

Maine Arts Academy

"Good morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of the Educational & Cultural Affairs Committee.

My name is Heather King and I am the Executive Director of Maine Arts Academy and I'm here from Maine Arts Academy, to speak in opposition of LD1571. Our school has several arts teachers who teach under unique qualifications.

Our Digital Art teacher has spent 40 years as a professional artist, working with such clients as Penguin, Random House, McDonalds, Scholastic, Time, A&E, Warner Brothers, and many other publishers and businesses. He brings his illustration and digital art experience to students from a real world perspective. Our Fine Arts Curator, which is a unique position that no other school in Maine has, has her bachelors in fine art and brings years of experience in the sculpting field, actually creating the Orange Bowl football game Trophies, an award for Hillary Clinton while her husband was in the whitehouse, American Express awards, American Airline, etc... Our Curator not only teaches art to our students but has set up 12 art shows in the community this year for our students to display their art. Students participate in art shows with professional artists, not just art shows that students are invited to. Students sell their art and pay the owner of the venue to allow them to have art shows. All students take a course titled "Business for Professional Artist" and this is the crux of all our art programs.

Our dance teacher has a bachelor's degree in dance and comes to us from working for the Celtics Basketball team in Boston. She has set up our dancers to perform with Colby College students in Portland and collaborate with Bates College. Our Photography teacher works as a professional photographer and brings real world experience to our students.

Our music department is not a traditional music department and does not have the ability or money to compete with larger schools. Each of our music teachers specializes in their specific subject area and are not generalists. Our Strings teacher has a thriving business as a professional music scorer writing original music that compliments visuals and narratives of film. He is a masterful string teacher, but not a general music teacher. Our percussion teacher performs all over the world and teaches for Colby College and Bowdoin college. Our Guitar teacher has a bachelor degree in music from the University of Maine and also teaches for Colby and the University of Maine. These "almost Ivy League" colleges feel these teachers are talented enough for them. Both these teachers also performed at Governor Janet Mills inauguration. I don't think a certification would make them a better qualified teacher.

We have a film studies department with a teacher who has a masters degree in film studies. Our theater teacher has been the Director of the Camden Shakespeare Festival for the past 10 years. He brings years of real world experience from a career in television and theater. All of our teachers work professionally in their field and bring their hands-on, realistic, real world experience to our students.

Maine Arts Academy has numerous unique positions that allow students to take a deeper dive into professional arts. We would much rather have teachers that are professionals in the field than teachers that have learned their trade from a book. We want students to go out into the world and make a living in the arts if they choose to.

We also have teachers who are working diligently to get their academic subject area certifications that fall under the 16 teacher shortage areas.

Particularly, our math teacher comes with years of math teaching experience at private schools and is taking courses to get certified now. The 3 year window for certification really helps with teacher shortage areas. I ask that you do not pass LD1571. It would be a detriment to our students learning process and Maine Arts Academy's mission and vision. I would graciously add that if Charter Schools cannot hold a unique vision for teaching unique students, they should be funded just like other public schools.