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**Testimony of Nancy Smith, Executive Director of GrowSmart Maine
in support of Public Transportation Components in LD 1101,
An Act to Support Lower Home Energy Costs by Establishing a Home
Energy Scoring System**

March 30, 2023

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and Honorable Members of the Joint
Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology,

My name is Nancy Smith and I am the CEO of GrowSmart Maine. We are a statewide non-partisan non-profit organization helping communities navigate change in alignment with smart growth. We advocate for comprehensive policies and funding for smart growth practices and outcomes.

We have partnered with Build Maine to guide a transparent crowd-sourcing of policy proposals that began a year ago, and has drawn together over a hundred people from across Maine and beyond. Policy Action 2023 has resulted in sixteen proposals from eight working groups, all addressing this goal, “to address barriers to and create incentives for equitable, sustainable growth and development that strengthens downtowns and villages of all sizes while pulling development pressure away from productive and open natural areas. We do so acknowledging that Maine has urban, rural, and suburban settings for which any solution may/not be a fit and a variety of people who deserve to be welcomed to their communities.”

LD 1101 is the bill that came out of Working Group #8, Decarbonization of Buildings, thanks to the significant work done by passivhausMAINE. I’ve attached the fact sheet for this bill, which outlines the merits of the proposal and provides context within Policy Action 2023.

I also appreciate this bill personally, having sold and then purchased a home last year. I invested over \$10,000 in energy efficiency in the house I sold, yet there was no way to highlight that value in the real estate listing. And when I was seeking a new home, I found only minimal reference to what it might cost to heat and cool each house as I compared options. I’m proud of the energy efficiency investments I made in my Monmouth home, and have accepted that I now have to make similar improvements to my new home in Ellsworth, having spent my first winter here.

This bill is a critical component of Policy Action 2023. GrowSmart Maine and Build Maine will assist the committee in any way that is helpful as you consider LD 1101.

OVERVIEW: What does the bill do?

The legislative Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology (EUT) is currently considering LD 1101 which increases the probability that efficiency measures take place by providing a voluntary low-barrier audit which prioritizes potential projects to increase a building's efficiency score and also directs consumers to funding opportunities. This bill directs the Efficiency Maine Trust to establish a voluntary home energy scoring system for residential buildings for the purpose of evaluating a building's energy efficiency and relative greenhouse gas emissions. The bill also provides requirements relating to home energy audits.

LD 1101 was born from passivhausMAINE's [retrofitMAINE project](#). Naomi Beal's work on the Energy TAG of MUBEC is meant to tilt the existing codes to increased efficiency and resilience of new buildings. For existing buildings, we have found retrofits to be costly, inconvenient, and complex.

Adoption of LD 1101 increases the probability that efficiency measures actually take place with a low barrier, voluntary audit which prioritizes potential projects to increase a building's score and also points consumers to funding opportunities. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity for wide scale updating of the building stock both for mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

PROS:

- Equity centered: transparency at sale, lowering operations costs, increasing building resilience, healthy interiors, durability in extreme weather events.
- Voluntary
- Consumer protections at points of sale
- leveraging improvements for sellers' benefit
- increased participation in rebates, incentives and tax credits
- decreased carbon emissions and costs for operations in the Single Family Home market.
- Anonymous collection of carbon and building stock data to inform future building policy
- Remote Audit is less costly, less workforce intensive-reserving workers for the actual retrofit work
- Bolsters Clean Energy Workforce either as auditors or retrofit construction.

- Embracing this once in a generation opportunity to decrease carbon emissions and increase durability of Maine's aged building stock
- Building Stock improvement: Maine has some of the oldest building stock in the country, the highest proportion of buildings heated with #2 heating oil (\$\$volatile prices) and the oldest population in the country. Improvement to existing buildings is a top priority is a single bullet which improves multiple challenges.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:

There is some concern around requiring in-person audits with a preference for remote audits. LD 1101 will increase the probability that efficiency measures actually take place, especially if energy audits are easy to access. Required in-person audits have the potential to be a barrier to program uptake with few auditors currently in place. Programs can be developed to encourage this field. We prefer to see a remote audit option and focus workforce development on the retrofit field.

IMPACTS: Why does it matter?

Equity: Equity centered: transparency at sale, activating cost saving incentives, lowering operations costs, increasing building resilience, healthy interiors, durability in extreme weather events.

Transportation Safety and Choice: N/A

Climate Action: Decreased carbon emissions and costs for operations in the Single Family Home market. Sistering with current rebate and incentive programs to encourage participation. LD 1101 represents both climate mitigation and adaptation.

