



Natural Resources Council of Maine

3 Wade Street • Augusta, Maine 04330 • (207) 622-3101 • Fax: (207) 622-4343 • www.nrcm.org

Testimony in Support of LD 1976, An Act to Update the Growth Management Law

**To the Committee on Housing
by Josh Caldwell, Climate & Clean Energy Outreach Coordinator
November 14, 2023**

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and members of the Committee on Housing, my name is Josh Caldwell. I am the Climate and Clean Energy Outreach Coordinator at the Natural Resources Council of Maine. NRCM has been working for more than 60 years to protect, restore, and conserve Maine's environment, on behalf of our 30,000 members and supporters. I am submitting this testimony today in support of LD 1976, An Act to Update the Growth Management Law.

In order to overcome the impacts presented by an accelerating climate crisis, it is essential that Maine has the most up to date planning practices on the books for local communities. The legislation before you would do just that by modernizing the Growth Management Law to reflect the changes that Maine is currently experiencing and to build for a future that is prepared for climate change, responsive to a growing population, and conducive to economic vitality for Maine communities.

NRCM supported the creation of the Growth Management Law in 1988 to ensure sensible guidelines around development that limit environmental impact and promote sustainable land use practices. Since that time, Maine has experienced many changes and has made great strides to establish ambitious climate goals and a corresponding Climate Action Plan. *Maine Won't Wait* outlines climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies that revolve around effective land use planning. By reducing sprawl, revitalizing downtowns, protecting valuable natural and working lands, and providing multiple modes of transportation, Maine can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve our infrastructure and social connectivity so that communities can more effectively respond to climate change.

The bill encourages communities to plan for the future, providing additional tools and resources to help municipalities envision and achieve positive local changes. Municipalities will be bolstered by enhanced state and regional support, further increasing dialogue and collaboration between state, regional, and local planning entities. The Community Resilience Partnership has exemplified the efficacy of this model over the past few years, and towns across Maine have capitalized on the opportunity to plan around climate change.

If we hope to do our part to address climate change in Maine, we have to go beyond limiting our thinking to solar panels and electric vehicles. While renewable energy and end-use electrification are important, we need to think comprehensively about how we build and develop – and redevelop – our communities. With forward-looking planning, communities can alleviate the expensive dependence on cars and commutes that result in the transportation sector representing the largest sector source of Maine’s greenhouse gas pollution. They can also more effectively preserve working and natural lands, reduce sprawl, and get more community members involved in local decision-making processes.

Municipalities have a critical role to play in reducing the impacts of climate change and building a safe and healthy future for Maine residents. The best practices and additional support outlined in this legislation will enhance local comprehensive planning, and in doing so, will reduce environmental impacts and allow communities to build the future they want. For these reasons, we urge you to support LD 1976.