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THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

**Testimony of Senator Nicole Grohoski
In Support of LD 1687, “An Act to Improve Geographic Information System
Data Acquisition and Maintenance”**

**Before the Committee on State and Local Government
3 May 2023**

Good afternoon Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Nicole Grohoski, and I have the honor of serving the 22 coastal towns and island communities that make up Senate District 7. Today, I am pleased to introduce LD 1687, “An Act to Improve Geographic Information System Data Acquisition and Maintenance.”

In my professional life, I work as a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) specialist, making maps of many Maine places and also farther afield. I can tell you firsthand that this bill would provide important support for data acquisition and the Maine Geolibrary, which benefits both the public and private sectors.

“How do you actually make a map?” I get this question a lot. The first step is compiling relevant, publicly-available data for the area you’re mapping. For a map of the City of Augusta, I’d download digital datasets for town boundaries, roads, waterbodies and streams, wetlands, conserved lands, and E911 features (like schools, fire and police stations, and libraries). Depending on what questions I want to ask, I might download other data. If you take a look at www.maine.gov/geolib/catalog.html you’ll see the range of what is possible from our GeoLibrary. Wondering where the deer wintering areas or Atlantic salmon habitat is in Maine? Look no further.

This amazing array of data needs to be maintained and shared via the stable platform that the GeoLibrary provides. Spatial data needs to be updated regularly because people are very busy – we’re always building new infrastructure. Our ability to understand a landscape by looking at aerial photos improves every year as our computing improves. This is why maintaining the GeoLibrary and gathering new aerial imagery elevation data on a periodic basis is important.

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The GeoLibrary is currently only staffed by a part-time consultant. This is just not enough staff time to do all of the work necessary to maintain data, keep the systems stable and secure, coordinate with state agencies, assist the public, and develop funding partners for new data acquisition, so that our state dollars can stretch further.

In conclusion, I strongly support LD 1687 and the funding it provides for the Maine GeoLibrary and data acquisition. This funding will ensure that spatial data is accessible to any and all Mainers who are interested in learning more about the place where we live, whether they're involved in economic development, risk management, community planning, conserving our wildlife, or they just like messing about with maps.

Thank you for your attention and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.