



**Community Development
Planning Division**

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**TESTIMONY OF THE TOWN OF GORHAM
TO THE COMMITTEE HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY PROVIDED IN SUPPORT OF LD #1751
“AN ACT TO IMPROVE THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT PROGRAM LAWS”**

DATE OF HEARING: MAY 8, 2025

**Honorable Senator Curry, Honorable Representative Gere, Distinguished Members of the
Committee:**

The Town of Gorham, Maine Community Development Department is highly supportive of LD 1751. The Town’s three professional planners have, collectively, over 50 years of experience in the field. As professional planners, we intimately understand the importance of Comprehensive Planning and have worked to develop numerous such Plans. With our extensive experience we know what works, and what doesn’t work, in terms of the process to develop a Comprehensive Plan within large and small municipalities and then to implement recommendations outlined in the Plan. LD 1751 incorporates thoughtful changes that will make Comprehensive Planning in Maine a more successful and worthwhile process for all involved.

Over time, it has become apparent that several updates are needed to Maine’s Growth Management Laws. Reforming these laws is of great importance to Maine’s professional planners, which is why the Maine Association of Planners has dedicated a large amount of time and resources to crafting legislation that enacts these updates in order to improve Comprehensive Planning.

While we acknowledge that a competing bill, LD 1940, also would update the Growth Management Act, we as practitioners do not support bill LD 1940 and believe it would create more problems for municipalities than it would solve. LD 1949 introduces a number of unhelpful, rigid mandates and practices inconsistent with best practices in municipal planning. It also introduces a number of unfunded mandates for additional analysis and planning which may not be appropriate for all communities, especially rural communities. While certainly well-intentioned, we believe that LD 1751 represents a significantly better alternative.

LD 1751 will be of significant utility to Gorham, and all Maine communities, by decreasing the municipal burden and cost to develop Comprehensive Plans while preserving the essential comprehensive analysis of our community. Key LD 1751 reforms include:

- Revises the current inventory requirements by exchanging the one-size-fits-all thirteen topic areas with a tiered framework based on a community's capacity.
- Encourages smaller communities to conduct multi-municipal planning by eliminating the barrier of having to have a multi-municipal planning board. Thus, each community can conduct Planning Board reviews individually, if they choose.



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- Allows for the continued use of the current Growth Area Exemption which is critical to encouraging smaller communities to conduct Comprehensive Plans, promoting improved resource protection while combating sprawl.
- Streamlines state review timelines by requiring a shorter window of review for completeness.
- Maintains elements of the current Comprehensive Planning process that work well, based on knowledge and experience of municipal planning practitioners.

Comprehensive Planning requirements should not be one-size-fits-all. The proposed changes to the Growth Management Law in LD 1751 allow for communities to more efficiently undertake municipal or multi-municipal planning efforts. Gorham will be undertaking its next Comprehensive Planning process in the next five years. **Gorham would greatly prefer to develop its next Comprehensive Plan under the improved Growth Management Act framework as envisioned in LD 1751.**

Town staff would be willing to work with Committee members to answer any questions or provide insight into proposed changes. We believe Committee engagement with practitioners is crucial for achieving an amended Growth Management Act that serves the public interest. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tom Poirier, Director of Community Development
Carol Eyerman, AICP, Town Planner
Damon Yakovleff, AICP, Assistant Town Planner