



**Amy Roeder**

45 Blackstone Street  
Bangor, ME 04401

[Amy.Roeder@legislature.maine.gov](mailto:Amy.Roeder@legislature.maine.gov)

# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002  
(207) 287-1400  
TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

*Testimony of Representative Amy Roeder supporting*

## **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”**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business*

Good morning Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business. My name is Amy Roeder and I represent House District 125, which includes part of Bangor. I am here today to support 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.”

Before my life as a State Representative, I was the Executive Director at a historic theatre in Maine and before that, I was the Education Director at another. In fact, my entire adult life has been spent inside one theatre or another in various jobs. When you spend enough time in theatre administration watching how the sausage gets made, it’s pretty easy to trace how much a theatre enriches the community it serves. You might be thinking I’m speaking in theoretical terms, or pushing the envelope of flowery hyperbole or even about to burst into song (as we theatre folk are so wont to do). I am speaking, however, of the economic realities of our state and how we absolutely cannot withstand a blow to the performing arts in Maine. According to Arts Action Fund, artistic and cultural activities in the state of Maine contribute \$1.55 billion to the state’s economy.<sup>1</sup> That’s more than blueberries (\$26 million in 2019), potatoes (\$184.1 million) and even medical marijuana (\$221.8 million)<sup>2</sup>. To add sacrilege to the mix, our arts and cultural sector’s economic impact dwarfs the net worth of Stephen King (\$500 million).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.artsactionfund.org/sites/artsactionfund.org/files/2020-03/Maine%20March%20Factsheet%202020\\_2.pdf](https://www.artsactionfund.org/sites/artsactionfund.org/files/2020-03/Maine%20March%20Factsheet%202020_2.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/maine/articles/2020-12-08/marijuana-is-now-maines-biggest-agricultural-commodity#:~:text=Maine%20is%20known%20for%20its,the%20state's%20most%20valuable%20crop.&text=%7C-,Dec.,2020%2C%20at%208%3A19%20a.m.&text=PORTLAND%2C%20Maine%20\(AP\)%20%E2%80%94,the%20state's%20most%20valuable%20crop.](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/maine/articles/2020-12-08/marijuana-is-now-maines-biggest-agricultural-commodity#:~:text=Maine%20is%20known%20for%20its,the%20state's%20most%20valuable%20crop.&text=%7C-,Dec.,2020%2C%20at%208%3A19%20a.m.&text=PORTLAND%2C%20Maine%20(AP)%20%E2%80%94,the%20state's%20most%20valuable%20crop.)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.celebritynetworth.com/richest-celebrities/authors/stephen-king-net-worth/>



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In an Americans for the Arts study of the economic impact of the arts on my own home, Bangor Maine, the organization found “the nonprofit arts and culture sector is a significant industry in the City of Bangor -- one that generates \$10 million in total economic activity. This spending -- \$3.4 million by nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and an additional \$6.6 million in event-related spending by their audiences -- supports 312 full-time equivalent jobs, generates \$6.2 million in household income to local residents, and delivers \$1.1 million in local and state government revenue.” To be quite blunt, Bangor cannot exist very long without the arts.

Performing arts venues of all kinds are withering and dying without the ability to do their work in a traditional manner. Even my city’s professional theatre, Penobscot Theatre Company, has seen much hardship in the total loss of its programming over the past year. That’s 1200+ children who didn’t get to see a student matinee performance. 190 + kids who didn’t get to participate in educational activities. 1000+ subscribers who have built traditions around attending performances with friends and families. That’s also less money flowing to restaurants and hotels, to taxi companies and childcare providers.

Moreover, we rely on the arts to add depth and scope to our lives. We enrich our lives by participating in the arts as a spectator or practitioner. We create personal and community memories. We mark our place in the world by feeding our souls in darkened theatres, sitting in fellowship with our friends and neighbors watching stories of hope and horror and love and loss. The performing arts bind communities together with indelible threads of story.

I urge you to vote ought to pass on this bill and help Maine’s economy by helping its performing arts sector stay alive.