



Janice Dodge

17 Vine St

Belfast, ME 04915

Phone: (207) 338-1626

Jan.Dodge@legislature.maine.gov

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

March 6, 2024

Testimony of Rep. Jan Dodge in support of

**LD 2231, Resolve, to Promote Access to Education and Workforce Development by Transferring
Ownership of the Hutchinson Center Property in Belfast to the City of Belfast**

Before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

Good afternoon, Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and distinguished colleagues of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. My name is Jan Dodge. I represent House District #39, Belfast, Northport and Belmont.

I am before you today regarding The Hutchinson Center, whose existence is important to Belfast and greater Waldo County. We hope this venue will be able to continue as an education hub, important local space and influential segment of our economic landscape.

For years, our region was one of only a few that did not host a University of Maine satellite or community college. This was particularly unfortunate as we attempted to retrain area workers as we recovered from the loss of our chicken processing, sardine packing and shoe manufacturing industries!

Through a partnership between the University of Maine, Charles Cawley, CEO of MBNA and public and private donors, the Hutchinson Center was built. For years, it was the site of conferences, job fairs, city-wide citizen meetings, Belfast Senior College programs and classes and the University's academic offerings.

Our citizens have a deep commitment to education and share support for the preservation of this building. I believe members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, as well as the Future of the Hutchinson Center Committee, understand the mission of fostering learning opportunities in all regions of our state. I hope the University will uphold their commitment to Belfast, our county seat and service center, by collaborating on the transfer of this property to the City of Belfast, or at the very least, allowing time for a suitable RFP to be brought forward to utilize the building for the furtherance of its original educational purpose.

I would ask you to direct your questions to members of the Future of the Hutchinson Committee who are best positioned to provide informed answers this afternoon.

Thank you.