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April 25, 2023

Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
131st Maine Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

To Whom it May Concern:

Maine Preservation is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and preserving historic places, buildings, downtowns, and neighborhoods, strengthening the cultural and economic vitality of Maine communities.

Founded in 1964, Greater Portland Landmarks' mission is to ensure that Greater Portland preserves its sense of place for all and builds vibrant, sustainable neighborhoods and communities for the future.

Together we write to express strong support for bond measures L.D. 912 "An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Restore Historic Community Buildings" and L.D. 1163 "An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue for Capital Improvements for Arts and Cultural Facilities." The rehabilitation of historic community buildings like libraries, town halls, and repurposed churches, and supporting arts and cultural facilities (often located historic buildings) is central to maintaining a sense of place and critical to the cultural, economic, and civic health of Maine communities.

Maine Preservation provides technical assistance and grant guidance to nonprofits and local governments that steward historic buildings, giving us firsthand knowledge of the significant need for capital improvement funds for rehabilitation projects, enhancing accessibility, and improving energy efficiency and climate resilience. For the past four years we have administered small, capital improvement grants totaling \$450,000 to historical societies, art galleries, and theaters with a maximum individual award of \$10,000. During that same time, we received letters of interest from over a hundred nonprofits, stretching from Wells to Madawaska, with requests to support capital improvements nearing \$1.5 million.



Studies show that investment in historic preservation supports small business and good-paying jobs, improves property values, keeps money circulating in local economies, and catalyzes additional investment. The rehabilitation of historic buildings can be labor-intensive, creating high-paying jobs. In a soon-to-be-finalized economic impact analysis of historic preservation in Portland, it is estimated that these projects create 218 direct jobs and an additional 217 indirect and induced jobs every year.

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission's "Heritage for the Future 2021-2026 Edition" statewide historic preservation plan calls for, "Consistent funding for existing grant programs, the availability of assistance to address the learning curve for applicants and awardees to successfully utilize funding, and the resources needed to implement new or one-time grant programs provide additional challenges." The plan also highlights that 74% of individuals surveyed indicated that increasing funding for preservation projects and expanding the capacity of potential users should be the focus of the preservation community for the next five years. Financial investment in historic cultural, arts and community spaces will be a critical step forward in meeting these goals.

For these reasons, Maine Preservation and Greater Portland Landmarks support passage of L.D. 912 and L.D. 1163, so that Mainers have the opportunity to support the places and spaces significant to them and their communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tara Kelly". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Tara Kelly, Executive Director
Maine Preservation

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Hansen". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sarah Hansen, Executive Director
Greater Portland Landmarks