



Natural Resources Council of Maine

3 Wade Street • Augusta, Maine 04330
207.622.3101 • Fax: 207.622.4343 • NRCM.org

Testimony in Support of LD 1940, An Act to Revise the Growth Management Program Laws

To the Committee on Housing and Economic Development
by Josh Caldwell, Climate and Clean Energy Policy Advocate for NRCM
May 8, 2025

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Josh Caldwell, and I am here on behalf of the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) in support of LD 1940, An Act to Revise the Growth Management Program Laws. NRCM is Maine's leading nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to protecting Maine's environment, with nearly 20,000 supporters statewide and beyond.

The legislation before you today will ensure that communities throughout Maine have the tools to plan for a thriving future while protecting critical natural resources. Further, it will reduce the current barriers to effectively conducting comprehensive planning and allow communities to adapt along with evolving clean energy, conservation, and economic development best practices. This way, communities can identify where to grow and develop, where to site clean energy resources, and where to prioritize preservation of natural and working lands, ultimately reducing conflict and resulting delays in implementing an effective climate response.

Local Comprehensive Planning is Critical to Meet our Climate and Environmental Goals

In order to overcome the impacts presented by an accelerating climate crisis, it is essential that Maine's local planning practices align with our statewide climate goals while allowing for flexibility in response to changing conditions. The legislation before you would do just that by modernizing the Growth Management Law to reflect the changes that Maine is currently experiencing and to build for a future that is prepared for climate change, responsive to a growing population, and conducive to economic vitality for Maine communities. Maine's Climate Action Plan, *Maine Won't Wait*, outlines climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies that revolve around effective land use planning. By reducing sprawl, revitalizing downtowns, protecting valuable natural and working lands, and providing multiple modes of interconnected transportation, Maine can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve our infrastructure and social connectivity so that communities can more effectively respond to climate change.

NRCM's Mission is Rooted in Smart Planning and Good Land Use Practices

NRCM supported the creation of the Growth Management Law in 1988 to ensure sensible guidelines around development that limit environmental impact and promote sustainable land use practices. Since that time, Maine has experienced the simultaneous impacts of climate change and population growth and has made great strides to establish ambitious climate goals and a corresponding Climate Action Plan. In order to effectively protect the nature of Maine, as is our charge, we have to respond to climate change while remaining committed to conserving the natural and working lands that represent the backbone of our state's character, ecology, recreation economy, and heritage industries. This can only be done through smart planning at every level of government.

Local Planning Must be Forward Looking

Maine's Growth Management Law and associated comprehensive planning guidelines have not been updated in more than 30 years. Current planning guidelines are not responsive to present-day conditions, nor are they adequate to prepare communities for the impacts of climate change. This bill encourages communities to plan for the future, providing additional tools and resources to help municipalities envision and achieve positive local changes. Municipalities will be bolstered by enhanced state and regional support, further increasing dialogue and collaboration between state, regional, and local planning entities. The Community Resilience Partnership has exemplified the efficacy of this model over the past few years, and towns across Maine have capitalized on the opportunity to plan around climate change.

With forward-looking planning, communities can alleviate the expensive dependence on cars and trucks that result in the transportation sector representing the largest sector source of Maine's greenhouse gas pollution. They can also more effectively preserve working and natural lands, reduce sprawl, and get more community members involved in local decision-making processes.

Municipalities have a critical role to play in reducing the impacts of climate change and building a safe and healthy future for Maine residents. The best practices and additional support outlined in this legislation will enhance local comprehensive planning and reduce barriers to conducting such planning, and in doing so, will reduce negative environmental impacts and allow communities to build the future they want in alignment with statewide climate and environmental goals.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1940. Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.