



**Alison Sucy, Director of Government Affairs  
On Behalf of the Maine Tourism Association**

**Neither For Nor Against**

***LD 1641, An Act To Ensure Continued Access to Film and Stage Theaters and Music Venues***

May 6, 2021

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business:

My name is Alison Sucy, and I am the Chief Operating Officer and Director of Government Affairs for the Maine Tourism Association. The Maine Tourism Association is the state's largest advocate for all tourism-related businesses. Incorporated in 1922, MTA members include cultural and historical attractions, theaters, entertainment venues, lodging, camps, restaurants, campgrounds, retail, outdoor recreation, guides, tour operators, and amusements. MTA also operates the seven State Visitor Information Centers from Kittery to Calais, and annually produces the state's official travel planner, *Maine Invites You*.

I offer this testimony Neither For Nor Against LD 1641. We greatly appreciate the sponsor's intentions; and we definitely support a DECD-run grant program using federal funds to help Maine's theater and music venues recover from the severe losses they have suffered due to the pandemic.

As you know, tourism is one of the hardest hit industries by the pandemic—and these venues suffered more than most as they experienced complete closures last year. Many aren't certain they can open this year due to capacity and social distancing restrictions which may limit their audiences to a point where it isn't feasible to open. With over 100,000 people normally employed in tourism, it is one of Maine's largest private industries. It generates millions of dollars for the Maine economy. Maine needs tourism to be successful, not just for the tourism businesses and workers themselves but for the benefit it brings to the entire state. A successful tourism industry is the key to economic recovery for the state.

Our only hesitation in supporting this bill is that we believe DECD should have the flexibility to create a grant program in conjunction with grant programs that serve other types of tourism businesses. Rather than separately set in legislation a myriad of grant programs for each individual type of business, we believe it would be better to develop all programs at once looking at the amount of available funds, the estimated number of businesses in each category, and how best to craft each grant program (application process, requirements, funds available, etc.). Additionally, the rules for use of the American Rescue Plan Act funds have not yet been issued so it is unknown whether the guidelines in the legislation will be permitted under the Department of Treasury rules.

MTA would support amending this bill to a Resolve that would direct DECD to develop a grant program for Maine's music and theater venues. Thank you for your consideration of these comments.