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OUGHT TO PASS

LD 1751 “An Act to Improve the Growth Management Program Laws”

DATE OF HEARING: Thursday, May 8 2025

Honorable Senator Curry, Honorable Representative Gere, and Distinguished Members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee:

My name is Eli Rubin, I have been a planner for 3 years, and I currently work for the City of South Portland. It has been incredible to hear from the deep well of experience of all the other planners in the state. Having been a planner for only 3 years, I will share a different perspective.

I’ve had a few careers prior to planning, and I’ve learned that many of my colleagues similarly found planning as a second or third calling. It is actually quite common. Previous to planning, I worked as a house carpenter and still carry with me a technical and physical knowledge of the construction methods and labor realities and how they impact the housing crisis. I worked as a deer and wild game butcher for 5 winters and still carry with me a love for this traditional rural industry that serves locals and tourists alike and that is intimately tied to wildlife and resource management. I also worked as a farmer and raised certified organic produce for nearly 10 years. There are more than a few of us farmer-turned-planner types in the room and we retain and cherish a close relationship to the state’s soils, watersheds, and tight knit rural economy.

I share this to emphasize that just because you hear about the advanced degrees, and planning certifications, and decades of planning experience from my colleagues, planners are people, not bureaucratic cogs in the machine clinging to old rules. Planners are people who live and work and raise families and have other jobs and bring a wide breadth of life experience to their work. Thus, my perspective on planning for housing, wildlife and resource management, tourism, soils, waters, and local economy, are all informed by both an education and real-life experience. LD 1751 is a bill for our community because it is grounded in the everyday reality of life.

One job I have not had, however, is the job of a legislator. I don't envy your position and am appreciative of the weighing and balancing of competing interests you must do. **So I will offer you an actionable solution to the problem in front of you in three steps:**

Step 1: Pass the Roberts' bill today because it is a straightforward amendment that can begin immediately and has undivided support from municipal professionals. I could be wrong, but I don't believe there is any person or entity opposed to our measure on its merits or who believes it is not an improvement to existing statute. It's only opposition is brought from there simply being an alternative measure.

Step 2: If you're interested in the concepts within LD 1940, turn that into a working group resolve. Develop out the good ideas within and even better enhance comprehensive planning in Maine. As Rep. Collamore said last week regarding impact fees, "It can be a two track thing. Fix an issue we have currently and further study the issue in a working group." Passing LD 1751 today does not preclude continued improvement in the future.

Step 3: There is no step 3. You're done and the committee can move on to the next big decision.

I know the deep breadth of experience each of you brings to the table and thank you for your time and consideration.

Eli Rubin