



# COVID-19 CULTURAL IMPACT COMMISSION

Legislative Report & Recommendations

June 29<sup>th</sup> 2021

## Table of Contents

- Statutory Charge ..... 2
- Commission Members ..... 3
- Executive Summary ..... 4
- Introduction ..... 8
- Background .....
  - Overview of Massachusetts Cultural and Creative Sector ..... 9
  - Impact of COVID-19 on Cultural Institutions, Artists, and the Community ..... 11
  - What Has Been Done ..... 12
    - State Agency Resources ..... 12
    - Other State and Federal Appropriations ..... 15
    - Fiscal Year 2022 State Budget ..... 16
  - Key Data .....
    - Mass Cultural Council COVID-19 Economic Impact Survey of the Cultural Sector ..... 18
    - Audience Outlook Monitor Survey Data ..... 20
    - Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development Impact Hearing ..... 22
    - Commission's Public Survey Data ..... 23
    - Commission's Public Hearing Summary ..... 28
- Key Findings: Challenges to Recovery ..... 29
  - Exposed Vulnerabilities ..... 32
- Summary of Commission Meetings..... 34
- Recommendations .....
  - American Rescue Plan Funding ..... 36
  - Investment in Arts Education ..... 38
  - Further Considerations ..... 39
- Appendix.....
  - Bibliography ..... 40
  - Minutes of Commission Meetings ..... 43

## Statutory Charge

On January 14, 2021, a \$626 million economic development bond bill, titled *An Act Enabling Partnerships for Growth* was signed into law. Section 99 of the legislation included language establishing a special COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission:

SECTION 99. There is hereby established a special legislative commission pursuant to section 2A of chapter 4 of the General Laws to examine and make recommendations on addressing the recovery of the cultural and creative sector, including the arts, humanities and sciences, as a result of the outbreak of the 2019 novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, and the effects of the governor's March 10, 2020 declaration of a state of emergency pursuant to executive order 591. The special commission shall review and develop recommendations and best practices for the recovery, promotion and continued growth and vitality of the cultural and creative sector in the commonwealth. The special legislative commission shall meet no fewer than 4 times, in diverse locations throughout the commonwealth.

The commission shall consist of the following 13 members: the house and senate chairs of the joint committee on tourism, arts and cultural development, who shall serve as co-chairs; the executive director of the Massachusetts cultural council or a designee; the executive director of MASSCreative, Inc. or a designee; 1 member of the commonwealth association of museums; 1 member of the educational theatre association; and 7 members to be appointed by the co-chairs: 2 of whom shall be representatives from 2 different designated cultural districts in the commonwealth; and 5 artists from different disciplines and sectors, including the arts, humanities and sciences. All appointments shall be made not later than 30 days after the effective date of this act. The commission shall convene its first meeting not later than 60 days after the effective date of this act.

The commission shall examine ways to increase recovery and promote remote operations and programming in the commonwealth, including, challenges maintaining and operating programming, including, training staff, developing new creative work regardless of format, barriers in reopening physical locations and maintaining a virtual presence, strategies for increased marketing and strategies for cross-promotional partnerships with other industries, including the hospitality industry.....

The chairs of the commission shall work to facilitate information and data requests of the commission members, ensure that the work of the commission incorporates feedback from the cultural and creative sector statewide and coordinate cooperation throughout the review. The commission shall submit a report of its review and its recommendations, together with drafts of legislation, if any, necessary to carry out the recommendations of the commission by filing the same with the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on tourism, arts and cultural development, not later than June 30, 2021.

## Commission Members

**State Representative Carole Fiola**, Co-Chair, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development

**State Senator Edward J. Kennedy**, Co-Chair, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development

**Michael J. Bobbitt**, Executive Director of Mass Cultural Council

**Sara Bogosian**, President and Executive Director of the Lowell Art Association, Inc dba Whistlerhouse Museum of Art, Representing the Lowell Canalway Cultural District

**Dennis Canty**, member of the Educational Theatre Association.

**Magdalena Gomez**, Award-winning performance poet, playwright, and teaching artist

**James Marsh**, General Manager of the Lynn Auditorium and Community Development Director

**Chris McCarthy**, Chief Executive Officer of the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Provincetown Cultural District

**A. J. Pietrantone**, Deputy Director of Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, School, Archives, and Community Programs

**Aminah Pilgrim**, Humanist, artist, author, community organizer and award-winning educator

**Emily Ruddock**, Executive Director of MASSCreative

**Dawn Simmons**, Executive Director of StageSource

**Dan Yaeger**, Executive Director of the New England Museum Association

## Executive Summary

With the end of the COVID-19 State of Emergency, the Commission begins its work at a critical time for the arts and culture sector in Massachusetts. The impacts of COVID-19 have proved to be difficult as many businesses and organizations shut their doors or faced the challenge of adapting to safety regulations. While necessary to protect public health, the closure of physical locations stymied key revenue streams at a time where more money than ever was needed to upgrade physical and digital infrastructure. While many state and federal programs were implemented to assist businesses and organizations, these one-time funds were not inclusive of for-profit entities and did not provide full coverage of the industries needs or losses.

The challenges affecting the creative and cultural sectors will have lasting effects on the Massachusetts economy. The creative and culture sector drives tourism to our communities and leads to major economic activity and investment in our cities and towns through its influence on nearby restaurants, hotels and other venues. The economic impact of the prolonged closure and recovery of the creative and cultural sector will have lasting impacts in the hospitality and tourism sectors.

In 2019, prior to the pandemic, tourism accounted for 2.5% of the Commonwealth's GDP and accounted for more than 3% of employment. Mass Cultural Council reported 71,000 jobs, generated \$2.3 billion dollars in economic activity and produced more than \$128 million in new revenues for Massachusetts. Research by Mass Cultural Council has shown that from those who reported, Massachusetts non-profit and municipal cultural organizations reported \$588,334,079 in lost revenue and \$30,403,616 in lost personal income due to the pandemic from March 2020 to April 2021.<sup>1</sup>

As the sector struggles to recover, numerous vulnerabilities and opportunities for improvement have arisen. Venues struggle to come back to full capacity due to work force shortages, organizations are struggling to turn online programming into a profitable

---

<sup>1</sup> "One Year Later: Cultural Sector in Economic Crisis Due to Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic." Mass Cultural Council. Mass Cultural Council, March 8, 2021. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/one-year-later-cultural-sector-in-economic-crisis-due-to-ongoing-covid-19-pandemic/>.

model, and creative workers are leaving the sector as employment remains unstable. Additionally, the pandemic exacerbated existing weaknesses such as racial inequities, housing and healthcare.

Workers who make up the creative and cultural sector, comprised of a mostly gig economy, saw a 40% loss in income in just the first month of the pandemic. Worker shortages now leave the reopening businesses and organizations in an inoperable position. The instability within this gig economy has proven to be too much for many workers as they lost housing stability and access to healthcare.<sup>2</sup> When March came, many lost their jobs in the cultural sector immediately, and had no other part-time work to fall back on. With other sections of the economy opening first, this means these same gig workers will find jobs in other sectors before they come back to the arts, threatening the stability of the entire sector.

Solutions at this time focus on the once in a lifetime availability of funds from the federal government and the Commonwealth. \$5.3 billion in funds from the American Rescue Plan provide an opportunity for much needed investment in the cultural sector. The economic losses and infrastructure upgrades that are needed has left organizations looking for revenue. This Commission recommends that \$575,000,000 of the funds received by Massachusetts from the American Rescue Plan be invested into the cultural sector.

