

Living

Students urge Maine lawmakers to support art education



Christopher Cousins | BDN

A group of ninth-graders from Bangor High School perform a dance they choreographed on Thursday at the State House in

By **Christopher Cousins**, BDN Staff
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AUGUSTA, Maine — Students and arts educators from across State House on Thursday to try to convince lawmakers that ar



public schools is important.

The students and teachers spent much of the day discussing how art education has made a positive influence in their lives, including a concerted lobbying effort in the Hall of Flags. The event was sponsored by the Maine Alliance of Art Education.



Maeve Porter Holliday and Maggie Ruff, both seniors at Casco Bay High School in Portland, spent the morning standing outside the House of Representatives with signs that read “Erik Jorgensen.”

Jorgensen, a Democrat from Portland, is their state representative. They said they wanted to urge him to support art education as a “fundamental right,” not an elective.

“If anything, we need to increase arts programs instead of cutting them,” said Ruff. “People think of it as just creativity, but it’s about perseverance, determination and teamwork. Almost any skill you can think of traces back to having art education as a child.”

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Rating History		
1-10	Strongly Outperform	A
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Ranking

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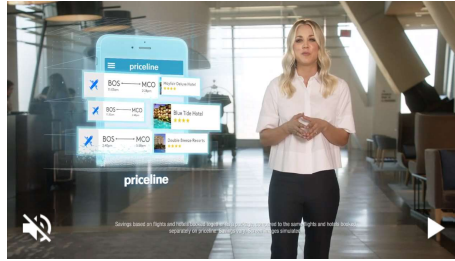
By **Charles Schwab**

Holliday agreed.

“Art is a medium for awareness,” she said. “No matter what grade you’re in, art is very vital to what you’re learning.”

Arts Education Advocacy Day is one of numerous events at the State House for which proponents turn out in force to expose lawmakers to grass-roots advocacy. Thursday’s advocacy featured a mid-day event that included addresses from Maine Arts Commission Director Julie Richard, Sue Mackey Andrews of the Maine Resilience Building Network, Roger Dell of the Farnsworth Museum and Jeff Poulin of the Americans for the Arts.

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Ruff said a strong arts education culture in Maine is vital to her future.

“I am going to school to be an art teacher,” she said. “It would break my heart if I couldn’t come back to Maine to teach.”



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Correction: An earlier version of this story incorrectly stated that a performance of the national anthem by high school students was part of the event.

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