Fiscal health: The audit will point to local, state and federal incentives. This program also provides anonymous data collection for future housing and building policy.

Economic Development: Bolsters Clean Energy Workforce- either as auditors or retrofit construction.

Quality of Life: Improved personal wellness with healthy interiors, predictable costs, comfort of an energy efficient home and resilience in extreme weather events.

Build Maine + GrowSmart Maine

POLICY ACTION 2023

Overview of Proposed Legislation

a collaboration between



PROBLEM STATEMENT Maine's current uncoordinated approach to building places is causing real, unintended, and significant social, environmental, financial, economic, and cultural challenges and requires the creation of a cohesive approach to land development, redevelopment, and placemaking.

THE GOAL of Policy Action 2023 is to address barriers to and create incentives for equitable, sustainable growth and development that strengthens downtowns and villages of all sizes while pulling development pressure away from productive and open natural areas. We do so acknowledging that Maine has urban, rural, and suburban settings for which any solution may/not be a fit and a variety of people who deserve to be welcomed to their communities.

FOR TALKING POINTS AND MORE: [Public Folder for PA23](#)

Policy Action 2023

Working Group	Bill Number	Bill Title	Sponsor	Committee
Printed Bills (LDs):				
1: Coordination of Government	LD 602	An Act to Provide Regional Support to Deliver State and Federal Programs to Cities and Towns in the State	Representative Traci Gere	Select on Housing
1: Coordination of Government	LD 250	Resolve, to Prepare Preapproved Building Types	Senator Matt Pouliot	Select on Housing
3: Complete Streets Action	LD 1076	"An Act to Expand the Use of Traffic Cameras for School and Work Zones"	Senator Mattie Daughtry	Transportation Public Hearing April 4th
6: Subdivision Regulations	LD 1257	An Act to Increase Housing and Protect the Regional Road Network, Municipal Tax Base, and Working Lands	Representative Lydia Crafts	Select on Housing
7: Downtown Revitalization / Open Space protection	LD 638	NOTE: Sponsor has decided to withdraw the bill and create a stakeholder group to meet between sessions. Goal is property tax policies to incentivize redevelopment of derelict buildings.	Representative Marc Malon	Select on Housing
8: Decarbonization of Buildings	LD 1101	An Act to Support Lower Home Energy Costs by Establishing a Home Energy Scoring System	Representative Rebecca Millett	Energy, Utilities and Technology Public Hearing March 30th
Pending Bills (LRs):				
1: Coordination of Government	LR 1771	An Act to Establish an Affordable Housing Permitting Process	Representative Traci Gere	
2: Rework Transportation Funding	LR 1777	An Act to Strategically Advance the State's Public Transit Infrastructure by Reinvigorating the Public Transit Advisory Council and Increasing Funding	Representative Maggie O'Neil	Transportation
3: Complete Streets Action	LR 1782	An Act to Establish a Thriving Corridors Program by Encouraging Affordable Housing and Mixed-use Development	Representative Traci Gere	Transportation
3: Complete Streets Action	LR 1256	Resolve to Establish a Vision Zero Task Force to Recommend Strategies to Achieve the Goal of Eliminating Traffic Fatalities and Serious Injuries	Representative Dan Ankeles	Transportation
3: Complete Streets Action	LR 2226	An Act to Grant Municipalities the Authority to Set Lower Motor Vehicle Speed Limits	Senator Rick Bennett	Transportation
3: Complete Streets Action	LR 996	An Act to Increase Street Safety	Representative Marc Malon	Transportation
4: Growth Management Law	LR 1377	An Act to Update the Growth Management Law	Representative Melanie Sachs	
5: State Historic Rehab Tax Credit	LR 1684	An Act to Expand the Maine Historic Rehabilitation Credit	Representative Maureen Terry	Taxation
6: Subdivision Regulations	LR 275	Resolve Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to convene a stakeholder group tasked with a Comprehensive overhaul and modernization of the State Subdivision Statutes	Representative Jack Ducharme	
7: Downtown Revitalization / Open Space protection	LR 1399	An Act To Increase Maine's Housing Supply, Combat Climate Change, and Preserve Rural Open Spaces by Prohibiting Communities from Large Lot Zoning Practices in Areas Where Public Sewer and Water Infrastructure are Available	Representative Jim Boyle	

For an overview of Policy Action 2023, visit [GrowSmart Maine website > Public Policy](#) or [click this link](#)