

Billy Hanson
Dirigo Entertainment
LD 1957

I am a filmmaker born and raised in Maine, currently living and working in Los Angeles. I am strongly in favor of the proposed legislation.

I am lucky to have known what I wanted to do with my life since I was very young, but at the end of high school, when it was time to select a path of higher education, I had to travel out of state to find it. I was very lucky to attend the film school at Florida State University, one of the most exclusive film schools in the country, and after graduating I moved straight to Los Angeles, where movies are born.

My intention with this path has always been to bring movies back home. I see the potential in the State's many landscapes and seasons, the hard-working nature of the people, and the indefinable essence of life in small town Maine, something Stephen King himself has strived to capture. But as my career as a screenwriter and director has gained traction, my ability to bring films into Maine has become more difficult.

Several times now, I have gotten the attention of producers and pitched a great project to film in my home state, but the question of incentives always becomes a factor, and inevitably leads the producers to take advantage of better deals in Massachusetts, in New Jersey, in Kentucky, in Louisiana, or in Canada. And with the current deals in place, it's an uphill battle to continue fighting to film in Maine.

This proposed legislation would offer support and better incentives for small film productions to set themselves up in Maine and spend a good amount of their budget in Maine, giving money directly to communities for food, lodging, transportation, labor, even crew and cast for each project.

I certainly hope this is not seen as bringing Hollywood into Maine. I live in Los Angeles, but I do not work in the Hollywood system. Nor do I really care to. Most filmmakers out here don't. The independent space is massive, with hundreds of films being produced a year, even as the film industry itself has been knocked down repeatedly over the last several years. The proposed legislation focuses on supporting smaller projects, which is the right way to go in looking to the future.

In 2019, I made my first film in Maine, called Bone Cold. After it's release, I was approached by five or six other filmmakers who were interested in bringing their film projects there, as well. The interest and opportunity is out there. Film in Maine can thrive. All we have to do as a state is decide that we want to take part. The first major step in that decision is this proposed legislation.

I strongly encourage you all to consider the amazing potential of Film Production in Maine and approve LD 1957.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this proposed legislation.