



Maine Real Estate &
Development Association

Supporting Responsible Development

LD 1751, An Act to Improve the Growth Management Program Laws

LD 1940, An Act to Revise the Growth Management Program Laws

In Support

May 8, 2025

Chair Curry, Chair Gere, and members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee;

On behalf of the Maine Real Estate and Development Association, please accept the following testimony in support of both LD's 1751 and 1940. MEREDA's testimony reflects our desire to see changes to Maine's growth management law. First, we wish to thank the two sponsors, Rep. Roberts and Rep. Sachs, for bringing forward these two proposals so that this committee can find the right policy solution to revising the existing law to incentivize planning for responsible development. We believe that the path forward probably lies somewhere between the two proposals before this committee. The following are some key provisions that MEREDA will seek in any final draft of a change to the growth management law.

1. Clarity of Community Growth and Infrastructure Goals

- Developers seek certainty in land use and zoning laws. A comprehensive plan can help set clear goals for a community by laying the groundwork for zoning ordinances.
- The Maine Legislature has put a focus on growth zones and areas connected to public infrastructure to incentivize housing and responsible development. While MEREDA agrees with this in concept, we remain concerned that too few communities have provided clarity around their growth zones. Additionally, some kind of mandate or requirement that communities develop a minimum number of growth zones and support those zones with planned infrastructure improvements, would be a key to improving the efficacy of comprehensive plans.
- Additionally, MEREDA would note that neither bill provides enforceability with respect to standards that must be adopted through zoning ordinances. If a comprehensive plan is toothless, it will ultimately not lead to the fruition of the community vision. MEREDA would encourage the committee to add some enforceable standards, including requirements to set housing goals, requirements to have a minimum amount of growth area, and clarity around desired density in critical infrastructure areas.

2. Certainty of Environmental Protections

- MEREDA appreciates that both bills look at environmental protections and how a comprehensive plan can play an important role in planning for critical environmental areas. We would recommend the committee look at how the two bills would provide certainty in environmental regulation and to adopt a policy that promotes housing creation while balancing community environmental resources.

3. Effective Community Engagement

- MEREDA appreciates that the comprehensive planning process is an opportunity for a town to set its vision for land use planning, transportation, and the built environment. Engagement from diverse community perspectives is key to achieving this goal. Unfortunately, too often only a handful of dedicated citizens participate in this process, leaving the rest to complain about and often complicate the implementation of the goals in the plan.

While both bills strive to promote responsible development, LD 1751 leans toward *incentivizing coordinated regional planning*, whereas LD 1940 stresses *enforceable standards, transparency, and community empowerment*. For jurisdictions aiming to balance growth with accountability and sustainability, a hybrid approach incorporating the strengths of both could prove most effective.

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