There is an immediate need for this reinvestment into the sector. Investments made in this industry generate business and employment throughout the Commonwealth. To support the industry as a whole, the report calls for the development and investment of a statewide marketing campaign that must be geographically representative, while ensuring that less established institutions are given equal opportunities and resources. The overlap of the creative and cultural sector with the tourism industry creates an opportunity for cross-promotional partnerships. These partnerships, which could take the form of marketing campaigns and shared grant programs can bring more guests and

---

<sup>2</sup> Commission Impact Hearing, June 25, 2021, 192nd MA General Court, Special Legislative COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

patrons into restaurants, cultural districts, and promote the long-term success of the Commonwealth's cultural future.

Additionally, the Commission sees this funding as an opportunity for new grant programs to be created to support operating costs and cultural worker relief and development. These grants would be for items such as infrastructure upgrades for virtual programming, staff training to build retention and diversity awareness, the creation of workforce development programs, artist integration in schools and creative youth development, as well as opportunities for for-profit cultural organizations, non-profit and municipal cultural organizations and heritage organizations to receive reopening assistance.

With the massive impact on the workforce and pre-existing issues in retention, Commissioners emphasized the need for workforce programs that can provide staff training, diversity training, professional development, and community development. Examples include programs that commission new public art works around the Commonwealth or create incentives for developers to create artists live/work space. Development of these programs are critical to creating a stronger workforce and will provide employers and workers the tools they need to retain staff and build careers.

Another issue that was instantly identified was the inequities existing in the sector for low-income individuals and people of color. The public health and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected communities of color and other historically marginalized communities. These issues are institutional and must be addressed through policy changes and funding at both the public and private level. While this report is for the legislature, there are numerous best practice suggestions that the Commission implores organizations to consider as they rebuild their business models. This includes creating grant opportunities for lesser-known organizations that are constantly overlooked for funding opportunities that go to well-established entities. We also strongly recommend actions that ensure those distributing grants consider racial diversity and equity, geographic diversity and programmatic diversity.

The Commission also recommends that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education allocate a portion of its Elementary and Secondary School

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

Emergency Relief Funding to arts education programs, professional development for arts educators, and support for the safe reopening of arts spaces in public schools. It is important that these funds be utilized to support school-based performances, virtual and/or in-person field trips to cultural facilities in Massachusetts, and to provide support for innovative curriculum development and the permanent integration of technology into arts classrooms.

Community and industry collaborations are critical to rebuilding the sector. Providing an increase in funding to support enhanced partnerships between school-based arts programs and cultural organizations with the goal to make arts programming accessible for all students. Outside of schools, the promotion of collaborations and partnerships with museums, art organizations, and other cultural centers is a way of developing more programs to serve the community and increase accessibility. These collaborations and partnerships create a more cohesive and sustainable model for the application and distribution of resources and allows for the sector to develop itself as a community.

While this report cannot do justice to the entirety of improvements needed in the creative and cultural sector, the Commission has focused its work on recovery efforts due to the timeline of this report set in statute. Meanwhile, this Commission has uncovered other institutional issues which should be looked at in greater specificity and detail, which are outside of this Commission's scope.



## Introduction

This commission was formed with the specific mission to “review and develop recommendations and best practices for the recovery, promotion and continued growth and vitality of the cultural and creative sector in the commonwealth.”<sup>3</sup>

This team offers a variety of perspectives through different disciplines and different geographic backgrounds. Commission members represent all regions of Massachusetts, while also bringing their unique sector experience to the table.

Over the course of two months, from May 4<sup>th</sup> to June 29<sup>th</sup>, Commission members held seven public meetings and a public hearing to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on the cultural and creative sector and the efforts needed to build the industry back while addressing the vulnerabilities of the sector that exacerbated the impacts of COVID-19.

The Commission values the input from everyone to ensure that the recommendations made by this commission reflect the needs of everyone and can be applied equitably. To ensure that these recommendations are inclusive and reflective of the sector as a whole, the Commission also invited guest speakers to present data and hosted a public hearing to allow all members of the sector to present their challenges and solutions. Guest speakers included: Kelly Barsdate from the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, Catherine Peterson from ArtsBoston, and Alan Brown from WolfBrown. Additionally, the Commission shared a Public Impact Survey with the public via the Commonwealth’s legislature website and through dissemination of the Commission members and associated groups.

The Commission held virtual meetings on Tuesday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, Tuesday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, Friday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, Monday, June 28<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday, June 29<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, the Commission held a Public Input Hearing on June 25<sup>th</sup>.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 358, § 99, (2020)

<sup>4</sup> Special Commission on COVID-19 CULTURAL IMPACT COMMISSION. The General Court of Massachusetts , 2021. <https://malegislature.gov/Commissions/Detail/551/Hearings>.

## Background

### Overview of Massachusetts Cultural and Creative Sector

The Massachusetts Cultural and Creative sector is comprised of thousands of for-profit and non-profit cultural organizations that range from small art studios to nationally recognized performing art centers, as well as the thousands of individual artists and entrepreneurs that drive the industry. The Massachusetts arts and cultural industries generated over 25 billion dollars for the U.S. GDP in 2019 alone, a near 25% jump in productivity since 2001 after adjusting for inflation.<sup>5</sup> There are nearly 310,000 people employed by the creative economy in New England, with nearly half employed in cultural institutions providing close to 150,000 creative economy jobs in Massachusetts. Non-profits alone generated \$2.3 billion in economic impact in 2019 for the Commonwealth, and employed 71,000 individuals.<sup>6</sup> The cultural sector largely represents a gig economy, with many workers practicing as independent contractors relying on employment in multiple institutions within and even outside the sector.

Engagement with the cultural sector is strong in Massachusetts. Three out of four Massachusetts residents participate in a cultural event monthly, and nearly 50,000 such events were produced by cultural non-profits the year before the pandemic. Massachusetts arts events were attended by 21 million people in 2019, four times as many people than the total of all Red Sox, Patriots, Celtics, and Bruins games.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> “The Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA) - Regional Data.” Bureau of Economic Analysis, March 31, 2021. [Hyperlink](#)

<sup>6</sup> “Our Case Statement for Increased Public Investment in Arts & Culture.” Mass Cultural Council, February 13, 2020. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/our-case-statement-for-increased-public-investment-in-arts-culture-2020/>.

<sup>7</sup> Rooney, James, David Howse, Kiki Mills Johnston, and Evelyn Francis. “Arts Factor 2019 Report: Changing Lives and Creating Community.” ArtsBoston, August 5, 2019. <https://artsboston.org/artsfactor-2019/>.

In Massachusetts, cultural policy is primarily created through a public-private partnership. The Massachusetts Cultural Council is an independent state agency that promotes excellence, inclusion, education, and diversity in the arts, humanities, and sciences, fosters a rich cultural life for all Massachusetts residents, and contributes to the vitality of our communities and economy. The Agency pursues this mission through a wide range of grants, initiatives, and advocacy for artists, communities, organizations, and schools.<sup>8</sup> Mass Cultural Council is governed by an independent board of citizens, known as “the Council,” the members of which are appointed by the Governor for three-year terms. Mass Cultural Council’s status as an independent state agency allows it to maintain a strong voice advocating for the cultural sector while working within state government.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> “Composition of MCC Board.” Mass Cultural Council, June 11, 2021. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/about/board/>.

