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State and Local Government Committee  
Senator Joseph Baldacci, Chair  
Rep. Ann Matlack, Chair

Re: LD 446

Dear Committee Chairs,

Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission (LCRPC) has provided land use, transportation, and natural resource planning for the past three decades to the municipalities located within Lincoln County. We work on economic development and community infrastructure projects to support our residents and municipalities.

We are a rural area with 18 towns ranging in population from 700 to about 5000. Only three (3) towns have planning staff and all are part-time or contracted. Our support consists of broad-range planning support and specific technical assistance, such as comprehensive plan assistance, ordinance review and recommendations, coordinating regional initiatives, business development, and coastal and hazard mitigation planning. To better achieve these goals and provide continued quality planning services, we support LD 446 to expand the capacity of the State of Maine to assist us in our work by providing additional planning resources available to municipalities.

Past state support for research, data collection, GIS and mapping, skills and experience of staff, trainings, workshops, and publications, and coordination of long-term goals meant that the State Planning Office was an invaluable partner for towns and the LCRPC. In our experience, the world of town planning boards, ordinance review committees, conversation commissions, and other local boards has only gotten more complex.

The decrease of these programs and State resources over the past decade has been detrimental to progress at the local and town level. For example, despite substantial requirements for towns to prepare and adopt Comprehensive Plans, meet growth management requirements, maintain land use regulations and ordinances, and manage a host of state-mandated regulations impacting land use, the current municipal planning assistance office (through the Dept. of Agriculture, Forestry, and Conservation) has limited capacity to provide the needed level of municipal support and assistance. DAFW has two (2) staff persons assigned to planning assistance for local and regional agencies. Given that Maine has 16 counties and 454 municipalities, only having two staff members to coordinate planning efforts across the 35,385 square miles of Maine is unsustainable. Dedicating a better-funded and staffed State Planning

Office would open opportunities and resources currently unavailable to planners and governmental agencies at the local level.

Rebuilding the State Planning Office will fulfill needs that are currently unmet by:

1. Providing technical assistance for the Governor, legislature, state agencies, and municipalities on land use and connected sectors.
2. Providing a clear means of communication between state agencies and current planning issues, reducing interagency regulatory and policy conflicts.
3. Aiding in implementation of the State policies and plans at a regional and local level, including the recently issued "Maine Won't Wait" Four-Year Climate Action Plan released by the Maine Climate Council through the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF).

The LCRPC believes that LD 446 gives a new path to re-building the State's capacity to work with municipalities and regional entities on important policy and regulatory issues.

Respectfully submitted,



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County Planner