Maine Forest Products Council

The voice of Maine's forest economy

Testimony Neither For Nor Against LD 161

"Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Convene a Stakeholder Group Tasked with a Comprehensive Overhaul and Modernization of the State Subdivision Laws"

February 27, 2025
Krysta West, Deputy Director

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere and members of the HED Committee. My name is Krysta West. I live in Readfield, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Maine Forest Products Council neither for nor against LD 161, "Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Convene a Stakeholder Group Tasked with a Comprehensive Overhaul and Modernization of the State Subdivision Laws."

For 65 years, the Maine Forest Products Council has served as the voice of Maine's forest economy, representing more than 300 members from all facets of the forest products industry. Our members include pulp and paper mills, sawmills, secondary wood processors, foresters, loggers and truckers. We also represent commercial landowners managing more than 8 million acres of forestland.

This Resolve would form a stakeholder group to investigate and submit a report "regarding a comprehensive overhaul and modernization of the subdivision laws that promotes development in growth areas; reduces development pressure in rural areas; protects public health, safety and welfare; advances state goals to produce affordable housing; and streamlines the development review process."

Our member businesses operate in rural areas throughout the state where workforce recruitment is most difficult. The development of the workforce is challenged by the lack of affordable housing that pervades the state, as shown in recent reports on affordable housing from Maine Housing and the Governor Office of Policy, Innovation and the Future. [1]

Our members report that residential subdivisions have become more complicated and expensive in the jurisdiction of the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC). As a result, few subdivisions have been approved in this area. To meet the housing challenges of our members and the state, we need to identify more places for residential growth near our businesses, and to make the subdivision review process less cumbersome and time consuming. We note that the LUPC is beginning the process of updating its Comprehensive Land Use Plan, which provides an opportunity to implement the recommendations of the stakeholder group.

As this stakeholder process conducts its work, we urge the group to include more input from landowners and businesses from both urban and rural parts of the State.

Thanks for your attention, and we would be pleased to provide information as needed.

[1] 2025-housing-outlook-report.pdf; Housing Goals Report September 2024.pdf