



227 Water Street, Suite 208  
Augusta, ME 04330  
207-250-0220  
www.growsmartmaine.org

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**Testimony of Nancy Smith, Executive Director of GrowSmart Maine  
In support of LD 1593, An Act To Increase Affordable Housing  
Development, with amendments**

April 25, 2023

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and Honorable Members of the Joint Select  
Committee on Housing,

My name is Nancy Smith, I live in Ellsworth, 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. I look forward to coming before this committee to support several bills from the Policy Action 2023 process, for which we partnered with Build Maine to guide a transparent crowd-sourcing of policy proposals that began over a year ago, and has drawn together over a hundred people from across Maine and beyond.

For today, GrowSmart Maine supports LD 1593 with an understanding that the sponsor will present an amendment at this public hearing to address several concerns raised.

**Our primary concern is with section 2: §4352-A. Residential housing**

**Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, a municipality may not adopt or enforce any zoning restriction that prohibits residential housing in any zoning district.**

Sen Chipman said his amendment will clarify that this provision will not prohibit municipal bans on housing in industrial districts where health and safety would be an issue, or in areas where agriculture is the priority. The issue with the first correction seems obvious, as we cannot promote affordable housing without ensuring it is safe. Our concern with the second provision is the innate tension created when new housing is allowed in areas designated for agricultural purposes. I experienced this when I was farming, as have many throughout Maine, when neighbors complain about the sights, smells, and sounds that come with farming. Allowing a separation between farming and housing makes for better neighbors, and keeping with the intention to ensure land in these districts is available for farming.

I'll also note that GrowSmart will be supporting a related b LD 54, which protects Auburn's agricultural zoning provision that restricts new housing to farming households. Though the local ordinance does not prohibit housing in the ag zone, I believe Auburn appropriately set limits on new housing to that which supports farm ventures. This bill was assigned to the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee, though I understand it has been re-referred to this committee.

For both bills, the key point for us is this; **addressing the housing crisis must be done without undoing the good work to address the climate crisis, and without creating the next crisis of access to farmland and food.**

GrowSmart Maine will assist the committee in any way that is helpful and thanks the sponsor for responding to our concerns before the public hearing, allowing us to testify in support of the bill.

*Nancy E. Smith*