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**Testimony of Nancy Smith, CEO of GrowSmart Maine
In Support of LD 1752, Resolve, to Prepare Pre Approved Building Types**

May 9, 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.

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 the shared 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 or may not be a fit and a variety of people who deserve to be welcomed to their communities.”***

This testimony reflects the positions of GrowSmart and Build Maine.

Eight of these bills are coming to your committee, and I am pleased to support this bill, as well as share context with an overview of Policy Action 2023 proposals. Many of these proposals offer pragmatic, incremental steps while others are provocative in that they call for us to examine assumptions that have led to the unsustainable growth patterns of the past sixty years. All of them will improve economic, social, and climate metrics across the state.

There are three goals for Policy Action 2023, and we are already seeing results in each category:

- To pass sound policy solutions to address the goal listed above
- To build advocacy capacity within the broad reach of stakeholders who support this goal
- To advance the provocative discussions we need to have if we are to have meaningful outcomes with long term, sustainable impacts in strengthening our downtowns and pulling development pressure away from productive and open natural areas.

Specific to this bill, as you can see in the attached Fact Sheet, LD 1752 proposes a catalog of building plans from which municipalities can adopt for use within their locally-designated growth areas. Because the community will have already approved these designs through a public process, the developer is eligible for an expedited review process for projects where these building types will be constructed. This cost and time savings is a meaningful benefit for the developer while also supporting the interests of the local community.

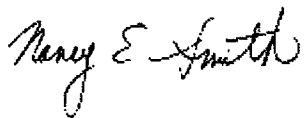
I will note a drafting error on page 1, line 8 and 9, where the phrase “when the pre approved building types are located along existing streets or within designated growth areas...” the word “or” should be removed so the language reads “along existing roads within designated growth areas” to avoid this process applying to sprawling growth along our roadways. This change will ensure the expedited permitting process is not making it easier for sprawling development outside of areas the municipality has identified as where they want to see more development.

As an additional clarification, this bill is intended for building types that include housing, such as small single family homes, duplexes, small apartment houses of three to ten units, small apartment buildings of six to twelve units, and “shophouses” with retail on the first floor and residential above.

We also support allowing additional building designs to be approved once the initial set of pre-approved building designs is available. This brings additional flexibility and choice for communities as they determine what fits in their downtowns and village centers.

This is voluntary for municipalities, adding a tool to increase the speed and quality of housing construction for residents without sacrificing the work already underway to address climate change and without creating the next crisis of access to farmland and open space.

GrowSmart and Build Maine will assist the committee in any way that is helpful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nancy E. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.