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Testimony of GrowSmart Maine Neither for Nor Against  
LD 462

"An Act to Reexamine the Relationship among County, Municipal  
and State Governments"

March 8, 2021

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack and members of the  
Legislative Committee on State and Local Government, my name is  
Nancy Smith and I am the Executive Director of GrowSmart Maine.  
We are a statewide non-partisan organization working to create  
lasting prosperity without sacrificing the quality of life that defines  
Maine.

We support policies, programs and projects that define and protect  
the value of our unique built and natural places while supporting  
long term economic opportunity. This includes the value of regional  
planning and implementation for development and conservation.  
This was the focus of our [Summit 2020](#). ***While this bill points in  
a direction we support, it appears to be leading toward a  
single conclusion prematurely.***

LD 462 seems to assume that additional funding for counties is the  
likely best strategy to strengthen regional efforts in Maine. This  
ignores the value of Regional Planning Commissions, Economic  
Development Districts and Councils of Governments (often the  
same organization in a region) in offering significant resources and  
of a statewide coordinating agency. These quasi-government  
agencies, regardless of current size and scope, could also benefit  
from evaluation and strategic investments.

We suggest that it may make sense to view this proposal within the  
context of LD 446, An Act to Reestablish the State Planning Office. ***Considering  
the potential of county government to better provide regional services and  
resources within context of LD 446 may be the most effective path  
forward.***

(over)

At the public hearing last week, it was made clear by the sponsor and supporters that the intention of LD 446 is evaluating current infrastructure and increasing resources to support local, regional, and statewide coordination and resources. ***The goal is the same; creating a better system for municipal, regional, and statewide planning and implementation.***

In closing, I'll note that GrowSmart Maine supports the portion of LD 462 that calls for evaluating the scope of county government outside of Maine and suggests any study include the regional entities mentioned above. Further, we would suggest limiting the comparative analysis to similar states, in particular the other New England states.

As always, we are willing to assist the committee in any way that is helpful to you.

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy E. Smith". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

Nancy E Smith  
Executive Director