



Maine Association of County Clerks, Administrator and Managers

*Testimony in Opposition to LD 870 – An Act Regarding the Membership of the
Maine Land Use Planning Commission.*

March 20, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker and esteemed members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

My name is Tim Curtis, Somerset County Administrator and President of the Maine Association of County Clerks, Administrators and Managers (MACCAM). I am speaking in opposition to LD870 and the proposed changes to the membership and makeup of the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC).

For the many Townships located in Maine's Unorganized Territory the LUPC serves as planning board and code enforcement to ensure that the proper balance between conservation and development is maintained. The Commission is currently fully seated with no vacancies and the 9 members meet on a monthly basis to conduct business in an orderly fashion. County Commissioners are the statutory managers of the Unorganized Territory(s) in their jurisdiction.

The proposed legislation creates a Commission of 13 by adding 4 appointments, not from the statutory managers, but from the Governor. In addition, it removes all residency requirements from the Governor's appointments. These changes shift the power and make-up of the board from local control to Augusta.

Consider the planning boards and residents of your communities. How would they respond to a sudden and severe shift in authority at the local level by a state agency...? The residents of our Townships and the elected officials that serve them deserve the same respect.

Furthermore, LD870 erodes the authority of County Commissioners by shrinking the timeline for appointments from 90 to 30 business days, after which the County loses their voice in the selection process and it reverts to the Governor.

If there are legitimate concerns about the function of the LUPC, solutions should come from a collaborative effort between the Counties and the State. The optics of LD870 reveal a heavy-handed approach that disregards the role of all duly elected officials.

Thank you for your consideration,

Tim Curtis
Somerset County Administrator

SOMERSET COUNTY

Maine

March 19, 2025

Testimony in Opposition of LD870 – An Act Regarding the Membership of the Maine Land Use Planning Commission

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker and esteemed members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

On behalf of the Somerset County Commissioners, we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to this Committee regarding LD 870. We are testifying in opposition. Our primary concerns are the proposed changes to the membership, the reduction from 90 business days to 30 business days in the county commissioner's ability to make appointments to this important board, and the of overall makeup of the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC).

The Maine Land Use Planning Commission (the LUPC or Commission) serves as the planning and zoning authority for the unorganized and deorganized areas of the State, including townships and plantations.

We recognize that the responsibility of serving the unorganized and deorganized areas of Maine and helping guide land use in these areas represents a unique challenge. The proposed changes LD 870 makes to the existing statue represents a misunderstanding of that unique challenge.

As the statute currently stands the Governor's appointee "must be familiar with the needs and issues affecting the commission's jurisdiction ". This is extremely important criteria that will be struck from the statute along with the residency requirements as stated in statute should LD 870 pass. Furthermore, increasing the Governors' appointment(s) from one to 5 members of the board only increases the concern to the people who live, work, and enjoy the pursuit of happiness in the UT by restricting the opportunity of those residents and businesses of the UT to determine their own destiny.

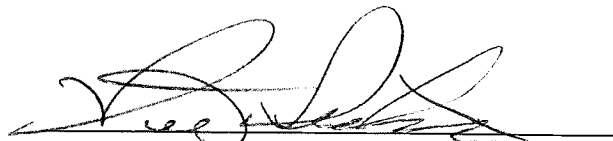
To reduce from 90 business days to 30 business days establishes an unrealistic timeframe to make appointments to this important board and suggests a lack of consideration of the county commissioners' responsibility to appoint the best qualified person for the board.

The changes LD 870 makes to the existing statue will weaken the voice of the communities the LUPC serves by increasing the Governors appointments, lessening the timeframe of the County's choice for the board, and by removing certain resident requirements already established in Law. LD 870 is a solution looking for a problem where there is none.

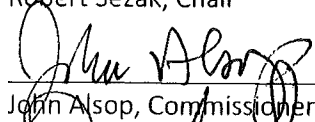
Please vote "ought not to pass" and reject LD 870.



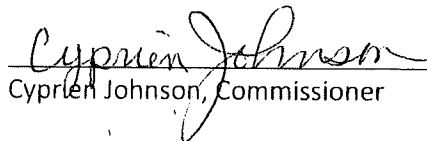
Robert Sezak, Chair



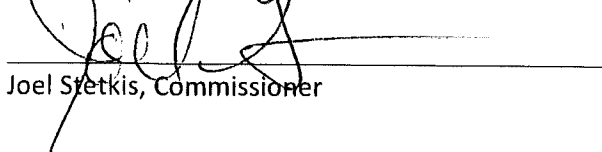
Scott Seekins, Chair



John Alsop, Commissioner



Cyprien Johnson, Commissioner



Joel Stetkis, Commissioner