



Testimony of the Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments
neither for nor against
LD 1751 An Act to Improve the Growth Management Program Laws

May 8, 2025

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, the Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG), is a regional planning agency serving communities in Androscoggin, Franklin, and No. Oxford Counties, including 51 municipalities and 3 counties. As a Regional Planning Commission and Council of Governments, AVCOG provides extensive technical assistance to the municipalities we serve, most of which are small communities with no planning staff. These communities are limited in their capacity to plan for growth and development and rely on our resources to assist in developing their comprehensive plans. We support comprehensive planning as the best means to battle the three costs of unmanaged growth including:

- Sprawling development and increased spending on infrastructure, emergency services, and education.
- Loss of natural habitats, working farmlands, working waterfront, and open spaces.
- Loss of community character, vibrant villages, downtowns, and social connections.

LD 1751: An Act to Improve the Growth Management Program Laws provides municipalities cost and time savings, limits legal challenges, and provides process flexibility across the state and with regard for rural Maine. It will help to improve Maine's growth management program and encourage communities to develop and update comprehensive plans through efficiency, flexibility, and cost effectiveness. It will save our small rural towns time and money by encouraging the creation of regional comprehensive plans which we have already been talking to our communities about; continues the current growth area exemption, and most importantly provides flexibility for small rural communities.

By streamlining state review timelines, continuing the current growth area exemption, allowing each municipality the ability to conduct planning board reviews, simplifying the inventory process with readily available information, and linking the inventory with state goals, communities will invest less time on inventory, and more time on action. LD 1751 acknowledges the variations of Maine communities and encourages first-time comprehensive plans by using existing state tools. In addition, our region's communities will benefit from a focus on goals related to housing as this bill removes barriers to housing production.

AVCOG's planning staff have a great understanding of the issues, and the solutions needed to effectively address them. Over several decades our agency has assisted in writing and/or reviewing almost all the comprehensive plans in our region. We work with communities preparing plans that comply with growth management laws and to further community goals. As a technical assistance provider, we see the positive impact this will have and believe it would be of great benefit to Maine communities in their comprehensive planning process.

Sincerely,
Amy M. Landry, Executive Director