<sup>9</sup>Wu, Hsin-Ching, "The Role of Massachusetts Cultural Council in State Cultural Policy: Institutionalism, Policy Goals, and Perceived Outcomes in the Arts and Culture" (2020). *Graduate Doctoral Dissertations*. 590. [https://scholarworks.umb.edu/doctoral\\_dissertations/590](https://scholarworks.umb.edu/doctoral_dissertations/590)

## Impact of COVID-19 on Cultural Institutions, Artists, and the Community

The Commission began its work at a critical time for the arts and culture sector in Massachusetts. Recent research by Mass Cultural Council has shown that Massachusetts nonprofit and municipal cultural organizations “report an overwhelming \$588,334,079 in lost revenue since March 2020, while the Commonwealth’s working creatives: individual artists, teaching artists, and scientists/humanists cite \$30,403,616 in lost personal income due to the pandemic in Mass Cultural Council’s most recent COVID-19 impact survey of the cultural sector.”<sup>10</sup>

The impact of COVID-19 has touched every aspect of the cultural sector; workers, venues, contractors, employers and more have all faced hardships caused by closures of entertainment venues and the pause in the cultural economy. Many artists and industry workers were out of work during the pandemic, with some workers losing 40% of their income within the first month of the pandemic.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the arts and cultural sector is made up of a large number of gig workers. This meant as other industries like the hospitality and tourism industries that supported artists with additional income streams shut down, artists were some of the hardest hit. Some parts of the sector, like dance and theater groups, lost a significant portion of their membership permanently due to long and uncertain timelines on reopening.<sup>12</sup> Others, such as art museums and cultural institutions had to layoff or furlough large amounts of staff, while needing to create or scale up digital options, meaning there were less staff to do more work.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> “One Year Later: Cultural Sector in Economic Crisis Due to Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic.” Mass Cultural Council. Mass Cultural Council, March 8, 2021. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/one-year-later-cultural-sector-in-economic-crisis-due-to-ongoing-covid-19-pandemic/>.

<sup>11</sup> StageSource. “COVID-19’s Impact on Freelance Theatre Artists.” SurveyMonkey. StageSource, 2020. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-7M2XP7N9/>.

<sup>12</sup> Commission Meeting Minutes, May 18, 2021, 192nd MA General Court, Special Legislative COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

<sup>13</sup> Commission Meeting Minutes, May 4, 2021, 192nd MA General Court, Special Legislative COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

## What Has Been Done

### State Agency Resources

#### Mass Cultural Council

As the state agency charged with supporting the cultural sector, Mass Cultural Council has served as a center point for state government funded COVID-19 relief efforts for cultural and arts non-profit organizations and artists. State and federal funds administered by the Agency provided COVID relief to cultural nonprofits and individual artists in Fiscal Years 2021 and 2022:

- COVID-19 Relief Fund for Individuals, Funded through the Agency's annual state appropriation, this program provided 272 individual artists who lost income due to pandemic-related cancellations and closures with \$1,000 relief grants in FY20. In FY 2021 the award was increased to \$1,500, and approximately \$1.2 million was granted to 781 individual artists, teaching artists, humanists, and scientists.<sup>14</sup>
- GKV Foundation COVID Relief for Berkshire Theater Professionals, In FY20 Mass Cultural Council received a \$30,000 donation from the private GKV Foundation. Per the donor's direction the Agency awarded \$1,000 to 30 theater professionals living and working in Berkshire County who lost income due to COVID-related cancellations and closures.<sup>15</sup>
- CARES Act Supplemental Assistance for Creative Youth Development Programs, In FY20 Mass Cultural Council received \$475,300 in federal CARES Act funds from the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA). Mass Cultural Council invested these dollars into 74 Creative Youth Development programs statewide. Creative Youth Development programs foster creative expression while supporting core social and emotional skills, engaging young people of all ages as empowered agents in their own lives. As a practice, Creative Youth Development draws from the belief that culture plays a major role in the growth of creative, productive, and

---

<sup>14</sup> "COVID-19 Relief Fund for Individuals." Mass Cultural Council, March 22, 2021. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/artists-art/covid-19-relief-fund-for-individuals/>.

<sup>15</sup> "\$30K in COVID-19 Relief Awarded to Berkshire Theater Professionals." Mass Cultural Council, June 3, 2020. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/30k-in-covid-19-relief-awarded-to-berkshire-theater-professionals/>

independent-minded individuals and thriving communities. The Agency granted the CARES Act funds into these programs because of the belief that post-COVID, these programs will be more vital than ever to the vulnerable youth and families they serve.<sup>16</sup>

- Cultural Organization Economic Recovery Grant Program, 183 cultural non-profit organizations received nearly \$10 million in COVID relief grants, funded with federal CARES Act monies received by the Commonwealth. This program was developed and administered by Mass Cultural Council in partnership with the Baker-Polito Administration's Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. During the grant application process, over \$30 million in funding was requested for the \$10 million available, demonstrating the great need for relief across the nonprofit cultural sector.<sup>17</sup>
- Safe Harbors Program, The Safe Harbors Program was a three-pronged approach developed by Mass Cultural Council in FY20 that included a small financial stipend to existing grantees, an online instructional series, and capacity building coaching services for cultural nonprofit organizations. These services helped cultural nonprofits in the state access \$21 million in federal emergency COVID funds, develop best-practices while operating remotely during a global pandemic and state of emergency, and helped cultural organizations build and raise money from private sources.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> "Federal CARES Act Funds to Support Creative Youth Development Programs Across MA." Mass Cultural Council, April 29, 2020. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/federal-cares-act-funds-to-support-creative-youth-development-programs-across-ma/>

<sup>17</sup> "New \$10M Grant Program Provides State Cultural Organizations COVID Relief." Mass Cultural Council, April 29, 2020. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/new-10m-grant-program-provides-state-cultural-organizations-covid-relief/>

<sup>18</sup> "COVID-19 Relief Effort for Organizations." Mass Cultural Council, April 16, 2020. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/covid-19-relief-effort-for-organizations/>

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

### Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism

The Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism (MOTT) is the state agency dedicated to promoting Massachusetts as a leisure-travel destination. An integral part of the state's economy and as part of cross promotional programs with the cultural sector, tourism generates \$1.5 billion in state and local taxes and \$22.9 billion in travel related expenditures, supporting 149,400 in-state jobs.<sup>19</sup>

- Travel and Tourism Recovery Grant Program, This program is dedicated to marketing projects that support the My Local MA campaign, enhance tourism recovery, and have the potential to increase non-resident visitation. Distributing more than \$1.5 million, the program's goal is to strengthen the Massachusetts economy through the development and enhancement of the state's tourism industry.

### Mass Humanities

Mass Humanities is the Commonwealth's affiliate of National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Mass Humanities has long partnered with local non-profit organizations to bring history, philosophy, and literature into the everyday lives of people in communities across the Commonwealth. Mass Humanities receives major support from NEH and the Mass Cultural Council as well as private donors. A private 501(c)3 non-profit organization, Mass Humanities is committed to responsible stewardship of public and private resources through the guidance of our statewide board of directors and the creative, efficient operations of our Northampton-based staff.

- Digital Capacity Grants, This program awarded more than \$250,000 to museums, historical societies and other cultural organizations the opportunity to reach their audiences digitally as the COVID-19 pandemic persists.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> "Partnerships for Recovery: Grant Programs to Aid Recovery." Mass.gov. Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. Accessed June 23, 2021. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/partnerships-for-recovery-grant-programs-to-aid-recovery>.

<sup>20</sup> "Digital Capacity Grants Awarded to 59 Organizations." Mass Humanities, April 2, 2021. <https://masshumanities.org/digital-capacity-grants-awarded-to-59-organizations/>.

## Other State and Federal Appropriations

- Local Rapid Recovery Planning Grants Program administered by the Mass Downtown Initiative is a \$10 million program to enable 125 towns and cities to create COVID-19 recovery plans tailored to their needs.<sup>21</sup>
- Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation Business Relief Grants awarded more than \$687 million to over 15,000 businesses across the Commonwealth, including arts and culture organizations.<sup>22</sup>
- The Regional Pilot Project Grant Program is a \$5 million competitive program administered by the Massachusetts Office of Business Development to support 37 municipalities and organizations with the development of regional recovery strategies.<sup>23</sup>
- Shuttered Venue Operators Grant Program<sup>24</sup> and the Restaurant Revitalization Fund<sup>25</sup> opened their application in the Spring of 2021. These federal funds have yet to be released in full, but are targeted funds to help the most vulnerable parts of the sector. They are administered by the Small Business Association and come from federal funds.
- Paycheck Protection Program supplied 211,000 loans for a total \$20.9 billion in funding.<sup>26</sup> Cultural and Arts businesses and non-profits were eligible, with direct support provided to Mass Cultural Council organizational support grantees through their Safe Harbors program.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> “Partnerships for Recovery: Grant Programs to Aid Recovery.” Mass.gov. Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. Accessed June 23, 2021. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/partnerships-for-recovery-grant-programs-to-aid-recovery>.

