

May 7, 2025

Senator Chip Curry, Senate Chair
Representative Traci Gere, House Chair
Committee on Housing and Economic Development
100 State House Station Augusta, Maine 04333

Re: Testimony IN SUPPORT of LD 1940, An Act To Revise the Growth Management Program Laws

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development;

My name is Jeremiah Bartlett, a resident of Auburn. I ask that you accept my TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT of LD 1940, An Act To Revise the Growth Management Program Laws.

I first wish to express my gratitude to Representative Sachs for bringing forward this opportunity to provide towns and cities throughout the state with an effective tool to address our needs for housing affordability and locally-supported economic development. These intrinsically related items play a critical role in our state's future.

My familiarity with these topics is significant. I have been in the transportation planning and engineering field for over 25 years in Maine, having worked on efforts from Ellsworth to York. For about half of this time, I have been the lead transportation staffer for a municipal Transportation Engineering Group, and seen every angle of transportation plans, from long-range comprehensive efforts to reviews of development projects to redesigning streets for our ever-changing needs.

In addition to my work life, I have also been involved – twice – with the City of Auburn Comprehensive Plan, most recently, the 2021 Plan that updated the City's Transportation Policies and its Land Use Plan. In addition, I Chair the Lewiston-Auburn Complete Streets Committee, charged with ensuring that infrastructure in both cities meets the needs of all users.

From an infrastructure perspective, I have had as much experience as just about anyone in the state working to integrate land use and transportation from the very beginning of planning concepts down to the work of overseeing construction efforts. I have come to realize that planning and infrastructure needs are forever intertwined; this being said, more needs to be done so that future generations – including my own children – can remain in this great state and prosper.

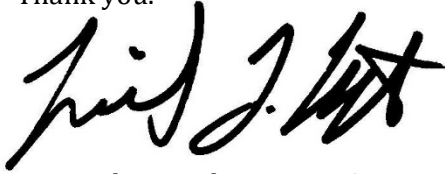
This proposed update to The Growth Management Act update is a critical step needed to ensure more robust and resilient communities. Even in communities that have taken steps in a positive direction, such as Auburn with its significant (and notable) foray into form-based code and more flexible land allowances in key land use zones, communities continue to struggle with a legacy of previous planning challenges that lead to more work needing to be done. As I expect you are aware, "growth areas", as they are currently defined in statute, do not give our communities much in the way of direction. The

proposed updates, on the other hand, represent the culmination of deep efforts by of work done by Maine communities over a number of years. They will allow for communities and their people to embrace productive decision-making regarding future growth.

Many of our communities are struggling with a legacy of outdated planning and growth strategies, leading to all but existential challenges around balancing taxes and fees with the need to maintain an aging infrastructure and population. Without the proper tools, some of these communities will become ghosts of their former selves, devolving into municipalities in name only, with too few services and too many costs to provide for anyone but those with the wherewithal to live anyway. And this simply does not need to happen.

Please accept this testimony. I urge broad, bipartisan support for this very important and timely update.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremiah J. Bartlett". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a distinct "B" at the end.

Jeremiah J. Bartlett, PE, PTOE
Auburn