

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

May 8, 2025

Sen. Curry, Rep. Gere, and members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, my name is Maura Pillsbury and I am an analyst at Maine Center for Economic Policy. We are testifying in favor of LD 1940.

LD 1940 would make much needed changes to modernize Maine's growth management program laws that would benefit economic development in our state. The thoughtful changes in this bill, incorporating perspectives of numerous stakeholders, would help streamline the process, allowing municipalities greater flexibility in planning for future development.

The changes in the bill to the growth management program statute include:

- updates and revises existing definitions of affordable housing, critical rural area, growth-related capital investment, growth area, and rural area
- adds definitions of agricultural soils, attainable housing, conserved lands, critical natural resources, development standards, high impact corridor, important natural resources, and placetype
- removes the definition of transitional area and replaces it with a definition of suburban area
- amends state goals to include supporting affordable housing
- changes 'citizen participation' to 'public participation' and bolsters the requirement for public input
- repeals and replaces existing growth management program elements
- changes 'guidelines' to 'requirements'
- requires plans to be made available online
- changes the review process for comprehensive plans

The bill also:

- directs the convening of a stakeholder group to solicit input on the development of rules to implement these changes
- requires the Maine Office of Community Affairs to develop guidance for public participation in the development of comprehensive plans
- exempts any plans not submitted before the completion of rulemaking from these requirements

Comprehensive planning is an important economic development tool for Maine's communities, but too often is bogged down in red tape. We urge the Committee to support these updates to the growth management program statute to allow communities to better address pressing issues, engage the public, plan, and achieve their goals for a vibrant future.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions via email. maura@mecep.org