

**TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE ASSOCIATION OF PLANNERS
TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS AND
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY**

WRITTEN TESTIMONY PROVIDED FOR LD #1955

**“An Act To Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the
Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and To
Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of
State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2022 and June 30, 2023”**

DATE OF HEARING: March 4th

**Honorable Senator Breen, Honorable Senator Dill, Honorable Representative Pierce,
Honorable Representative O'Neil, Distinguished Members of the Committee on
Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation
& Forestry**

My name is Charles Haeuser, and I am a community planning consultant having done planning for over 40 years at the local and regional levels. I am providing testimony on behalf of the Maine Association of Planners Legislative Policy Committee to testify in favor of LD 1955. The Maine Association of Planners, or MAP, is an organization of over 100 members, including professional public, private, and nonprofit planners, citizen volunteers serving on local boards, and Mainers from other professions like attorneys, landscape architects, professors, and developers. Though our membership works in diverse settings, we are all dedicated to enhancing the practice of planning in Maine.

Since the 2008 financial and real estate crisis, the pace of growth and development continues to increase each year. In addition, climate migration into Maine, and climate adaptation needs, are major factors driving demand for services in planning, permitting, and assistance to towns. As development pressures have increased so has the need, at all levels of the public and private sectors, for additional staff to help move these projects and proposals through the development review process. To ensure projects are built in such a way as to



benefit both the public as well as private interests, professionals are needed to provide public officials with sound advice based on science and best practices.

In addition, the Land Use Planning Commission is facing a sustained surge of permit applications. Maine's Unorganized Territories are a key part of our state's character and we can keep Maine the state that we know and love by supporting the LUPC members in their important job of screening and guiding this development. Though LUPC leaders have strong policies in place, they need personnel to do their job in the face of this additional pressure.

Even with all the additional demand facing Maine's organized and unorganized communities, planning staff in Augusta has dropped to near zero. Here are some comments from Matt Nazar, the Augusta Director of Community Services:

Having almost no professional planning staff at the state level to help within the administration to develop good planning programs and legislation results in lost opportunities. In 1999 when I was drawn back to Maine by a talk on sprawl and smart growth that I heard Evan Richert give at a Boston EPA conference, the Land Use Program at the State Planning Office had seven professional planners working on land use issues in coordination with regional planning agencies, municipal planners, and local appointed/elected officials. The State Planning Office spent an enormous amount of time working directly with Legislative Committees as Administration staff providing sound advice to legislators on planning-related issues in front of them. By the time I became the Director of the program in 2004, we were down to 5 planners. And with the SPO being disassembled and its parts scattered around other state agencies, the Land Use Program's successor has been reduced to 2 people who have little time to do anything beyond review submitted comprehensive plans.

MAP supports this budget because it will re-build the vibrant technical assistance program that was once a hallmark of SPO. Additionally, with the added capacity, the State will finally be able to take a fundamental review of the Growth Management Act in the context of the 21st Century and a world of rapid and accelerating change in technology, climate, and social institutions.

The Maine Association of Planners supports the sections of the budget above that both add to and support staff that will help public officials find information and make sound decisions.





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MAP would be happy to answer any questions you may have about our testimony and would be pleased to work with the Committee as it considers LD 1995.

Thank you.