<sup>22</sup> “Baker-Polito Administration Celebrates COVID-19 Business Relief Program, Awards Final Round of Grants.” Mass.gov. Accessed June 23, 2021. <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-celebrates-covid-19-business-relief-program-awards-final-round-of-grants>.

<sup>23</sup> “Regional Pilot Project Grant Program.” Mass.gov. Massachusetts Office of Business Development, January 22, 2021. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/regional-pilot-project-grant-program>.

<sup>24</sup> “Shuttered Venue Operators Grant”. SBA.gov. U.S. Small Business Administration. Accessed June 23, 2021. <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/covid-19-relief-options/shuttered-venue-operators-grant>.

<sup>25</sup> “Restaurant Revitalization Fund.” SBA.gov. U.S. Small Business Administration . Accessed June 23, 2021. <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/covid-19-relief-options/restaurant-revitalization-fund>.

<sup>26</sup> “Paycheck Protection Program.” SBA.gov. U.S. Small Business Administration. Accessed June 23, 2021. <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/covid-19-relief-options/paycheck-protection-program>.

<sup>27</sup> “COVID-19 Relief Effort for Organizations.” Mass Cultural Council, April 16, 2020. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/covid-19-relief-effort-for-organizations/>



## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

- Passage of the 2020 Economic Development Bond Bill,
  - Chapter 358 of the Acts of 2020 was signed into law in January 2021, targeting the needs of the tourism and cultural sector's recovery. This legislation specifically addressed the need for marketing and infrastructure improvements and funding in building back the sector. This funding is subject to the appropriation by the Administration, which has not occurred at the time of this report. Bill Highlights:<sup>28</sup>
    - \$4 million to Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism for regional tourism councils for regional advertising and marketing
    - \$10 million to Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism for a grant program for marketing and facility improvements
    - \$20 million for a grant program administered by Mass Cultural Council for infrastructure upgrades for non-profits that closed to the public due to the pandemic.
    - \$6 million for a grant program administered by Mass Cultural Council to support artists in creating new remote mediums and to promote local museums
    - \$5 million for a program administered by Mass Cultural Council in consultation with DESE to assist public schools in providing access to cultural experiences via remote field trips options
    - Establishment of the COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission
    - Creation of Tourism Destination Marketing Districts

### Fiscal Year 2022 State Budget

Fiscal Year 2022 begins on July 1, 2021; there are multiple funding proposals likely to be included in the state operating budget. Below are several line items affecting arts and culture. These do not include the various additional \$1 million in district earmarks secured by lawmakers that target specific various cultural and art institutions across the state.

---

<sup>28</sup> Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 358, § 1-112, (2020)

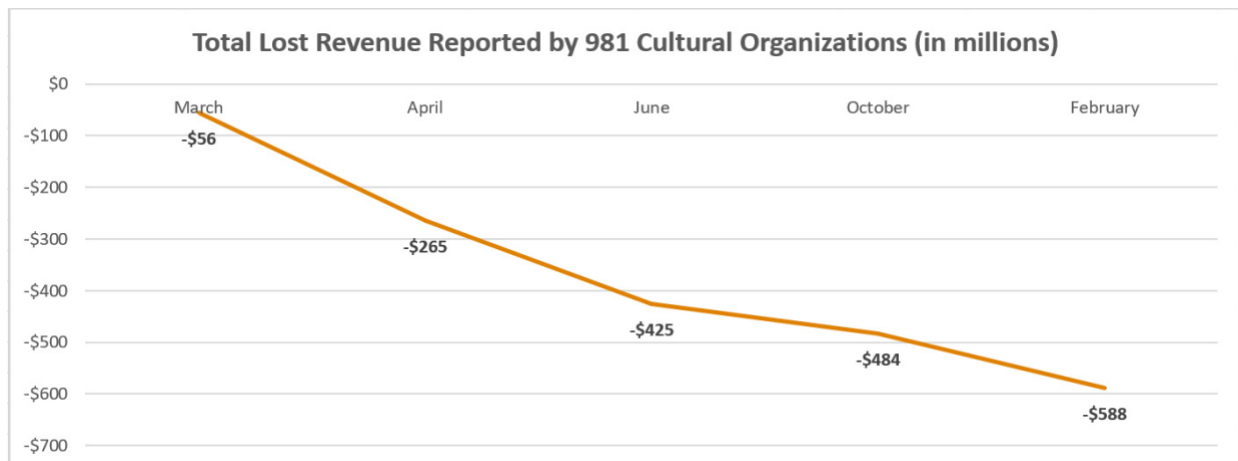
## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

- Mass Cultural Council, Funding the Mass Cultural Council at over \$20 million in FY22 is the most robust state investment into arts and culture since the late 1980s, and will mean a nearly 20% increase from the Governor's proposed FY22 Budget, as well as a 10% increase from the FY21 General Appropriations Act.
- Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, There is a proposal to add \$2 million to the Tourism Trust Fund, in addition to its set \$10 million a year, a 20% increase. This funding supports both the Office of Travel and Tourism and our Regional Tourism Councils in promoting tourism, a driver of over 200,000 jobs in Massachusetts and a direct boon on many cultural institutions. While there are some discrepancies between the current House and Senate versions of this line item, an amount to be determined in the coming weeks will be provided for next fiscal year.
- Regional Tourism Grant Matching Waiver, By statute, the maximum amount of grants received by a private non-profit agency from the office of travel and tourism may not be greater than the amount received from non-governmental sources. This requirement has been waived for fiscal year 2022. This waiver allows local tourism council's to not be burdened by the required matching funds in a year when funding is needed most and will lessen the financial constraints currently facing both the local tourism councils organizations and the organizations that have been required to match funding.
- Film Tax Sunset Clause, The House and Senate are working to ensure film and movie production in the state can continue to provide economic opportunity for the travel, arts and hospitality industries. The continuation of the current tax incentives is vital to keeping the film industry thriving in Massachusetts and to continue to capitalize on the employment and economic opportunities that the industry provides. While the exact details of the Film Tax are not finalized, the exact details of this clause will be determined over the coming weeks.

