

Testimony of
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Regarding LD 1940
An Act to Revise Growth Management Laws
Submitted to the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development
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Good morning, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development. My name is Deborah Deatruck and I live in Cumberland.

My professional background is in public health and includes eight years in state government (in the Bureau of Health, the predecessor of the Maine CDC), ten years doing research and teaching in the University of Maine system, and most recently, two decades as the Senior Vice President for Community Health Improvement for MaineHealth, the state's largest health system, a position I retired from in 2019.

I am writing to express my strong support for LD 1940, An Act to Revise Growth Management Laws.

Much of my career in public health has been devoted to working with regional coalitions of health care, business, and community-based organizations in rural Maine. These coalitions, which exist in Franklin, Oxford, Aroostook, Washington, Hancock and other counties, are aimed at addressing social and environmental conditions that are called Social Drivers of Health. Housing, one of the biggest of these drivers, fundamentally impacts where people live and work, where their children go to school, what kind of health care is accessible, and has a significant impact on individual and community health and well-being.

How do we know this? Hundreds of reports, including county-level Community Health Needs Assessments (<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/phdata/MaineCHNA/final-CHNA-reports.shtml>)

that have been conducted biannually by Maine hospitals and health systems since 2010. What you may not know is that for many years, health care providers in Maine have routinely screened their patients to assess which Social Drivers have the biggest impact on health outcomes. Among the many thousands of patients screened statewide, housing-related issues frequently top the list.

While I understand the acute need for MORE housing in Maine, as cited in the [recent report](#) from the Maine Housing Authority, I know from my experience that our communities want housing that is safe, affordable, accessible to jobs, education, and commerce, integrated with the local environments and natural resources, and is resilient to the challenges of climate change.

LD 1940 seeks to put in place several policies that will result in increased understanding, engagement, and participation by the public in planning processes: 1) reasonable planning approaches that are responsive and tailored to the outcomes that communities want and need; 2) redefinition of growth areas that will help inform community planning efforts; and 3) expanding tools to engage the public and increase broad participation in the planning process.

I urge you to support LD 1940.

Thank you.

