

Robert O'Brien
Portland
LD 1940

Honorable Committee Members:

I wish to testify in favor of LD1940, An Act to Update the Growth Management Laws.

In my professional capacity, I have been contracted to write a municipal Comp Plan in Maine, served as a Planning Assistant in a Maine town office, and was a housing economist nationwide for several years.

Two points to support the bill before you:

1. This Act codifies best practices in land use management that have been accepted for decades. It's time our Land Use Management Plan formally recognized them. These best practices are the most fiscally responsible in terms of maximizing the use of expensive public infrastructure like roads and utilities and their maintenance and replacement costs, resource-responsible in terms of preserving productive lands like farmland and woodlots, and environmentally responsible by limiting the disruption of wild territories.

2. Secondly, this Act removes the requirement that towns respond to an arcane and unwieldy checklist when conducting a Comprehensive Plan. This tool -- while well-intentioned as a prompt to incite discussion around best practices -- devolved into a massive bureaucratic task that one assignee would be responsible for filling out. I was that assignee once. And it did not serve as a public dialogue guide -- it became a massive ream of paper submitted and filed that no one read. And it costs towns money in terms of paying contractors to fill it out or by spending public officials' time working on it in-house. In short, make such a tool flexible so officials may modify it for maximum positive impact on a Comp Plan process.

LD 1940 addresses both of these points above. Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,
Robert O'Brien
Portland