

**RE: Support of LD 1751**

**May 7, 2025**

Dear Senator Chip Curry, Representative Teri Gere, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development,

On behalf of the Midcoast Council of Governments, I am writing in support of "An Act to Improve the Growth Management program Laws" (LD 1751).

Our organization has been working with the Maine Association of Planners (MAP) to create this bill that would balance the burden facing small communities during the Comprehensive Plan process while also preserving the intent of the Growth Management Act.

As someone who works on Comprehensive Plans in multiple rural communities, I can attest that most municipalities get bogged down in reviewing their past and present when they should be looking towards the future. Part of the problem is treating all communities with the same requirements and standards of review regardless of their growth potential, history of development, and projected trends. The collection of data and the cost of creating these documents tend to make towns lose interest and abandon these efforts.

For years, the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry have been working with planners and community partners to make the data collection more straight forward and less of a burden for municipalities to incorporate into their Comprehensive Plans. Easily accessible data reduces the time and resources it takes for a small town to put together their Comprehensive Plan. The passage of LD 1751 is an ideal way to streamline the review process, giving greater flexibility to smaller communities. This bill removes requirements and mandates placed on smaller communities by reducing their workload to citing state-provided data, incorporating this data with their local narratives, and then presenting it to the public with quick reviews from the State Review agency.

The individuals and organizations that participated in the creation of LD 1751 are professionals that have been involved with multiple successful Comprehensive Plans throughout the State of Maine. I personally have assisted nearly half a dozen communities with their Comprehensive Plans, all of whom with populations of under 5,000 residents. This bill will reduce the amount of time and energy spent by staff members to collect non-applicable data and will result in a significant reduction in the cost of developing these Plans.

Thank you for this opportunity to let me speak on this matter.

Sincerely,

Maxwell Johnstone, Senior Planner for Midcoast Council of Governments