



Testimony of Maine Labor Climate Council in support of LD 1940, "An Act to Revise the Growth Management program Laws"

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Francis Eanes, the Executive Director of the Maine Labor Climate Council, and am testifying in support of LD 1940.

Our organizations exists to tackle the twin crises of climate change and inequality, and increasingly it's clear that affordable, workforce housing is central to both of these goals. Our organization's affiliated unions represent thousands of workers all across Maine, including teachers, bus drivers, a construction workers. The shortage and high cost of housing — whether for rental or homeownership — affects all of them. Even though this goes beyond the direct purview of the policies we typically advocate for, we believe that responsibly developed and abundant housing is squarely a worker and union issue.

While no one thing will close the housing supply or affordability gaps, LD 1940 marks an important step in the right direction. By replacing the challenging and costly mandates of the current comprehensive planning process with a locally driven process, this bill gives municipalities a chance to lift up their unique needs priorities and build on their own planning assets. If the goal of the state's existing growth management act is to foster thoughtful planning among all towns, the status quo is a barrier, and this bill advances some important reforms to directly address these issues.

This bill isn't new, and is the result of years of collaborative work with a wide array of stakeholders, including municipalities and planners, and makes important reforms to last year's bill that past both chambers. All in all that amounts to as close to a common-sense, consensus-based proposal as anything that passes through the Legislature these days. Maine communities need the tools to engage in the kind of 21st-century comprehensive planning needed by our as it faces compounding climate, energy, and affordability challenges. This bill's structural reforms move us down that road, and we urge you to vote Ought to Pass.

Francis Eanes
Executive Director
Maine Labor Climate Council