

May 4, 2021

Re: LD 1566 Support

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and members of the Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business Committee –

Please accept this statement as my support of Resolution LD 1566 which directs 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.

As you know, the cultural life of Maine is one of our most valuable assets. Maine's history of fine and performing arts is known throughout the world.

In 2017, the US Bureau of Economic Analysis reported that Maine's nonprofit sector contributes \$1.6 billion to Maine's economy. Nearly 26,000 creative businesses employ 16,876 workers on our state.

Covid-19 has had a devastating effect on our sector. At the end of 2020 the Brookings Institution found that Maine's creative economy businesses lost \$385 million due to Covid closures. It is expected that we're heading to similar losses in 2021. 70% of creative businesses have been severely affected by Covid and creative workers have suffered a 76% unemployment rate since the early spring of 2020.

There are some other opportunities for support for the cultural sector. I'm sure you are all aware of the SBA's Shuttered Venues grant program. The Maine Arts Commission will be receiving American Recovery Plan funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, which will be restricted to organizations. We hope that individual artists will be included in recovery opportunities from the Department of Labor, and educational loss funding through the Department of Education, and other sources.

However, none of these options would have the immediate and positive impact of the kind of investment that the LD 1566 resolution could bring.

While we are all optimistic that the worst of Covid-19 is behind us, we recognize that we are still a long way from the time when Maine residents and visitors feel comfortable and safe sitting side by side in a theater or other larger performing arts venue. We must help these venues survive and work to keep their employees in Maine.

Culture makes our communities vibrant and attractive places to live, work and visit. Investing in our venues, organizations and workers makes economic sense, but also gets to the core of why we all call Maine our home.

I thank you for your consideration and welcome your questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D Greenham', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

David Greenham
Executive Director
The Maine Arts Commission