

Testimony in Support of LD1566

Representative COLLINGS of Portland, Cosponsor Senator BALDACCI of Penobscot, Representatives: DODGE of Belfast, LANDRY of Farmington, ROBERTS of South Berwick, ROEDER of Bangor, SACHS of Freeport, TALBOT ROSS of Portland, Senators: HICKMAN of Kennebec, MAXMIN of Lincoln, thank you for supporting LD1566 in support of Live Performing Arts Venues in Maine.

My name is Dawn McAndrews, I live in Harpswell but I spend most of my time in Monmouth serving as Producing Artistic Director of Theater at Monmouth.

I am testifying today in support of LD 1566.

In 2019 Theater at Monmouth celebrated 50 years of bringing innovative approaches to Shakespeare and other classic theater to audiences across Maine and from 36 states. It was the most critically and financially successful year in the Theater's history. We were poised to start 2020 with a strong foundation, until Covid-19 and its associated state mandated closures forced a cascade of cancellations. First, our Spring Page to Stage tour which brings theatrical adaptations of classic literature to Elementary and Middle School Students, focusing on rural areas of the state. Then our three-month Summer Repertory Season and Fall Show. While patrons were supportive, we were refunding more money that we were taking in.

We pivoted to virtual programming from July through December and managed to safely rehearse, tech, and film one production in late August—our Shakespeare in Maine Communities program which annually tours to Middle and High Schools throughout Maine in September & October. After January 1, we waited to see how state guidelines would change due to vaccinations and when the performing arts would step into the spotlight. This spring, we are again streaming programming to schools that to date has brought in 25% of the income this program typically generates; and reached 75% fewer students. As a small performing arts organization in a rural community, we cannot continue to get by much longer.

I urge members of the Idea Committee to support this bill, in recognition of the commitment non-profit performing arts organizations and freelance artists have made to the people and communities throughout Maine.