

Testimony of Winston Lumpkins IV
In Support of LD 1020

March 27th, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

I'm Winston Lumpkins IV, a lifelong Mainer who's lived in Portland for the last 10+ years. I grew up in Piscataquis County, and was raised to appreciate the value of local and seasonal food. In Portland I work at a business which processes a lot of locally grown food, and **I believe very strongly that Maine should not preclude the possibility of feeding itself through suburban sprawl.**

I'm writing to you in support of LD 1020, though I must point out one question I have about the bill: **is the best use of the land that the MTA purchased to build the Gorham Connector selling it back to the original owners at the original price?** Due to inflation, and the general rising cost of real estate, this strikes me as a fiscally irresponsible move. Additionally, we might be able to leverage some of that land to create more housing, or, in the case of parcels which are close to waterways, or which could serve as farmland, preserving it makes sense.

I have the following reservations about the Gorham connector, which I consider sufficient to warrant the legislature rescinding its authorization:

1. I am deeply concerned that **authorisation for this highway will eventually be used if it is not rescinded.**
2. If created, this highway spur would foster suburban sprawl for a considerable distance to the west of Portland, permanently consuming land which either is farmland, or could be farmland, besides its impact on Smiling Hill farm, the only local source of milk not packaged in plastic. **That would be irrevocable harm to the State of Maine.**
3. **Alternatives exist:**
 - a. The Greater Portland Council of Governments has studied improvements to existing public transit, which represents a nearly infinite solution to congestion, as **adding buses is a far more fiscally sound solution than adding more lanes.**
 - b. The Maine DOT is beginning to look at solutions to congestion such as roundabouts and other modern investments in existing infrastructure.
 - c. Taken together, **these 2 improvements could allow dense, financially sustainable housing to be built in Westbrook and Gorham, and not at points further west, maintaining that land for potential farmland in the future.**
4. The last thing we should do is invite more people to live in Maine (which opening the land west of Gorham to an easy highway commute to Portland would do), while precluding our ability to feed those people as national and global food distribution systems break down over the next 10, 20 and 100 years.

Perhaps my concerns about the globalization of our food system are unfounded; however, that does not change the fact that **suburban sprawl creates a tax base too thin to cover the cost of replacement infrastructure, which will inevitably lead, in 20 or 30 years, to the state having to bail municipalities out.** We must not encourage irresponsible suburban sprawl by allowing this highway to be built, as ultimately the Maine taxpayer will bear the burden of the inevitable fiscal collapse of towns that build too much too far apart.

I trust that the Joint standing Committee will consider this bill and recommend the best possible version of it to the full legislature.

Thank you for considering it, and for your service to the State of Maine through serving as legislators; I know it is often a thankless job.

Please let me know if there is any way I can assist the Committee,

Sincerely,

Winston Lumpkins IV,

Portland, Maine

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Taken together, these 2 improvements could allow dense, financially sustainable housing to be built in Westbrook and Gorham, and not at points further west, maintaining that land for potential farmland in the future.

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