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Maine's Rural Development Council

Testimony of Nancy Smith, CEO of GrowSmart Maine in support of LD 1247, An Act to Restrict Municipal Ordinance Requirements Regarding Housing Developments

April 25, 2025

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

My name is Joe Oliva and I work for 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.

We partner with Build Maine to co-host a transparent crowd-sourcing of policy proposals that has drawn together over a hundred people from across Maine and beyond. [Policy Action 2025](#) follows [Policy Action 2023](#) from the 131st Legislature. Each session we strive, ***“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 is the corrected version of the testimony already submitted by GrowSmart Maine. Our support for this bill is contingent on the presence of language that specifies designated growth areas as the target of the proposal.

LD 1247 supports State Planning goals established decades ago by banning municipalities from large lot zoning in areas designed for, or already built out at, higher densities. Specifically, in designated growth areas where water and sewer infrastructure are available, municipalities must allow minimum lot sizes no greater than 5,000 square feet.

GrowSmart supports proposals that direct development towards places where it makes sense, and LD 1247 would go a long way in lowering the barriers to infill-oriented development patterns taking hold in Maine communities. Infill development in areas with existing infrastructure costs less for the municipality to service for the same population compared to sprawling development, serving a huge fiscal benefit to the municipality.

Through their comprehensive plans, many communities have already identified the areas in which they want to see growth take place, only to run into lot size ordinances that put up barriers. LD 1247 instantly alleviates those barriers without municipalities undertaking the complex and costly process of changing their zoning.

One of the core tensions within the current scramble to meet the state's housing needs is balancing preservation and access to the natural resources that define Maine communities with sufficient places in which people feel secure, that they belong, and where they can thrive.

Addressing the housing crisis must be done without undoing the good work to address the climate crisis, and without creating the next crisis of access to farmland and food. This bill will protect productive farmland and forests from sprawl by allowing traditional compact village development patterns to continue in places where the State has already set that goal.

We urge passage of LD 1247 because it unlocks housing development in places where it makes sense and protects Maine's precious open spaces and productive farmlands that, once developed, will never come back.