permitting, low level waste, lakes classifications and zoning and many other controversial issues. The commissioners came from a wide variety of backgrounds, places and perspectives. We learned from each other; we respected each other and working through our differences usually resulted in better decision-making. Our diversity was our strength.

I completely understand why the makeup of LUPC was changed to be more representative of the unorganized counties. With that firmly in place, adding members with specific areas of expertise would only enhance the capabilities of the Commission. During my time, the members had expertise in commerce and industry, fisheries and wildlife; forestry; and conservation. Today, outdoor recreation and natural resource businesses are additionally relevant, but the principle is the same – subject matter experts appointed by the Governor supplementing a deeper bench of experience in the unorganized territory appointed by county commissioners would make for the most effective Land Use Planning Commission.

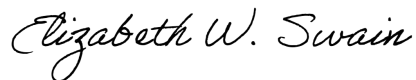
This is only the second time I have weighed in on the many changes proposed for LURC/LUPC over the years. I know we all want to see a high-functioning LUPC make

thoughtful decisions on behalf of its residents and the State of Maine. LD 870 takes nothing away from the current LUPC. It merely adds areas of expertise that will make the commission more representative, not less. With ever-more pressure on the unorganized territory, I believe this is the right proposal at the right time.

And if I might add one more point, I would like to share what I learned from working with many commissioners over eight years and then closely observing the commission thereafter. The best commissioners are those with common sense, experience in subjects relevant to the work of LUPC and centrist positions willing to listen. Trying to balance the Commission by appointing members with widely divergent views is disruptive and counterproductive.

I appreciate your service on the committee and the opportunity to share these comments. I recommend that the Committee vote Ought to Pass on LD 870.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth W. Swain".

Elizabeth W. Swain

22 Wilson Road

Pownal, ME 04069

swain.elizabeth11@gmail.com