



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

1620 EYE STREET NORTHWEST
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006
TELEPHONE (202) 293-7330
FAX (202) 293-2352
URL: www.usmayors.org

September 15, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate

RE: Supporting COVID-19 Relief for Arts and Cultural Institutions

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

Recently, The United States Conference of Mayors passed a resolution urging Congress to increase support for Arts and Cultural Institutions in our Nation's Rebuilding and Recovery. Urgent and coordinated action is needed to integrate arts, culture, and the creative economy into our national recovery and revitalization efforts; ensuring much needed relief for artists, who are drivers of wellbeing in their communities and essential arts and culture organizational partners.

The pandemic has laid bare the dire economic conditions facing artists, arts workers, and our arts and cultural organizations, whose creative efforts allow our communities to survive and thrive economically, culturally, and emotionally.

Contributing more than \$877.8 billion to the nation's economy in 2017, the arts and culture sector is an economic engine that directly employs more than 5 million workers nationwide. The current losses sustained by the arts and culture sector throughout the nation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have reached a staggering \$15.2 billion as of September 7, 2021.

Our arts and cultural communities have long led the way in addressing social isolation and public health, providing direct, holistic benefits to all—from elders to youth, and for members of our society who have been undervalued by our economy and are more at risk of harm now than they have ever been. Without swift action, we may permanently lose essential arts and cultural organizational partners that are critical to our national identity and essential to accelerate our regional recovery efforts.

As our nation moves forward, we have a singular opportunity to integrate arts, culture, and the creative economy into our national recovery; recognizing the great value of purposefully integrating artists and arts organizations into community health, wellbeing, and development; and bringing deeper understanding to the catalytic value of artists and the arts in developing stronger, more equitable, and more whole communities. Emerging cross-sector initiatives across the country confirm the incalculable benefits of recognizing the arts as inseparable from land-use, transportation, economic development, education, housing, infrastructure, health, climate change, justice and equity, and public safety strategies.

The hardest year for the creative economy is ahead as government shutdowns and access to federal aid and protections disappear. Keeping critical federal support open through 2022 ensures the arts have resources to aid in the recovery and rebuilding of our communities. As

Congress and the Administration formulate ongoing infrastructure and recovery, greater relief is needed for the recovery of our art and cultural workers and communities.

The United States Conference of Mayors urges Congress and the Administration to provide increased COVID-19 relief and recovery support for the arts and culture sector. Specifically, we urge for legislative relief that:

- Identifies opportunities for artists and arts organizations to be supported by federal programs for infrastructure, education, job creation, and health, coordinating with the Departments of Education, Commerce, Transportation, HUD, Labor, Agriculture, Energy, Justice, EPA, and State; the NEA, NEH, IMLS, and other cultural agencies; local and state government partners; and tribal governments.
- Extends the ERTC beyond 2021 and modifies nonprofit eligibility beyond the current gross receipts test to reflect the increased costs charitable organizations experience as they struggle to maintain or expand services to meet local needs throughout the health and economic crisis.
- Invests in reopening the creative economy to enable innovation and supports dedicated relief resources for nonprofit organizations and their workforce, as proposed in the WORK Now Act (S. 740 / H.R.1987) and emerging legislation that will support the creative workforce, such as the recently introduced Creative Economy Revitalization Act (CERA).
- Supports the nonprofit arts infrastructure and increases charitable giving by expanding the above-the-line, universal charitable deduction tax incentive through significantly increasing the cap and extending the provision at least through 2022 (S. 618 / HR.1704 /H.R. 1081).
- Enacts policies that will ensure rapid processing of the artist visas and consular appointments that are essential to supporting international cultural activity.
- Creates positions within the Executive branch and inter-agency coordination to support the arts, culture, and creative economy, with particular attention to relief and recovery efforts.

The pandemic has shown us how essential human connection is. We now have the opportunity to bring the full power of the creative sector to help develop and deploy policy that advances an equitable recovery, nurtures our collective wellbeing, and cultivates a better tomorrow.

Thank you again for all that you are doing, and for your support in lifting up the work, health, and wellbeing of our art and cultural communities.

Sincerely,



Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director

Attachment