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**Testimony of Nancy Smith, CEO of GrowSmart Maine
In Support of LD 602 An Act To Provide Regional Support To Deliver State And Federal
Programs To Cities And Towns In The State**

January 12, 2024

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere and Honorable Members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing,

My name is Nancy Smith, I live in Ellsworth, and I am the CEO of GrowSmart Maine. We are a statewide non-partisan non-profit organization helping communities navigate change in alignment with smart growth. We advocate for comprehensive policies and funding for smart growth practices and outcomes. I am sorry I cannot join you today, and have instead submitted this testimony online.

We have partnered with Build Maine to guide a transparent crowd-sourcing of policy proposals that began a year ago, and has drawn together over a hundred people from across Maine and beyond. [Policy Action 2023](#) has resulted in sixteen proposals from eight working groups, all addressing the shared goal, *“to address barriers to and create incentives for equitable, sustainable growth and development that strengthens downtowns and villages of all sizes while pulling development pressure away from productive and open natural areas. We do so acknowledging that Maine has urban, rural, and suburban settings for which any solution may or may not be a fit and a variety of people who deserve to be welcomed to their communities.”*

LD 602 is a part of Policy Action 2023, though the sponsor’s amended language replaced the original concept draft just last week. We understand that Rep Gere is working with the Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF), Councils of Government, and the Regional Planning Commissions in developing this proposal. We also understand that funding to support this proposal is in the works as well.

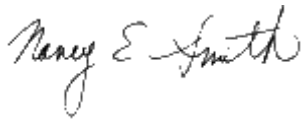
GrowSmart Maine supports clearly stating these roles

We suggest the committee consider several aspects of this bill.

- That Section 5A include accessing state and federal programs for **farmland protection, farm viability, and open space**, in addition to housing, land use and economic development. Specific inclusion of these components of Maine’s economy and quality of life will support and encourage resilient municipal planning, conservation, and development without hindering the achievement of goals in housing and economic development.
- We strongly support the **regional aspects** of this bill, encouraging municipalities to consider how their communities fit into the regional picture for more viable plans, policies, and projects.
- Would the **mapping and GIS support** in section 5C be better managed at the state level, as BRILUP within the Dept of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry has this capacity.
- Regarding funding that may come with this bill, I encourage the committee to include something related to **accountability to achieve these outcomes**. Perhaps a biennial report to BRILUP on both activity and outcomes related to the impacts sought with this bill.

We believe it integrates well with the [GOPIF Report submitted from LD 1934](#), which outlines the need for and proposes a structure for these resources. This report was submitted to two other Legislative Committees, Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry in December.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy E. Smith".

CEO

GrowSmart Maine