

2020 Board of Directors

Ethan Boxer-Macomber, Chair
Carol Morris, Vice-Chair
Buzz Lamb, Secretary
Ben Smith, Treasurer
Rachel Bouvier
Rebecca Casey
Jean Claveau
Carl Eppich
Maggie Fleming
Tyler Kidder



Jeff Levine
Tom Rumpf
Lynne Seeley
Sally Stockwell
David Webster
Christopher Winstead
Robin Zinchuk
Daniel Hildreth, Emeritus
Evan Richert, Emeritus
Anna Marie Thron, Emeritus

**Testimony of Nancy Smith, Executive Director of GrowSmart Maine
in support of LD 1956, “Resolve, To Establish a Commission To Increase Housing
Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions”**

February 12, 2020

Senator Bellows, Representative Sylvester and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor & Housing, 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.

In this capacity, we lead a program called the **Maine Alliance for Smart Growth (MASG)**; a network of communities, individuals, businesses and organizations with a proven interest in promoting and supporting economically and culturally vital downtowns and the natural areas surrounding them; working farms and forests, open space and waterfront. We recognize the interdependence of Maine’s natural and built environments and their combined value in creating livable communities and sustainable economic opportunities for today and the future.

Though the focus of this bill is on increasing choices in housing, this proposal offers significant value across many policy areas from land conservation to economic opportunity, to ensuring wise use of infrastructure including roads, water and sewer, and broadband. For these reasons, the steering committee of the MASG voted to strongly endorse LD 1956. This testimony is therefore both for GrowSmart Maine and the MASG. Steering committee members are listed at the end of my testimony.

The commission proposed in this resolve has the opportunity to promote best practices and model ordinances for zoning and other land use restrictions. The coordination of effort outlined in LD 1956 is vitally needed to support municipalities in considering complex zoning and land use decisions.

We work with towns and cities across the state where staff, elected officials and volunteers are committed to their hometowns, but often lack the time or expertise essential to integrating various priorities. The outcome of this bill would provide tangible tools for these Mainers to address housing issues without undercutting efforts related to other community values.

We believe this proposed commission has the potential to add significant value in directing Maine's land use patterns as we create more housing choices for years to come.

If the sponsor and members of the committee are so inclined, our support and enthusiasm for this bill is reflected in our request to be included in this Commission through the addition of the following language in the Commission membership to be appointed by the Senate President: “a statewide organization that advocates for smart growth policies and projects”.

Please let me know if I can provide more information regarding our strong support for LD 1956.

Maine Alliance for Smart Growth Steering Committee

- GrowSmart Maine, Nancy Smith
- Maine Downtown Center, Anne Ball
- Maine Preservation, Greg Paxton
- Greater Portland Landmarks, Sarah Hansen
- CEI, John Egan
- Island Institute, Nick Battista
- City of Lewiston, Linc Jeffers
- The Nature Conservancy in Maine, Robert Wood
- Kennebec Valley Council of Governments, Cary Tyson
- Northern Forest Center, Mike Wilson
- AARP Maine, Lori Parham
- Build Maine, Kara Wilbur
- Eastern Maine Community College, Chris Winstead
- Jared Woolston, Maine Association of Planners