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Testimony of GrowSmart Maine
in support of LD 1733 "An Act To Provide Allocations for the Distribution of State
Fiscal Recovery Funds"

June 9, 2021

Senator Breen, Representative Pierce, and Members of the Joint Legislative Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, I am Nancy Smith, and I live in Monmouth. I am executive director of GrowSmart Maine, a statewide organization devoted building lasting prosperity while protecting 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.

I am excited to provide this testimony in support of LD 1733. Maine is well-positioned to make best use of the funds provided through the American Rescue Act Plan, with the Economic Recovery Committee Report as a reset to the State's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy. LD 1733 successfully incorporates the insight of economic, business and community leaders with a data-driven understanding of Maine's economy before and during the pandemic, and the experiences of Maine people whose lives were disrupted by COVID-19 to present a clear set of strategies toward recovery and long-term prosperity.

To ensure our testimony is concise, I will highlight areas of investment most aligned with our work, though in reviewing the bill, ***we fully support all components of LD 1733 with its strategic investments in equitable economic recovery and future prosperity for businesses, nonprofits, and their workers in urban, suburban, and rural communities.***

BROADBAND

As a founding member of the Maine Broadband Coalition, GrowSmart Maine fully supports creation of the Maine Connectivity Authority to facilitate Maine investments in strategic infrastructure, ensuring affordable broadband access for all communities and to maximize the use of public dollars for long-term benefit.

TRANSPORTATION

Investments in Maine's roads and bridges, as designated in MaineDOT's 2021 Capital Work Plan and with consideration for the safety of all users, is critical to Maine's economic future. It is equally critical to invest in EV charging infrastructure, climate adaptations of our transportation systems, and to advance alternatives such

as the workforce transportation pilot project.

HOUSING and ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Throughout this legislative session, there have been ongoing discussions of the need for investments in building more affordable housing for Maine's workforce across this state. GrowSmart Maine is directly engaged in the Southern Kennebec Working Communities Challenge to support regional approaches to

better connecting residents with limited housing choices, while seeking ways to expand those housing options.


We are also engaged in energy efficiency community campaigns in Biddeford and Windham, through partnerships with Maine Energy AmeriCorps Program, WindowDressers, and municipal staff. Through several years of engagement on this issue, we know that energy efficiency offers immediate financial and personal wellness benefits to Maine families as well as a reduction in Maine's reliance of fossil fuels.

NATURAL RESOURCE SECTOR

Investments in essential infrastructure for farming, forestry and fishing are necessary to ensure these heritage industries continue to be vital and profitable components of Maine's present and future economies, providing food, fiber, and valuable open space. GrowSmart Maine also views as natural resource sector investments the portions of LD 1733 that invest in Maine's outdoor recreation and marine resources and our state parks. Outdoor recreation is also a part of our heritage and essential to our future.

In closing, we appreciate that the Mills administration has devoted significant resources over the past few years to fully engage the public and key stakeholders in planning for a sustainable future that works well for everyone. With the American Rescue Act Plan, we now have the funding to implement many of the priority strategies. We've been preparing for this moment for years and LD 1773 is the next step to making it happen.

I appreciate the opportunity to offer our full support for this bill,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy E. Smith".

Executive Director