

Community-focused movie theaters are civic treasures. They provide gathering places for neighbors to experience new ways of seeing the world. They also form a link in a chain of cultural institutions such as orchestras, drama groups and art galleries that help communities define themselves. Salem Cinema has played this role in our town for almost 40 years. It started in a carved-out space on the lower level of a parking garage and became an instant hit with great films that the chain theatres were ignoring, outstanding popcorn (battered of course) and an extraordinary willingness to engage with local movie fans and arts groups. Founder Loretta Miles has patiently built the theatre through times of plenty and plenty of lean years, including the Time of Covid. Along the way, she has guided her theatre into a larger space with more screens (but no loss of personality) while helping build the Salem arts community into a unified force. The financial assistance provided by HB 3376 will help Loretta and community theatre owners like her to continue their valuable work in small towns and large all across our great state. That's why my wife, Pat, and I strongly support HB 3376 and urge its passage.