



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Joint Select Committee on Housing
From: Ania Wright, Legislative & Political Specialist, Sierra Club Maine Chapter
Date: November 14, 2023
Re: Testimony in Support of LD 1976: **An Act to Update the Growth Management Laws**

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing,

I am testifying on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members and supporters nation-wide. We urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1976.

Growing threats to our environment require a renewed emphasis on cities and towns where people can live, work, and thrive while protecting and restoring our natural environment and fighting the causes and impacts of climate change. Our resilience to the threat of climate change begins with our social, cultural and economic resilience, which depends upon inclusive and fair communities.

Sierra Club supports transformative strategies that build communities. Our full policy can be found [here](#).

This bill improves current law and will build communities resilience to climate change by:

- Focusing inventory activities on critical natural systems and environmental systems mapping as the basis for local planning and conservation work.
- Creating a more nuanced and meaningful set of definitions for rural areas to help better protect working lands and critical natural areas.
- Better defining "growth areas" using recognizable placetypes such as crossroads, villages, downtowns, adjacent neighborhoods, working waterfronts, farmsteads, and high-impact corridors. This updated framework helps communities better meet local goals and provides the foundation for effective policy and implementation.
- Expanding the public process with effective engagement tools to increase public participation.
- Affirming current statute by continuing to reward communities that undertake critical planning work, and



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- Creating a flexible, place-based approach that works for municipalities of all sizes.

We also look forward to working with the administration on comprehensive statewide and regional planning to ensure towns are working together on important issues that impact larger regions. For example, public transit requires larger coordination amongst towns, counties, and the state, and directly affects comprehensive planning.

This bill is critical to furthering smart growth in our municipalities and supporting resilient communities. Please vote 'ought to pass' on LD 1976.

Sincerely,

Ania Wright
Legislative & Political Specialist
Sierra Club Maine