## Key Data Regarding the Culture and Arts Sector

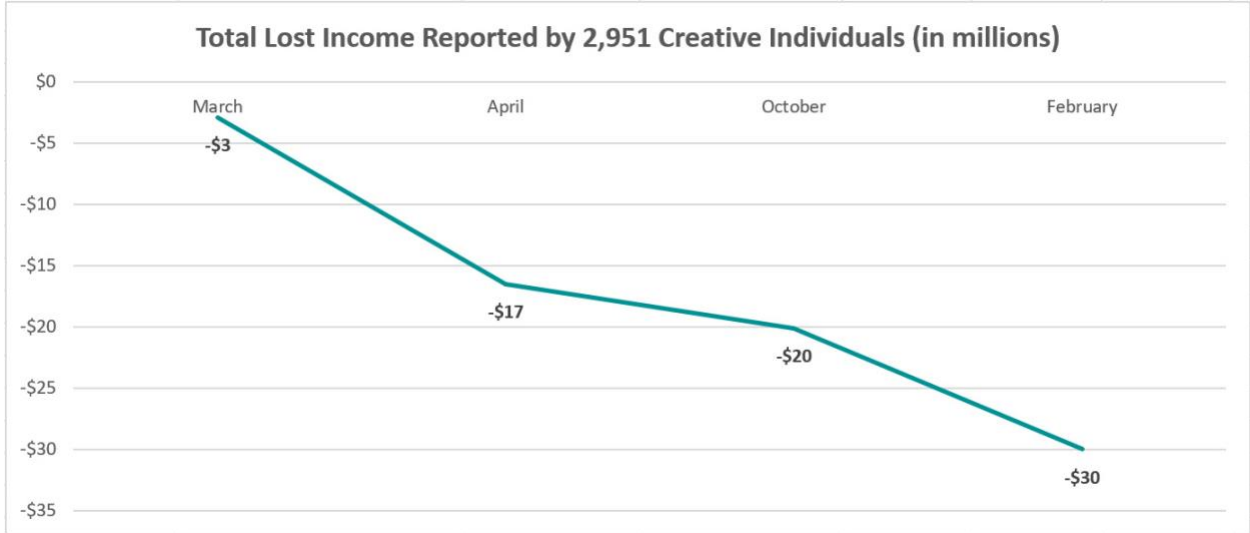
### Mass Cultural Council COVID-19 Economic Impact Survey of the Cultural Sector

- As of March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021 (Fifth Survey Data) <sup>29</sup>
  - 981 nonprofit and municipal cultural organizations have lost an overwhelming \$588,334,079 in revenue since March 2020
  - 2,951 artists, teaching artists, and scientist/humanists reported more than \$30.4M in lost personal income and 67,986 cancelled gigs/jobs since March 2020
  - Across Massachusetts, 30,009 individual cultural sector employees have seen their jobs impacted by COVID-19 in these ways
  - On average, Massachusetts cultural organizations are dealing with the loss of \$599,728 each.
  - 65% of the organizations with employees have, or plan to, lay off, furlough, or reduce the hours and/or wages of their employees.
  - On average, an individual artist, teaching artist, or scientist/humanist in Massachusetts has lost \$10,303 in personal income and 23 cancelled jobs/gigs due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - These numbers are only from those reporting. We know that there are many more organizations and cultural workers that have been affected.



<sup>29</sup> "One Year Later: Cultural Sector in Economic Crisis Due to Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic." Mass Cultural Council. Mass Cultural Council, March 8, 2021. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/one-year-later-cultural-sector-in-economic-crisis-due-to-ongoing-covid-19-pandemic/>.

COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission



Region	# of Organizations Reporting	Total Lost Revenue
Greater Boston	314	\$423,496,199
Central	97	\$28,272,317
MetroWest	69	\$10,042,000
Northeast	120	\$25,921,761
Southeast	189	\$51,628,955
Western	192	\$48,972,847
<b>Total</b>	<b>981</b>	<b>\$588,334,079</b>

## Audience Outlook Monitor Survey Data

In conjunction with Catherine Peterson from ArtsBoston, Alan Brown from WolfBrown gave a presentation to the Commission on the Audience Outlook Monitor Survey.<sup>30</sup> This international collaboration provides organizations data from key focus groups across the United States related to audience opinions and outlooks on attending art events. The survey data contextualizes and looks longitudinally at feelings and actions of focus group membership comprised on attendees and ticket holders of art events. Nationally, audience vaccination has already plateaued at around 95%, meaning arts audiences have been or are planning on being fully vaccinated. Even with this protection, as of April, 40% of vaccinated audience members say they were not ready to go out. With this in mind, demand for indoor events has lagged behind demand for outdoor events, leaving certain sectors and venues with difficult decisions to make regarding their previous traditional programming.<sup>31</sup>

Boston is one of the cohorts being looked at for this national data set, with the focus groups been chosen by ArtsBoston. The latest data from April was published before the updated Massachusetts reopening timeline. Since statewide social distancing and masking requirements have changed so dramatically for vaccinated individuals in this time, and the rates of infection have continued on lower trend, a survey update is needed to see how trends have changed from April.<sup>32</sup> Based on the April data, around half of audience members were waiting for a lower rate of infection before considering attending a performance, while a quarter of audience members were ready to attend an in-person show right away. 60% of full vaccinated audience members were not yet comfortable attending an event in person at a large theatre or concert hall. In terms of the future outlook of digital programming, 66% of respondents stated that virtual programming and attendance will play a role in their cultural life.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Commission Meeting Minutes, May 18, 2021, 192nd MA General Court, Special Legislative COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

<sup>31</sup> "Home: Audience Outlook Monitor." Audience Outlook. WolfBrown, June 14, 2021. <https://www.audienceoutlookmonitor.com/>.

<sup>32</sup> Commission Meeting Minutes, May 18, 2021, 192nd MA General Court, Special Legislative COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

<sup>33</sup> "Audience Outlook Monitor: Arts Boston." Audience Outlook Monitor. WolfBrown, April 2021. <https://www.audienceoutlookmonitor.com/arts-boston>.



- **Key Takeaways from Nationwide Survey as of April 2021** <sup>34</sup>
  - Audience vaccination has likely plateaued at +/- 95%, reflecting extremely high levels of cooperation with public health efforts
  - Roughly 40% of vaccinated folks are not yet ready to go out; most say they're waiting for infection rates in the general population to drop to lower levels
  - Resumption of demand for indoor events ranges from 45% to 70%, and varies greatly by region; many wouldn't go out without both masks and distancing
  - Resumption of demand for outdoor events is 80% to 90%
  - We have yet to understand how the changed CDC guidance on masks will affect audience attitudes; **this will be explored in June and July**
  - Around 15% to 20% don't foresee going out again until January or later, underscoring the importance of continued efforts to engage through online programs
  - We are just now learning to navigate the post-vaccination world, and the limits of protection afforded by vaccination

<sup>34</sup> "Home: Audience Outlook Monitor." Audience Outlook. WolfBrown, June 14, 2021. <https://www.audienceoutlookmonitor.com/>.

### **Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development Impact Hearing**

On April 9, 2021, the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development held a virtual Cultural Impact Hearing. The hearing included verbal testimony from 15 invited speakers in five panels dealing with various segments of the area of Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development over a period of just under three hours and additional feedback on the status of the industry from over 50 contributors was provided via written testimony.

The consensus of the hearing was that the sector has been hit especially hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, facing sharp declines in business that will be slow to recover without additional state action. According to the panelists who testified in person, the widespread job losses and drop in spending could take years to rebound, impacting workers across the state as well as tax revenues. Industry groups tourism, arts, and cultural organizations advised the panel to increase spending on recovery grants, advertisement programs aimed at encouraging travel to Massachusetts, and support for regional tourism councils. Panelists also urged strategic investment in order to remain competitive within the larger tourism landscape. The hearing also heard testimony related to the Mass Cultural Council survey and in particular support of the Commonwealth Cultural Future Act (S.2246).

At the time of the hearing, the Commonwealth had distributed more than \$650 million in relief grants to about 14,400 businesses so far, and cultural non-profits received almost \$10 million through a separate grant program in January and the federal government was preparing to launch a \$16 billion “Shuttered Venues” program to assist live venue operators, theatrical producers, live performing arts organization operators, museum operators, movie theater operators, and talent representatives affected by mandatory closures.

While the industry has been hit hard across the United States, the impact was especially stark in Massachusetts. Leisure and hospitality businesses lost 30 percent of their jobs from February 2020 to February 2021. Spring projections indicate domestic travel will rebound more quickly than international travel, reaching 2019 levels by the end of 2022 and that a full recovery in the tourism industry may not be realized until 2024 or later. More than half of the 40,000 pre-COVID hotel jobs in Massachusetts had been

either furloughed or eliminated, while statewide lodging market occupancy rate dropped by nearly half from 2019 to 2020.

