

Testimony of Diana George Chapin—LD 2231

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Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the committee, I am Diana Chapin. I am here to speak in favor of LD 2231.

I am a life-long resident of Waldo County. My various career paths have taken me from farming and greenhouse production, to teaching teens in crisis how to garden, to behavioral health, wellness and trauma healing.

My whole life, in one way or another, has been a commitment to serving my local community. Presently, I work as a professional healer and am one of the founding members of The Healing Garden, a Belfast-based educational non-profit dedicated to creating greater access to holistic wellness information and tools.

As volunteers, we organized as a non-profit to address the various crises we are witnessing in our community which are not able to be addressed by the current, overwhelmed mainstream medical model. As doctors, nurses and therapists, every day we witness complex and chronic illness, the impacts of stress, substance misuse, mental health and emotional health dysregulation. These afflictions are so often fueled by financial distress and a lack of inner fulfillment or purpose.

We used to think that education and professional development would elevate us out of poverty and stress, but over the course of my adult life, I have witnessed the financial and spiritual poverty crisis expand, and we all have witnessed the emergence of dramatic and widespread anxiety, depression, and, of course, opioid crisis, which in one way or another, affect us all.

Our non-profit's mission is to create entry points for all people to receive high-quality, donations-based wellness information, and to develop real skills and tools for healing. We have skills and knowledge, and are gifted at teaching, communicating, and resonating with people in need.

What we **don't have** is a place—a location to meet, to teach large groups, to share and to gather for group healing. It's hard to find adequate, affordable meeting space with the technology to reach people who can't leave their homes.

I support this bill and the original mission of the Hutchinson Center because as a state-of-the-art facility this community resource has a **unique** potential to change the lives of people who live and work in the mid-coast area, and those from across Maine. The people of Maine have already made this capital investment in the mid-coast region. In my view, the Hutchinson Center doesn't belong to the University of Maine to dispose of as if it were private property. It belongs to the people of Maine.

The Healing Garden, alongside members of the Belfast community, really need The Hutchinson Center to be held as community resource, to get upstream of the health crises we are currently facing, which keep people locked in unfortunate, depleting patterns, which ultimately affect us all.

I ask for your support with this bill so the City of Belfast can work with community members like The Healing Garden to facilitate a plan that will endure the Center be open to all for years to come.