

Planning & Code Enforcement

WRITTEN TESTIMONY PROVIDED

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LD 1751 “An Act to Improve the Growth Management Program Laws”

DATE OF HEARING: Thursday, May 8 2025

Honorable Senator Curry, Honorable Representative Gere, and Distinguished Members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee:

I am testifying today in support of LD 1751 “An Act to Improve the Growth Management Program Laws.” My name is Shelley Norton and I am the Deputy Planning Director for the City of Lewiston. I have worked in planning and land use for twenty years. I became a municipal planner because I wanted to help communities achieve better development results and to serve the public interest.

I have worked as a regional planner developing comprehensive plans as well as in municipalities. In Lewiston, I am currently leading the effort to implement the goals of our Comprehensive Plan and expect that we will be undertaking an update to our plan in the next few years. I am very interested in how this bill and LD 1940 may change that process for Lewiston and other communities.

A Comprehensive Plan is the foundational planning document that the municipality uses to identify its vision and to develop goals for all segments of municipal government. It identifies where growth would be best accommodated, areas to be protected, and identifies critical needs for the community.

Currently, creating a comprehensive plan is very time consuming. When I worked at Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments I was aware of communities who would spend two or more years working on a Comprehensive Plan because they could not afford to hire a consultant and they were using all volunteer efforts. The process still takes a year or more when using a consultant and involves cost and local time. For a plan that is meant to cover a ten to twelve year period, working for eighteen months or longer is untenable, and many communities don’t update their plan or have a plan as a

result. We should be striving to make it easier and beneficial for communities to have a comprehensive plan and keep it updated . . . not creating barriers.

LD 1751 improves Comprehensive Planning by decreasing the municipal burden and cost while preserving the essential comprehensive analysis of a community. It matches Comprehensive Planning requirements with a community's capacity and need through a tiered framework. It enables and directs rulemaking to address issues in the Rule. It provides a set of place type models allowing a community to modify and customize instead of starting from scratch. This will speed up the process for communities of all sizes and resource levels. I welcome this approach as it will reduce costs while letting municipalities create a plan that addresses their critical issues, a real win-win.

Please support this bill's approach to reform the Growth Management Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shelley Norton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Shelley" being more prominent than the last name "Norton".

Shelley Norton, AICP, Deputy Director of Planning and Special Projects