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Testimony of GrowSmart Maine in support of LD 609 Resolve,  
To Establish a Commission To Increase Housing  
Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use  
Restrictions

March 22, 2021

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and members of the Legislative Committee on Housing and Labor, 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 bill solidly aligns with that intention and we fully support it, as we did last year. **We believe this proposal will add significant value in directing land use patterns as Maine creates more housing choices for years to come.**

GrowSmart Maine leads 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 and climate resiliency to economic opportunity and affordable internet access, to ensuring strategic use of public infrastructure including roads, water and sewer. For these reasons, the steering committee of the MASG voted to strongly endorse LD 906. This testimony is therefore both for GrowSmart Maine and the MASG. Steering committee members are listed at the end of my testimony.

The tools that will result from the coordination of effort outlined in LD 609 are vitally needed to support municipalities in considering complex 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 multiple priorities. The outcome of this bill would provide tangible tools for these Mainers to address housing issues while enhancing efforts related to other community values such as land conservation, downtown revitalization, and economic opportunities for all.

We are pleased to see the addition of an equity perspective to the Commission. If the sponsor and members of the committee are so inclined, the support and enthusiasm for this bill by MASG is reflected in our request for two changes in Commission membership. ***First, that a conservation perspective be added, denoting the connection between development and open space, and secondly that a statewide organization that advocates for smart growth policies and projects not compete with Maine's regional planning commissions for a single seat at the table. Each offers a unique perspective to this process.***

Endorsed by members of the 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, Amy Winston
- Genesis Fund, John Egan
- Island Institute, Nick Battista
- City of Lewiston, Linc Jeffers
- The Nature Conservancy in Maine, Kaitlyn Bernard
- Northern Forest Center, Mike Wilson
- AARP Maine, Lori Parham
- Build Maine, Kara Wilbur
- Ik planning, Donna Larson Kane
- Maine Association of Planners, Jared Woolston

Best,



Nancy E Smith  
Executive Director