

Deirdre Nice  
Friends of the St. Lawrence Church  
LD 1163

Good Morning Chair Rotundo, Chair Sachs, and honorable members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of LD 1163. My name is Deirdre Nice and I am the Executive and Artistic Director of St. Lawrence Arts in Portland, Maine.

I write today as a strong supporter of LD1163. Bricks and Mortar grants are far and few between for our arts and cultural facilities as most granting organizations provide grants for programming but the buildings in which those programs call or home. St. Lawrence Arts is unique in that we have both an historic structure which is both a Portland Landmark and on the National Register of Historic and we are beginning to build a modern building next to the current theater which enable our organization the ability to forever maintain the historic theater.

If this bond were to pass and we had the opportunity to receive funds through the granting process, it will help transform our organization in one that supports itself through earned revenue and support our three part mission of

- \*Arts and Culture - creating an affordable and accessible venue for diverse offerings of performance arts - theater, dance, music, film, workshops and more;

- \* Neighborhood and Community - adding activity, entertainment, cultural enrichment, social interaction, renovation and investment that serve both the surrounding neighborhood of Munjoy Hill as well as the residents of Greater Portland; and

- \* Historic Preservation - rehabilitating this local and national landmark with the adaptive reuse of an arts center.

22 years ago, when St. Lawrence opened in 2021, there were not restaurants on this end of Munjoy Hill. Our theater generated a need for other investment on the hill and for our East End Neighborhood, and not we count Rosemont Market, two coffee shops, 3 restaurants and more all of which have greatly benefited our local economy.

It was the renovation of the historic parish hall that was then followed by other investment in Munjoy Hill, which has been completely transformed.

There is so much private development occurring that it is important for every community to preserve and create space for the greater community, and not have every lot bought up by developers and holding space for the cultural infrastructure and historic preservation can provide and making our community a place people want to start small businesses and raise families, increase tourism, mitigate isolation among old populations by having cultural and artistic opportunities in their communities and of course have opportunities for younger generations to have pride in the communities in which they live.

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