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**Testimony on H.P. 556 An Act Regarding the Membership of the
Maine Land Use Planning Commission
March 20, 2025**

Good afternoon, Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

My name is Gwendolyn Hilton, and I am a resident of the Town of Starks in Somerset County. I have been privileged to have served as a LURC/LUPC Commissioner for nearly 18 years. I currently serve in the Somerset County seat. I am speaking for myself today and not for the County or the LUPC.

I am testifying **neither for nor against** the proposed legislation. I have a few thoughts, as follows:

1. **Regarding Additional Appointments by the Governor:** This would allow for the appointment of a more diverse and balanced Commission. Familiarity with the LUPC jurisdiction, both its natural resources and people, is essential to the agency's credibility. Please keep the wording to reflect this requirement. Gaps on the current board include members with specialties in forestry, wildlife and fisheries, water resources, and climate science. Five gubernatorial appointments may be too many.
2. **Regarding Qualification Requirements for Gubernatorial appointments:**
 - a. Change "land use planning" to "land use planning and enforcement". We have several Code Enforcement Officers on our board who contribute significantly to our discussions.
 - b. Add "water resources" to the list.
 - c. Add "essential government services". LUPC has worked hard to consider input from adjacent service centers and other communities in our work. The Governor's current appointment has been a town manager in communities adjacent to the jurisdiction; his input is very helpful.
3. **Regarding County Commissioner Appointments:**
 - a. Work with the Counties to make changes to the qualifications for County appointments.
 - b. Give the County Commissioners 90 days to make their appointments instead of the 30 days. Sometimes it takes a while to find someone, and what happens if their representative resigns unexpectedly?
4. **Regarding Term Limits:** This would be limiting to an agency that engages in land use planning for such a huge jurisdiction. Institutional knowledge is very helpful, particularly as the LUPC embarks on an update of the comprehensive plan.

In closing, LUPC's credibility with the people it serves, especially those trying to make a living in the region, is essential. LUPC is very dependent upon voluntary compliance because of the huge area it serves with a very small compliance and enforcement staff. When the people who come before the board know that we serve on an almost volunteer basis and that we understand what it is like to live and work in and adjacent to the jurisdiction, they are more likely to respect the agency's decisions and comply with our regulations.

Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Gwen Hilton