The restaurant industry is estimated to have lost \$7 billion in sales over the course of a year. After the initial closures in March 2020 when the state of emergency began, over 3,000 Massachusetts restaurants were expected not to reopen following the pandemic.

### **Commission's Public Survey Data**

On May 18<sup>th</sup> at the second Commission meeting, Commissioners approved a public survey to be distributed within their networks. The goal of the survey was to receive public feedback and input from members of the arts and culture community. After selecting specific concerns from a set list, members of the community were able to detail their categories of concern regarding the sector's recovery from COVID-19. This provided both qualitative and quantitative data for the Commission to consider when writing recommendations for the final report. This survey took place after the announcement of the end of the state of emergency, with responses being allowed until the end of the Public Hearing on June 25<sup>th</sup>. 107 responses were submitted.

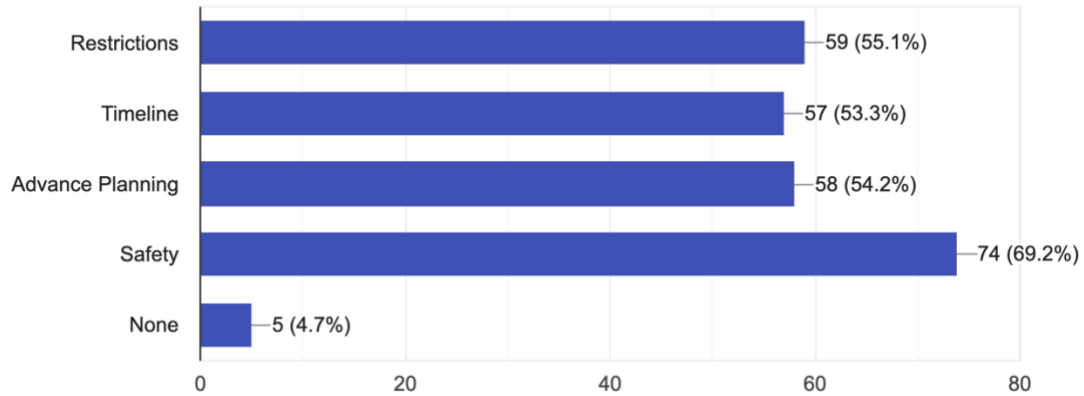
Overall, respondents were concerned about financial strain presented to their industry as a whole. Many who ran organizations stated fears regarding costs to operate their venues, while independent artists were concerned about the continued strain placed on them as contracted employees, with little stability over the past year within the industry.



Reopening

Which of the following categories regarding Reopening concern you?

107 responses



Regarding reopening, survey respondents were most concerned about safety when it came to the reopening process, with nearly 70% of respondents stating citing safety as a category that concerns them. Many respondents wrote comments concerned about the speed of reopening, wanting an emphasis to exist on proper pre-opening protocols to still be followed. There were many stated concerns centered around venue capacities, some in favor of the sudden reopening, with many others citing it should be a slower buildup for both safety and operational concerns.

Restrictions, reopening timeline, and advanced planning were all concerns for more than 50% of respondents.

Technical Upgrades

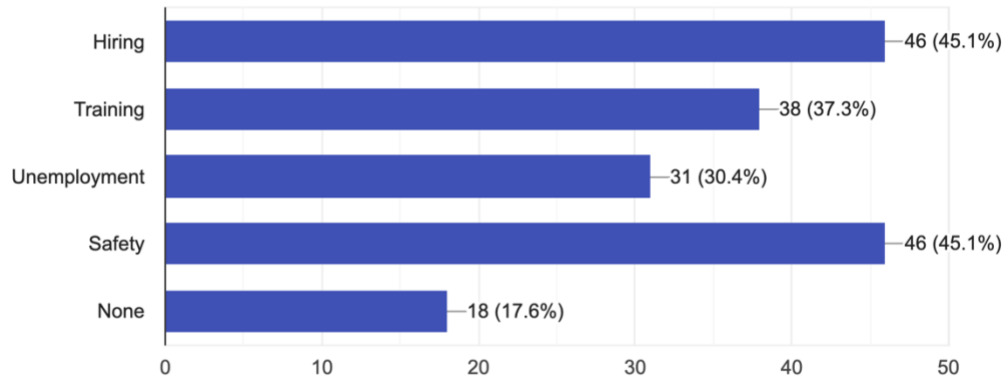
Costs were the primary concerns regarding technical upgrades. 72% of respondents indicated costs as a concern, with various written comments exemplifying their issues. Respondents cited the cost for good audio recording in virtual programming, the increased costs for staff, and the major costs for outdoor events, like mobile restrooms. Furthermore, respondents indicated venues are saving all they can to make ends meet, so there is no additional sum of money they have to direct towards technical upgrades. Respondents indicated a need for guidance on how to develop digital

programming. Finally, newfound accessibility for the disabled community was cited as an important factor in continuing the growth and expansion of digital infrastructure.

### Staffing and Employment

Which of the following categories regarding Staffing & Employment concern you?

102 responses

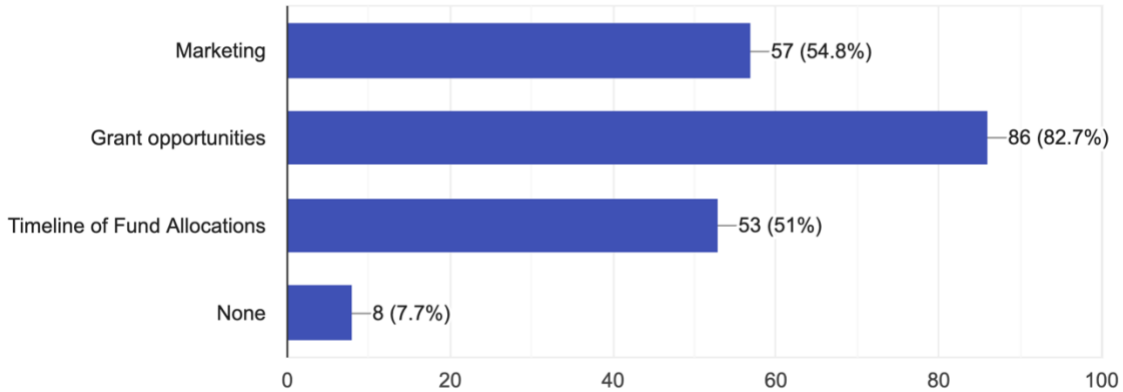


Many respondents voiced their concerns regarding staffing and employment, with 45% noting both hiring and safety of staff as their top concern. Many respondents stated difficulties regarding mobilization of volunteer staffs. Many others cited the difficulty of hiring arts sector employees, as the gig-nature of the cultural economy means less folks may be around to be hired when shows are ready to go. One respondent said “I fear it will be difficult to hire more contingent part-time staff when we are back at full visitation levels. Some will fear being in groups (health reasons), and some might just not want to return to the work force (we hire lots of retired teachers).”

Funding Needs

Which of the following categories regarding Funding Needs concern you?

