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TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE ASSOCIATION OF PLANNERS TO THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WRITTEN TESTIMONY AGAINST LD 1940

DATE OF HEARING: May 8, 2025

Honorable Senator Curry, Honorable Representative Gere, and Distinguished Members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee:

The Maine Association of Planners (MAP) provides testimony against LD 1940, *An Act to Revise the Growth Management Program Laws*.

Maine Association of Planners (MAP) is the professional organization for 167 planners in the public and private sectors, serving communities of all sizes. The Growth Management Act, which this bill seeks to amend, is the foundation for Comprehensive Planning in Maine. Planners across the state engage with its requirements while helping residents and businesses shape their communities. As such, many of us have identified problems with this law over the years and there is broad agreement that improvements are necessary. Unfortunately, this bill only fixes a few of the identified problems and creates additional problems.

This bill was brought forward in the 131st legislative session. During its development planners provided feedback, but few comments were incorporated and key issues remained. Because this amended version continues to take a one-size-fits-all approach, MAP opposes the bill today.

The bill mandates extensive mapping and identification of specific items that are not available through the state and which cannot be easily developed. Creating new data for Comprehensive Planning will increase the cost of the plan without providing clear benefit to the municipal decision-making process. It requires tasks that should be recommendations in the plan for future work, such as creating a Climate Action Plan. Including these tasks in the plan raises its cost and time for creation. Additionally, the bill reduces the flexibility of the growth area exemption, and includes future land use

requirements that do not make sense for small towns. Many municipalities in Maine have no services and lack the appropriate infrastructure to support designating a growth area. This bill should be flexible enough to allow for variation across all our municipalities. Instead, it removes existing flexibility and adds barriers. MAP fears that fewer communities will engage in Comprehensive Planning as a result.

This bill fundamentally misunderstands the problems with the Growth Management Act. It proposes amendments that will be a burden on municipalities without producing better results. Last summer MAP worked with the bill's proponents to see if we could come to consensus on changes. Unfortunately, we could not. MAP developed an alternative, LD 1751, crafted in partnership with more than 100 planners, legal experts, and nonprofit organizations. LD 1751 provides an inclusive solution to much-needed reform of the Growth Management Act, addressing the shortcomings of LD 1940.

The Maine Association of Planners urges you to vote **ought not to pass** on this bill.

Sincerely,

The Maine Association of Planners