



Testimony in Support of LD 1662:

“An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Zoning and Land Use Restrictions to Limit Certain Requirements to Municipalities with Populations of More than 10,000”

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Harris Van Pate, and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free-market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 1662, "An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Zoning and Land Use Restrictions to Limit Certain Requirements to Municipalities with Populations of More than 10,000."

This bill is a prudent step toward restoring local control over land use decisions and protecting the rural character and autonomy of Maine's smaller communities.

In 2022 Maine enacted LD 2003, which included sweeping statewide zoning reforms that imposed uniform housing mandates on all municipalities, regardless of their size, capacity, or unique local needs. While the intention was to increase housing availability, the blanket approach effectively disregarded the diversity of Maine's towns and cities. LD 1662 corrects this overreach by limiting specific mandates, such as minimum lot allowances for multi-unit structures and accessory dwelling units, to municipalities with populations exceeding 10,000 residents.

Why LD 1662 Matters:

- **Respect for Local Governance:** Smaller municipalities should not be forced to comply with urban-style zoning mandates that may be inappropriate or even damaging to their rural economies and infrastructure. Local leaders, elected by their communities, are best positioned to determine what types of development suit their residents.
- **Preserving Rural Maine:** Uniform mandates could strain limited rural infrastructure, lead to costly and unnecessary expansions of water and sewer systems, and diminish the rural character that is foundational to Maine's identity and tourism economy.
- **Supporting Economic Competitiveness:** Mandating high-density development across all towns could inadvertently harm property values, discourage responsible growth, and create burdensome compliance costs for municipalities that are ill-equipped to bear them. Maine must foster policies that encourage, not hinder, sustainable, organic growth tailored to each community's economic reality.



- **Learning from Other States:** Across the country, we have seen how one-size-fits-all land use mandates in rural areas have led to unintended consequences: higher housing costs, overwhelmed public services, and resentment among local populations. Maine should avoid repeating these mistakes.

Maine Policy Institute believes the role of the state should be to empower local decision-making rather than supplant it with top-down directives. LD 1662 strikes a thoughtful balance by ensuring that zoning reforms intended for larger, more densely populated areas do not trample on the rights and practical realities of Maine's smaller towns.

Conclusion

LD 1662 promotes a core principle of good governance: subsidiarity—the idea that decisions should be made at the most local level capable of addressing them effectively. It respects the distinct needs of Maine's diverse communities, protects property rights, and supports rural prosperity.

For these reasons, we strongly urge the Committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1662. Thank you for your time and consideration.