



Solutions for a
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Vice President of Policy and Advocacy, Defend Our Health
In SUPPORT of LD 1940, "An Act to Revise the Growth Management Program Laws"
Before the Committee on Housing and Economic Development
May 8, 2025

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and members of the Housing and Economic Development. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the director of advocacy for Defend Our Health, formerly the Environmental Health Strategy Center. Defend Our Health's mission is to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food and drinking water, healthy homes and products that are toxic-free and climate friendly. I am here to testify in support of LD 1940 "An Act to Revise the Growth Management Program Laws."

LD 1940 makes critical and overdue updates to Maine's Growth Management Program. Maine must be proactive in planning for sustainable growth, protecting our natural resources, and investing wisely in the infrastructure that supports our communities. LD 1940 does that.

Maine has a severe waste management problem in the state. Because of important and necessary legislation passed in the 130th legislature, Maine is one of two states that is landfilling our wastewater sludge, most of which is going to Juniper Ridge Landfill (JRL). Landfilling our wastewater is not a long-term solution. A growth management plan will help communities plan for the future and invest in infrastructure, including wastewater facilities, to help put in place technology that will help protect the health and environment of our communities. By requiring municipalities to align comprehensive plans with infrastructure assessments and investment priorities, LD 1940 helps ensure that future growth is both fiscally responsible and environmentally sustainable.

Maine's working lands are a cornerstone of our economy, our food security, and our rural character. However, we are in danger of losing more farms if we don't work together to plan for the future. Data from the most recent agricultural census shows that Maine lost 564 farms from 2017 to 2024. That amounts to about 82,000 acres. As Maine farmers deal with increased costs, impacts from PFAS contamination, and increased development, it becomes even more important to plan for the future of our agricultural sector. This legislation helps provide tools for towns to identify and protect farmland in their comprehensive plans.

Updating our Growth Management Law is essential to protecting public health. How we manage our communities determines all manner of things including who gets clean air, clean and safe drinking water, safe schools, etc. It is important to support smart growth for the health and safety of all of our communities. I urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1940.