104 responses

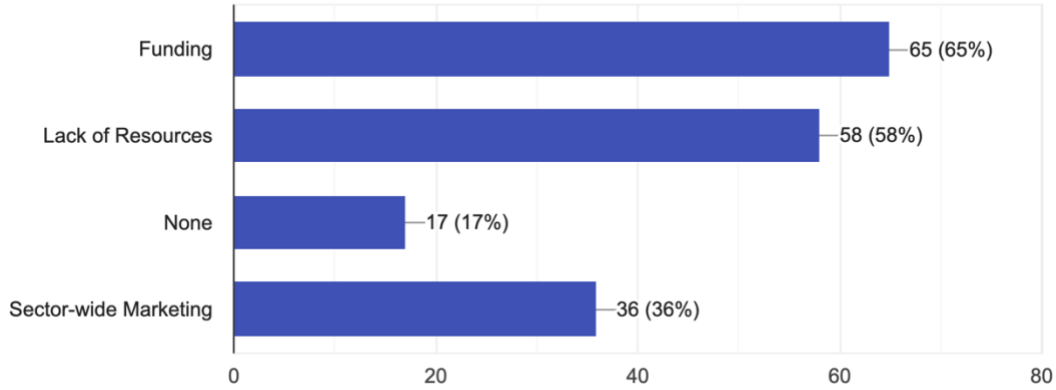


Grants were the largest point of concern in any category with 82% of participants stating grants were the top concern when it comes to funding with marketing funds and the timeline of allocated funds being concerns for around half of respondents. Comments left indicated an aggressive schedule necessary to give out funds, as many venues have yet to open in a capacity that provides profit. Many venues cited the need for money to keep the doors open. One respondent wrote “For profit creative arts businesses need funding. We need access to grants to build back up to being able to support ourselves.” Grants need to be focused on both non-profit and for-profit arts organizations, and long term support is needed. The timing of the pandemic hit some organizations harder than others, one organization specializing in the preservation, education and innovation of Cambodian Performing Arts missed out on performing for Cambodian New Year events for two years in a row as it takes place in April, which is one of their most lucrative fundraising opportunities. These experiences are not unique and collectively call for increased funding in the sector.

Marketing

Which of the following categories regarding Marketing concern you?

100 responses



In terms of marketing, the largest concern that existed was the need for funding, where 65% of respondents said it was a concern. Many comments mentioned that organizations do not have the funds for marketing, or do not possess the technical expertise needed to market their programs effectively. Marketing the safety of the sector was a concern in some comments, with one respondent stating “Limited funding means limited ability to market programs, Rules for safe reopening need to be clear and concise. We need our audiences to be safe and feel safe returning.”

## **Commission's Public Hearing Summary**

On June 1<sup>st</sup> at the third Commission meeting, Commissioners requested that a public hearing take place to hear directly from individual organizations and artists outside the Commission about the impacts of COVID-19 on the sector. This hearing took place on June 25<sup>th</sup> at 10am. Some of the themes of the hearing included providing additional resources and opportunities for individual artists, the need to focus on less endowed organizations and individual artists when it comes to funding opportunities, the need for unrestricted operating support, and the supports needed in BIPOC and other historically underfunded communities. There was also a particular emphasis on the impact of the pandemic on performance arts-related organizations that have missed out on fundraising opportunities because of the timing of the pandemic.

Those who spoke referenced the need for grant makers to take into account the financial restrictions of the applicants and the amount of funding that actually makes its way to the artists. More specific actions mentioned included making more affordable artist workspaces available and creating an easier, less time-consuming application processes that does not create more of a burden for applicants.

These concerns echo the commentary from Commissioners for the need to address the systematic racism that exists in the sector and to begin identifying the mechanisms that create barriers for BIPOC communities. The Commission believes that this is an area that requires further review as the institutional nature of this issue deserves further examination and attention.

## Key Findings: Challenges to Recovery

Funding: While numerous grant and loan options have been made available, federal funds have not been dispensed at a rate at which institutions have needed the funds. Programs such as the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant program, targeted to fixed seated performance venues, which is has been reported to have start up glitches, has been late to deliver on timelines, and has resulted in funds not getting to the organization<sup>35</sup>. The troublesome application process and slow delivery have left businesses frustrated with nowhere else to turn. Organizations in the Commonwealth need this funding now.

The American Rescue Plan funding is a beacon of light at the end of a long, dark tunnel. In addition to the allocation to the National Endowment for the Art and the National Endowment for the Humanities, the estimated \$5 billion dollars Massachusetts is set to receive is an opportunity for the Commonwealth to invest and bring the industry back stronger.

The Commonwealth has begun making investments through the Fiscal Year 2022 budget by increasing its investments in Mass Cultural Council, Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism and addressing the sunset clause on the Film Tax Credit. These investments make grants, programming, services and marketing possible for creative workers and cultural organizations.

Additionally, through the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development and Mass Cultural Council, numerous grant programs were made available to both for-profit and non-profit businesses. These investments and programming are just the starting points of the resources needed to bring back the industry.

---

<sup>35</sup> Commission Meeting Minutes, June 15, 2021, 192nd MA General Court, Special Legislative COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

Artists Leaving the Industry: Many artists and workers are planning on leaving the arts and culture sector completely. These decisions stem from lack of pay and the uncertainty that already existed before COVID-19 and made it nearly impossible for many to sustain income over the past year. Reporting on behalf of the organization StageSource, Dawn Simmons stated that many individuals plan to leave the industry, with 20% of StageSource's membership not renewing their memberships.<sup>36</sup> Exacerbated struggles of this gig economy are forcing artists to find alternatives to provide more stable income leaving the arts and culture industry with less talent to share.

Work force shortage: Between artists and creative workers leaving the industry, many businesses are competing against the pay that former employees are now receiving on unemployment. The industry now faces the challenges of retraining a new workforce and developing strategies for worker retention. Additionally, the short notice given of the full reopening left many performance venues in an impossible position, due to the amount of planning needed to put on a show and rehire staff.

Consumer confidence: Safety concerns did not and will not disappear overnight and the nature of the sector is based on bringing together people into crowds, which has been considered taboo for the past year. Though we are seeing an increase in demand for leisure travel, there is still uncertainty on whether this demand will be seen in the cultural sector for some time to come.

Online programming: Online programming became critical during the pandemic when in-person visiting came to a halt. It has become clear that this programming will not be going away. As we move towards recovery, developing and investing in online infrastructure and programming will be critical. Many organizations were able to develop online programs, but many are still struggling to turn this programming profitable.

Marketing: Statewide marketing investments are needed across not only the arts and culture sector, but also across the tourism and hospitality sector. The intersectionality of these sectors creates what is Massachusetts' 3<sup>rd</sup> largest industry. The creative sector drives tourism to our communities and leads to major economic activity in our cities and

---

<sup>36</sup> Commission Meeting Minutes, June 1, 2021, 192nd MA General Court, Special Legislative COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

towns. Despite the vast economic activity that the sector generates, with tourism accounting for 2.5% of the Commonwealth's GDP, Massachusetts invests only \$10 million in its tourism budget. In 2019, prior to the pandemic, tourism accounted for more than 3% of employment while the room occupancy tax generated more than \$280 million in revenue for the state.<sup>37</sup> Investments made in this industry generates business and employment throughout the Commonwealth. Massachusetts has many attractions spread across the state and is home to many historic arts and culture centers, by investing in a collaborative marketing campaign that emphasizes the unique offerings of Massachusetts, we can drive tourism back to the Commonwealth and boost business for the sector.

---

<sup>37</sup> "Commonwealth Revenues Room Occupancy Taxes 2019." Commonwealth Revenues. MA Comptroller. Accessed June 25, 2021. [https://cthrurevenue.mass.gov#!/year/2019//pay1/explore/0-0-0-0-0/revenue\\_class\\_name/TAXES+ROOM+OCCUPANCY/0--0/fund\\_category\\_name](https://cthrurevenue.mass.gov#!/year/2019//pay1/explore/0-0-0-0-0/revenue_class_name/TAXES+ROOM+OCCUPANCY/0--0/fund_category_name).



## Exposed Vulnerabilities in the Sector

Racial inequities: An overarching theme of the commission meetings was the need to address inequities in the arts and culture sector. Beyond just returning to an earlier status quo, commissioners stressed that it is important that the post-COVID landscape become more inclusive than previously. “Young people, people of color will not come to our sector events because of a discount or other surface-level marketing, there needs to be real, targeted outreach,” one commissioner noted during the initial meeting. The need for systematic change cannot be understated as artists leave the sector due to lack of income stability and funding opportunities.

