

**State of Maine Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Hutchinson Center Bill LD 2231 Public Hearing
March 6, 2024**

I am Larry Theye, retired professor of Communication and Management and member of the Future of the Hutchinson Center Steering Committee.

Following a 34 year career at the University of Nebraska-Kearney and a retirement move to Belfast, I taught full time for two years at the University of Maine-Orono, replacing professors on sabbatical. This was followed by nine years of teaching U-Maine classes at the Hutchinson Center.

Among those experiences, I found teaching at the Hutchinson Center the most enjoyable for several reasons: the wonderful staff and facilities at the Center, but it was primarily the students.

All my classes were taught at night, largely because many of the students worked full time during the day. They came from a fairly wide area along the Midcoast, and for many it was their first college class. Almost without exception, these students were goal-oriented, highly motivated and competent, and many went on to complete a degree in Orono. Two of whom I am aware graduated suma cum laude at the University of Maine-Orono.

Many lives were changed and careers launched as a result of the availability of the Hutchinson Center. These classes were, of course, in-person classes that promoted interaction between teacher and student and among students. Without this personal classroom interaction, much is lost with on-line instruction.

The Hutchinson Center was designed for in-class instruction and equipped with state-of-the-art technology. Our committee intends to make it an educational center once again when it's returned to the City of Belfast.