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Testimony of Rep. Tiffany Roberts presenting

LD 1751, An Act to Improve the Growth Management Program Laws *Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development*

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development.

I am Representative Tiffany Roberts, proudly representing House District 149, and I am here today to present **LD 1751, An Act to Improve the Growth Management Program Laws**. Maine's Growth Management Law was designed to guide long-term planning in our communities. But over the years, the law has become a source of frustration for many towns. It's overly prescriptive, requires exhaustive data collection, and often leads to lengthy, expensive, and overly complex comprehensive plans. We've heard this concern time and again.

In response to these concerns and previous attempts to address them, LD 1976 was introduced in the 131st Legislature. That bill unfortunately took aim at the wrong problem. It focused on statutory language, not the rules where the real challenge lies. It imposed rigid requirements that would have made planning harder, especially for small towns. That's why professional planners, including the Maine Association of Planners (MAP), opposed the bill. It ultimately did not become law.

Subsequently, MAP took a proactive step. They formed a subcommittee of 25 planners from around the state to take a hard look at Maine's Growth Management Law and offer a better solution. These are professionals with decades of experience helping Maine communities—large and small—develop meaningful and actionable plans. LD 1751 is the result of that work.

This bill reflects collaboration — not just among planners, but with legal counsel, the Maine Municipal Association's legal team, and several state agencies. The planners incorporated feedback from the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF); the Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA); the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF); and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW). And just last week, the Maine Municipal Association's Legislative Policy Committee gave it an overwhelming vote of support.

District 149: Part of North Berwick and part of South Berwick

LD 1751 gives towns more flexibility, saves time and money, and makes planning more accessible:

- It replaces the one-size-fits-all inventory requirements with a tiered system based on a town's capacity.
- It supports regional planning by eliminating the requirement for a multi-municipal planning board.
- It directs the state to develop a catalog of implementation strategies to help towns with cost-effective planning.
- It keeps the Growth Area Exemption in place. This is critical for encouraging participation from smaller communities.
- It shortens state review timelines, making the process more efficient.
- It reduces unnecessary data collection and helps shift local energy toward action and implementation.

Most importantly, it recognizes the diversity of Maine's communities. In contrast, the alternative bill—resubmitted this session —risks adding new barriers, higher costs, and a more burdensome process for our already stretched to capacity municipalities. Unfortunately, it was developed without the close collaboration of the planning professionals who work with these laws every day.

Let's be clear: every comprehensive plan in this state involves a planner. Whether it's a town staffer, a consultant, or a state reviewer. LD 1751 reflects their expertise in municipalities of all sizes. It's built for real-world applications and shaped by people who know firsthand what our towns need to succeed.

I urge the committee to support LD 1751. Thank you, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.