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STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



HEATHER JOHNSON
COMMISSIONER

Testimony Of: Kate Foye
Neither for Nor Against LD 1566

Resolve, Directing the Department of Economic and Community Development To Create and Administer a Fund for Live Entertainment Venue, Performer and Worker and Public Art Recovery Grants

May 4, 2021

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and members of Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, my name is Kate Foye and I am the Legislative Liaison for the Department of Economic & Community Development. I am here today to present testimony neither for nor against LD 1566.

COVID-19 has created an unprecedented financial crisis for the live entertainment and performing arts venues in Maine and throughout the country. We know how incredibly challenging this last year has been for businesses in this industry and are grateful for the hard work that all Maine businesses and organizations are doing to keep their doors open, their employees safe, and their communities strong.

We are closely monitoring the Federal program, the Shuttered Venue Grant, which is now open and targeted specifically to support these venues. We are aware of the challenges with the tool the Federal Government has used but we understand it is now open for applications. We do not have the resources to financially support organizations at the level of the Federal Government, so we are encouraging organizations to seek that route first. It is our intent to try to supplement need after that program has been awarded.

We look forward to working with the bill sponsor and others over the coming months. There are a couple of concerns with the resolve as written that we believe we can work together to solve if needed.

DECD's authority to provide grants to "performers and nonemployee workers" is unlikely under any Federal programs and also is unlikely under current statute; language around also supporting public art is unlikely to be allowable under current statute.

As written this resolve creates rules for the use of federal funds. Treasury has not yet issued the rules for the funds received through the American Rescue Plan Act. In addition, there were no State dollars used for the grant program referenced in the resolve summary.

Thank you and I would be happy to take any questions.