



Testimony in Support of LD 1940
An Act to Revise the Growth Management Law

Dear Senator Curry and Representative Gere, and esteemed members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee:

My name is Victoria Morales and I am the Executive Director of Quality Housing Coalition (QHC), a nonprofit with a mission to create and support quality housing opportunities for those in need in Maine. Since 2018, QHC has secured stable sustainable housing for over 1,200 households - benefiting 3,000 adults and children - in partnership with more than 100 landlords across seven (7) counties. These households, often excluded from the rental market due to low income, reliance on subsidies, poor credit, eviction history, or criminal records, gained access to housing through QHC's support. By serving as real estate brokers, financial guarantors, and mediators throughout tenancies, QHC addresses a critical gap for cost-burdened renters, who now make up nearly half of all renters in Maine.

Maine's housing production crisis has developed over several decades, in part because the state allocated an extremely small portion - just 0.00643% - of its biennial budget to housing production from 2000 to 2018. While federal pandemic relief funds and increased state investment recently boosted housing production, both sources of funding are now uncertain for the coming three years.

Given this precarious funding outlook, it is essential to focus on legal reforms that do not require new spending but can encourage housing development at scales appropriate for each community. One such reform is updating the Growth Management Act.

The Growth Management Act provides a framework for local planning that, when modernized, can incentivize housing production by streamlining comprehensive planning, focusing development in existing centers of activity, and reducing regulatory barriers that have historically limited housing supply.

This proposed policy is community-driven, developed over four years by advocates seeking a proven, practical approach to help Maine towns address key housing needs, such as:

- Creating affordable options like ADUs, cottages, and starter homes
- Enabling seniors to age in place by downsizing and freeing up family homes
- Expanding housing near jobs and service centers
- Repurposing upper floors in historic buildings for housing



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What sets this proposal apart is its focus on giving communities the flexibility and support to prioritize housing, while empowering local residents to collaborate on where and how to enable new development and update zoning to eliminate barriers. Although housing is typically addressed during comprehensive planning, there is seldom enough time for thorough work, often resulting in incomplete solutions or expensive additional studies. This approach has been successfully tested in towns like Madison, Millinocket, and Old Town, and I believe this policy framework will equip all Maine municipalities with the tools they need to make meaningful progress in expanding housing opportunities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony, and thank you for your unwavering commitment to addressing the housing crisis in Maine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vict Morales". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Victoria Morales
Executive Director
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