

Spencer Stephens
Belfast Theatre Arts Company
LD 2231

TESTIMONY OF SPENCER STEPHENS,
TREASURER, CO-FOUNDER AND BOARD MEMBER
OF BELFAST THEATRE ARTS COMPANY

BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURAL
AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: BILL LD 2231, SPONSORED BY SEN. CHIP CURRY OF WALDO
COUNTY

My name is Spencer Stephens and I'm a resident of Belfast. I'm here to testify in favor of LD 2231, a bill sponsored by Sen. Chip Curry that would transfer ownership of the Hutchinson Center to the City of Belfast.

I helped to found the non-profit, Belfast Theatre Arts Company ("BTAC"), which owns and operates the historic Colonial Theatre in downtown Belfast. I serve as its treasurer, sit on its board of directors and am actively engaged in furthering BTAC's educational mission. I believe if the Hutchinson Center were owned and operated by the City of Belfast, it could provide substantial help to the Colonial Theatre's non-profit mission and to the students of Waldo County.

BTAC is planning and organizing many different live performances by and for students of all different kinds. We are planning musical performances and various kinds of small plays and other live performances done by students. All such performances require a place for rehearsals, for event planning and for temporary storage of various kinds of musical instruments and other equipment. The Hutchinson Center would be a perfect fit for our needs.

The Hutchinson Center is close to downtown Belfast and to the Colonial Theatre, it has extensive space well-suited for rehearsals, ample parking and other amenities. Its location is familiar to, seemingly, all of Waldo County. As such, it is ideal for our purposes in many ways.

In its current state, the facility sits empty and unused. It is a valuable resource that is vastly under-utilized. The highest and best uses of the Hutchinson Center depend on the needs and wishes of the citizens of Waldo County. Our local government is better suited than any other party to serve those citizens. The City of Belfast, in particular, has demonstrated itself as a capable administrator and steward of public resources.

Since the Hutchinson Center was acquired with public money and has, for its life span, been maintained with public money, it stands to reason it should be dedicated to public use. In the hands of the City of Belfast, the Hutchinson Center can be effectively and promptly dedicated to public use.

I emphatically urge approval of LD 2231.

END