



**ought to pass**

**LD 1751 “An Act to Improve the Growth Management Program Laws”**

**DATE OF HEARING: Thursday, May 8, 2025**

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

My name is Erin Zwirko, and I have been a planner for 20 years serving as a planner in Maine and Massachusetts communities as well as in the private sector. I currently serve as the Director of Planning & Development for the Town of Yarmouth. I decided to become a planner while studying at College of the Atlantic (COA) in Bar Harbor. If you are not familiar with COA, the college offers one degree in Human Ecology. Human ecology can mean different things to different people, but for me and in my career, it means that I try to take a holistic approach to planning challenges through engaging with the various stakeholders so I can understand how they interact with the environment around them.

This approach is important to me as the community I currently serve completed a comprehensive plan in 2024. Taking a holistic viewpoint was the approach that our steering committee and consultants employed over the 18 months of learning, engaging, and synthesizing. All groups involved desired to understand how all of the elements of comprehensive planning come together and intersect with each other in positive, or negative, ways. Most importantly, how the actual people who live, work, or play in the community experience this interaction and understand their community. Those unique experiences create the foundation for the development of goals for the future. In this way, comprehensive planning can never be one size fits all because each Maine community exists in different contexts.

LD 1751 improves comprehensive planning by decreasing the municipal burden and cost while preserving the essential understanding of a community by considering the past, present, and future. It matches comprehensive planning requirements with a community's capacity, context, and need through a tiered framework. It provides guidance on strategies by place type to enable "floor model" comprehensive plans that communities can customize from rather than starting from scratch. This is especially important as LD 1751 does not mandate elements that are simply not applicable to a community.

I respectfully request your support for LD 1751 and am happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Zwirko, AICP, LEED AP

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