

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF STEPHEN PULEO

Director of Planning, Town of Windham

In Support of LD 1751 – “An Act to Improve the Growth Management Program Laws”

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

May 8, 2025

TO: Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Stephen Puleo, and I am the Director of Planning for the Town of Windham. I have worked in municipal and regional planning in Maine for over 25 years. I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of LD 1751, “An Act to Improve the Growth Management Program Laws.”

I entered this profession because I believe deeply in the power of planning to shape communities that are safe, livable, and sustainable. Over the years, I’ve had the privilege of working with residents from all walks of life—parents advocating for safer streets, seniors seeking more accessible housing, and young people dreaming of vibrant, walkable neighborhoods. These voices are the heart of comprehensive planning.

LD 1751 recognizes that planning should be a tool for empowerment, not a burden. The bill introduces a tiered framework that aligns planning requirements with a municipality’s size, capacity, and needs. This is a long-overdue shift from the current one-size-fits-all model, which often forces smaller towns to hire expensive consultants just to meet state mandates. I’ve seen towns delay critical infrastructure projects or community initiatives simply because they lacked the resources to update their comprehensive plans.

This bill also supports the development of customizable “floor model” plans and templates that communities can adapt to their unique circumstances. This approach saves time and money while preserving the integrity of the planning process. It also encourages collaboration between neighboring towns, which is essential in regions like ours where we share roads, utilities, and environmental resources.

In Windham, we’ve seen how thoughtful planning, supported by strong community input, can guide positive and meaningful development. Our most recent Comprehensive Plan was shaped by robust public engagement, including community surveys, workshops, and stakeholder meetings. Residents consistently expressed strong support for protecting the town’s rural character, enhancing transportation networks, and expanding housing options and all the town’s priorities now reflected in our plan. This process not only helped us understand our community’s values, but also strengthened local support for growth areas and investment public infrastructure.

Importantly, these planning outcomes directly align with the goals of LD 1751. The law’s emphasis on identifying growth areas, planning for housing, and leveraging regional collaboration is already happening in Windham, but not every town has the staff or resources to do the same.

LD 1751 provides the tools for more municipalities to do this work efficiently and effectively. It empowers them to create locally tailored plans that meet both community needs and state goals, including those related to housing supply and affordability.

On behalf of the Town of Windham, I respectfully urge the Committee to vote "**Ought to Pass**" on **LD 1751**. This bill offers a smarter, more flexible, and more inclusive approach to planning—one that will help communities across Maine thrive.

Thank you for your service, time, and consideration.

Sincerely,



Stephen Puleo
Director of Planning
Town of Windham, Maine