

Testimony to the Maine Legislative Committee on

Housing and Economic Development

From John Egan, resident of Freeport, ME

In FAVOR of LD1940

May 8, 2025

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and honorable members of the committee:

I am speaking today as a Maine Resident in favor of LD1940 and its recommended changes to the Growth Management Act, specifically improvements to the process for municipalities to conduct their Comprehensive Plans.

I am citizen of Freeport Maine and I happen to also serve there on the Town Council for the past 9 years. While that service informs my comments today, I am not speaking on behalf of the Town or The Council. But as an engaged resident, directly involved in our recent Comp plan process, I have current experience that demonstrates the need for changes in the Growth Mgmt Act. We gotta fix this. Freeport submitted its Comp Plan to DECD about 3 weeks ago. We had a competent consultant who conducted a very thorough process. We had more than 100 people show up a couple of times for community workshops. Our process checked all the boxes and I think we submitted a compelling and forward looking plan. We also hijacked nearly all the staff capacity of our planning and economic development staff time for the past 8-10 months with all the documentation and inventory chapter work required by the Growth Management Act.

The Comp Plan process is a great vehicle to engage residents DIRECTLY in how they want to see their town grow. And compliance with a local plan should have some gravity with municipal decisions going down the road for the next 12 yrs.... But this is an exhausting process. We literally wore out our community with the process. And they grew impatient with the density of the requirements. Regular Mainers care deeply about their hometowns, and they want a voice in the future. And they want a process they can understand that shows pictures and maps of their community – as they know it. And maps with overlays of different options and renderings of building types are easier to understand and more compelling than pages of text with required vocabulary.

LD1940 Simplifies the Comp Plan process dramatically. It proposes to use tools and maps and terms that our community residents can not only understand but get excited about too. Nearly every community in Maine is facing a challenge with housing supply – the easy way out is to cut trees and dig up fields and install big box subdivisions. No one wants that. We need to be encouraging but also facilitating our towns to focus the next 12 yrs of economic

growth in our village centers and places where infrastructure can support more density. And be thoughtful and pro-active on ways to improve and expand that infrastructure to avoid just cutting down trees further out of town.

Housing pressures and skyrocketing Real Estate prices are paralyzing our towns and our local economies. Land use and growth planning command that local voices and local engaged residents to roll up their sleeves and tackle these challenges – LD 1940 fixes one of the major tools that we have to solve these issues.