

Senate Executive Departments and Administration Committee

Ben Mickens 271-1403

SB 522, re-establishing the commission to study the economic impact of the arts and culture in New Hampshire.

Hearing Date: January 14, 2026

Time Opened: 1:00 p.m.

Time Closed: 1:11 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators McGough, Gannon and Pearl

Members of the Committee Absent : Senators Altschiller and Reardon

Bill Analysis: This bill re-establishes the commission to study the economic impact of the arts and culture in New Hampshire.

Sponsors:

Sen. Rochefort

Sen. Lang

Sen. Innis

Sen. Watters

Sen. Ricciardi

Sen. Prentiss

Who supports the bill: Senator David Rochefort, Victoria Cole (White Mountain Voice), 48 others signed up online.

Who opposes the bill: Daniel Richardson

Who is neutral on the bill: None.

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Senator David Rochefort

- Senator Rochefort introduced Senate Bill 522 and testified in support of the legislation.
- Sen. Rochefort explained that the bill is a result of last year's budget reductions affecting the arts community, which stemmed from broader discussions questioning the state's return on investment in the arts.
- Sen. Rochefort stated that he believes there is a return on the investment and cited several examples of theaters in his district that bring revenues to local communities and businesses.
- Sen. Rochefort stated that the anecdotal evidence he provided the committee will be quantified with the commission that this bill seeks to establish.

- Sen. Rochefort stated that communities around New Hampshire have undergone similar studies and they have all yielded that there is a clear positive economic impact.
- Sen. Rochefort again recalled discussions regarding the lack of data to justify continuing to provide state funding to the arts and this bill aims to provide that data.
- Senator Gannon agreed that investing in the arts can benefit local economies, but questioned whether the state would realize a measurable return on that investment. In response, Senator Rochefort noted that other state agencies such as Tourism and Business and Economic Development, receive public funding with similar economic goals, and argued that investment in the arts should be viewed in the same light.
- Senator Gannon asked whether increased state spending would boost attendance, generate additional revenue, and lead to greater secondary spending. Senator Rochefort responded that the funds would primarily be used to enhance the quality of arts programs through investments in talent and facilities, which could, in turn, attract larger audiences.

Victoria Cole, White Mountain Voices

- Victoria Cole testified in support of Senate Bill 522.
- Ms. Cole stated she decided to raise her family in New Hampshire because of the quality of the schools and the cultural amenities available in Franconia.
- Ms. Cole stated she started the White Mountain Youth Voices.
- She stated that there is a real economic impact from the arts on surrounding businesses like hotels and restaurants.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition: None.

Neutral Information Presented: None.