

**Testimony in Support of
LD 1940, An Act to Revise Growth Management Laws
Heard by the Joint Committee on Housing and Economic Development
Chairs: Senator Curry and Rep. Gere**

May 8, 2025

My name is Lisa Miller, I live in the small rural town of Somerville and am a retired public health and philanthropy official. I was also a member of the Maine House of Representatives from 2004 until 2010, serving on the Health and Human Services Committee as well as Appropriations and Financial Affairs.

I write to support LD 1940, An Act to Revise Growth Management Laws. I admit right off that I am not a housing expert and this bill can get quite technical. But as a public health advocate I am practiced at taking a broad view—what are the larger forces operating in our communities that support or challenge health and well-being?

Over the years I have come to believe that safe and accessible housing is a primary driver of health in a community. Moreover, home ownership is the first step for families to build wealth, putting them on the road to prosperity, another key determinant of a healthy community. Hence, my interest in commenting on this bill.

It goes without saying that Maine is facing a severe shortage of housing, particularly at the “entry” level. This bill seeks to streamline the planning process so that towns, particularly small rural towns like Somerville, can undertake community planning processes that are not burdened by overly complicated State data requirements. It offers new definitions for working lands, critical natural areas, and growth areas that better serve Maine’s rural landscape. Proposed revisions help guide communities toward addressing important issues like housing development without compromising local environmental and conservation goals.

On the national level, we are witnessing a rather extreme and blunt attempt to seek efficiency and streamlining in government agencies and processes. I view this bill as a more measured and state-specific effort to revise an important set of policies that serve to throttle new housing development efforts. We CAN meet our housing needs and preserve our rural landscape and character. LD 1940 is an important tool to help balance those two goals. I urge your support.

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Lisa Miller
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LD 1940

Please delete my prior submission. Somehow I had the Approps Comm as the committee. Thanks!