

TESTIMONY OF
JOSEPH YOUNG
SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF LD 1687

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Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and members of the Committee, I am Joseph Young, Christmas Tree Grower in Fayette, former Administrator of the Maine Office of GIS, Former Chairman and Public Member of the Maine Library of Geographic Information Board of Directors. I am speaking in favor of LD 1687.

The GeoLibrary was first envisioned by the Legislature in a 2002 report “GIS Needs Assessment & Requirements Analysis and Strategic Plan” to develop the Maine Library of Geographic Information. Since its subsequent establishment it has struggled to meet its mission as established in MRSA [Title 5, Part 4, Chapter 163 2001 through 2006](#). This has been done with support from the Maine Office of GIS located in the Office of Information Technology and the Department of Finance and Administrative Services.

Geographic information systems (GIS) use has grown exponentially over the last 20 years. These systems, consisting of computers and software operated by trained personnel, allow multiple sources of geographic data to be displayed in a geographic map, making it easier for decision makers like yourselves to understand and draw conclusions. An example of this would be the search of developable land parcels of a

certain size, requiring many services and other characteristics. A community can integrate sewer, water, three phase power, elevation, imagery, soils, parcel, and many other related data into one map. A simple query identifies the parcels where all or some of the attributes are available. The GIS system combines this information in a map allowing the community to visualize where development is possible, showing limiting factors and how it relates to other aspects of the community.

Many of the state's communities have developed and staffed their own GIS systems and many more have contracted GIS services to provide maps in their community. These maps, in many cases, are online and interactive, allowing people without any training in GIS to coordinate the display of multiple layers of data to satisfy their needs. Larger data sets of statewide importance are housed in the GeoLibrary where communities, state agencies and multiple other constituencies can access and use it in their own systems.

The GeoLibrary digital data platform is easily accessible via its website and is accessed hundreds of times a day. Information such as the Department of Marine Resources Aquaculture data, GeoLibrary parcel, ortho-imagery and elevation data are accessed on a daily basis. Data housed within the GeoLibrary is utilized in platforms such as the Emergency Services Bureau's Next Generation 9-1-1 System and by nearly all of the other State's agencies. As a Christmas tree grower utilizing state elevation data helped me locate a new driveway for the farm and I frequently view historical and current ortho-imagery related to my farm's operations.

The demand for geographic data has grown exponentially since the 2002 study. Having that data comes at a cost! Being able to host and efficiently distribute the data for the multitude of users throughout the state, nation and even internationally has outstripped the ability of the Maine Office of GIS to provide adequate support for GeoLibrary responsibilities. For most GIS projects current data is essential but the cost of acquiring ortho-imagery or elevation and many other data layers for a community is prohibitively expensive. However, using GeoLibrary contracts to acquire data at the state or regional level brings the cost down to affordable levels. In many cases the GeoLibrary can coordinate data acquisition with many partners willing to collaborate and help pay for the data. This coordination has saved the state millions of dollars over the last decade and has allowed communities that could not afford to have current high-resolution data to obtain it through GeoLibrary programs.

In closing, I encourage you to support this bill! The demand for data is ever increasing and requires State government support of its acquisition and distribution for the well being of all of Maine's citizens.