

# VIEWSHED

Landscape Architecture, GIS, & Planning

**Testimony in Support of LD 1687**  
**An Act To Improve Geographic Information System Data Acquisition and Maintenance**  
Before  
State and Local Government Committee

May 3, 2023

Good afternoon Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and members of the State & Local Government Committee. My name is Judy Colby-George, and I am the owner of VIEWSHED, a Landscape Architecture, GIS, and Planning firm located in Yarmouth, ME where I also live. I have a staff of 12 people working in Yarmouth. My firm works with many clients throughout the state, including municipalities, regional planning agencies, state government, and private industry.

We provide a wide range of services which all depend on spatial information provided by the Maine Office of GIS (MeGIS) and the Maine Library of Geographic Information (GeoLibrary). The information provided by MeGIS and the GeoLibrary are essential to our work and to supporting planning, environmental protection, economic development and almost all functions of municipal government. Without the clear authoritative data and ability to provide this information to all levels of government and the private sector, the state would not only reduce its ability to achieve many goals identified by government leadership, but it would fall behind other states which provide the data described in this bill and more in many cases.

In working toward the goals outlined in Maine Won't Wait and many other policies, understanding how the state is developing, where development is and is not, through detailed and current orthophotography is a baseline necessary to this work. This data provides the backbone of many types of analysis and understanding described in these policies. If we don't understand where things

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happen, it is very difficult to plan for where we want them to go in the future. The ability of all levels of government to have access to this data is more than important, it is indispensable.

Providing wide access to this data is also a matter of equity. If only the wealthy, largest private sector companies and largest communities can afford to access the data, where does that leave small communities or small businesses? The GeoLibrary is the hub around which the state's geospatial data is provided to all the people of the state of Maine and beyond. The work of the GeoLibrary board has been instrumental in developing the Orthophotography and LiDAR data acquisition in the state. Most individual municipalities cannot afford to procure these services on their own, nor do they have the in-house expertise to know how to evaluate proposal or final products from vendors of these services. The GeoLibrary has the expertise to ensure that all parts of the state receive data which meets national standards and is reasonable priced.

It is very important that the GeoLibrary receive the support they need to continue the work that has been done up until now. I think LD 1687 is a great step forward for the State of Maine.

I urge you to approve this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration,



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