A study commissioned by The Boston Foundation in 2016 demonstrated that the vast majority of funding for arts in the Boston area went to a few large arts organizations. This reality made it enormously challenging for individual artists and small companies to continue doing their work here, and to make Boston their creative home.

San Sang Wong from the Barr Foundation writes “Over the past year, we have come to see even more clearly that a central focus on racial equity is required to achieve the goal of a dynamic, thriving Commonwealth, with adaptive and relevant organizations with broad public engagement and support.”<sup>i</sup>

In 2020 Mass Cultural Council convened a series of listening sessions for cultural sector stakeholders to discuss racial equity. With that feedback in mind, and under the direction of Executive Director Michael J. Bobbitt, Mass Cultural Council is actively developing its first-ever Racial Equity Plan, which is expected to be brought before the Agency’s governing Council later this year for endorsement.

The Commission reiterates the commentary made during the Public Hearing that those dispensing fundraising opportunities be cognizant of BIPOC and historically underfunded communities.

Housing and Healthcare: The cost of living in Massachusetts is high and this has had an impact on artists during the pandemic. The commission heard testimony of several accounts of Massachusetts-based artists moving out of state because they could not afford the cost of housing during the shutdown and not all of those who left are

expected to return<sup>38</sup>. Similarly, the gig-based nature of many creative jobs have led to the burden of supplying their own health care through either the state connector or private health insurance options. These additional costs must be considered when describing the compensation of artists and cultural economy workers.

Kelly Barsdate referenced a bill introduced in Colorado, establishing a Community Revitalization Grant Program that would enable workforce housing by investing in mixed-use developments. The bill establishes the Community Revitalization Grant Program in the division of creative industries in the office of economic development. The grant program is established to provide money awards to finance various projects across the state that are intended to create or revitalize mixed-use commercial centers. The grant program is intended to support creative projects in these commercial centers that would combine revitalized or newly constructed commercial spaces with public or community spaces. Other Massachusetts communities have used artist housing as a way to attract and retain creative economy workers despite the rising costs of the real estate market.<sup>39</sup>

Testimony received by the Commission reiterated the need for affordable artist workspaces and drew attention to the compensation issues facing individual artists. Recommendations to address these issues include grant funding for individual artists, community development to support creative placemaking and incentives for developers to create artist live/work space in their communities.

---

<sup>38</sup> Commission Meeting Minutes, June 1, 2021, 192nd MA General Court, Special Legislative COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

<sup>39</sup> Commission Meeting Minutes, May 18, 2021, 192nd MA General Court, Special Legislative COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

## Summary of Commission Meetings

Following the establishment of the COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission as part of *An Act Enabling Partnerships for Growth*, commission members were appointed during the spring of 2021, with the official announcement of appointments occurring on April 30, 2021. The Commission scheduled seven meetings over the course of May and June with a sixth listening session later added at the suggestion of the Commissioners. (Full Meeting Minutes are available in the Appendix).

**May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021:** The first meeting of the COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission occurred on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Prior to the initial meeting, each member of the commission was asked to respond to a survey asking their thoughts on the content areas outlined in the enabling legislation. The introductory meeting allowed the Co-Chairs to go over the purpose of the commission and to ask each of the commissioners to discuss their own experiences in the arts and culture sector during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021:** The Commission's second meeting included a panel of guest contributors who spoke to several key data sources regarding national and local data and trends related to the arts and cultural reopening. Those panelists included Kelly Barsdate, Chief Program & Planning Officer, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies; Alan Brown, principal, WolfBrown and Contributor to the Audience Monitor Outlook; and Catherine Peterson, Executive Director, ArtsBoston. Following the presentations by the guest speakers was a question and answer session with the commissioners. During this commission meeting, the public survey form was approved and distributed via Google Forms.

**June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021:** The third meeting of the commission focused on specific recommendations for policy interventions proposed by the members of the commission. At this meeting, the commission also approved holding an additional Public Input ("Open Mic") Session, later scheduled for June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

**June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021:** In this fourth meeting of the COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission, Commissioners reacted to the first draft of the report which was distributed in the weeks following the third meeting.

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

**June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021:** The Commission held its Public Hearing which was advertised through the Commissioner's networks and through the legislature. Eight individuals participated in the hearing, with almost all of the Commissioners present to listen and ask questions of those providing testimony.

**June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021:** A brief fifth meeting followed the Public Hearing to highlight key takeaways of the hearing and to establish a meeting time to review final edits for the drafted report. Drafted report was to be made available to Commissioners at the end of the day to review for the meeting. Commissioners were asked to come to the Monday meeting with their edits or to submit them via email to Commission staff.

**June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021:** In the sixth meeting, Commissioners met briefly to discuss a last round of edits needed for the final report.

**June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021:** The Commission met for the final time to complete its work with the formal adoption of the report on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

## Recommendations

The Commission calls for the **timely release** of significant funds of \$575,000,000 from the states' American Rescue Plan funding to begin to rebuild the Commonwealth's Arts and Culture future over the next 4 years.

### American Rescue Plan Funding:

- Create Recovery and Reopening Grant Programming - \$375 million
  - o \$75 million for grant funding to independent, for-profit venues, and cultural service organizations to support recovery and stabilization funding, prevent closures, rebuild and reopen distributed by Mass Cultural Council
  - o \$100 million for grant funds to individual, practicing artists to support their career recovery and professional development distributed by Mass Cultural Council
    - Including ease of application process to remove barriers to more artists, ensuring equity
    - Any grant funding tool should ensure access for BIPOC, non-English speaking, and diverse immigrant communities
  - o \$100 million for grant funding for non-profit and municipal performing arts organizations, cultural service organizations, and venues to support recovery and stabilization funding to prevent closures, rebuild and reopen distributed by Mass Cultural Council
  - o \$100 million for grant funding for museums, visual arts, humanities, cultural service organizations, and cultural heritage organizations to support recovery and stabilization funding to prevent closures, rebuild and reopen distributed by Mass Cultural Council
  
- Invest in a Statewide Marketing Campaign - \$40 million
  - o \$40 million for the creation and implementation of an industry collaborated, statewide marketing campaign funded over 4 years by the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism
    - The tourism industry is made up of the arts, culture, hospitality, travel and dining sectors and needs a marketing campaign that acknowledges that these sectors exist in relation to each other and promotes the industry in its entirety
    - This broad marketing must be geographically representative and promote both popular and lesser-known community attractions and a variety of communication vehicles. The purpose of this campaign is to promote all aspects of the creative and cultural sector and encourage culturally and linguistic diversity, and racial equity
    - The development of the campaign should be done in collaboration with the Mass Cultural Council and other arts and tourism stakeholders

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

- Invest in Infrastructure and Equipment Upgrades - \$60 million
  - \$20 million to create targeted grant funding through the Cultural Facilities Fund
    - For organizations to create or upgrade virtual programming options, which could better allow them to monetize on this more professionalized programming
    - These grants could include infrastructure upgrades, such as new computer systems, camera and videorecording systems, audio solutions, and software that allows for both more seamless hybrid programming, and new digitally targeted programming
  - \$20 million to create grants for non-profit infrastructure and equipment grant programs to assist in infrastructure costs to safely and sustainably reopen distributed by Mass Cultural Council
  - \$20 million to create grant opportunities through the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism to assist with facility upgrades
  
- Programming to Encourage Workforce Development, Youth Education, and Community Development - \$100 million
  - \$25 million for Organizational Business Development for non-profit arts organizations
    - For Mass Cultural Council to develop and oversee a new capacity-building grant program in order to help cultural organizations and artists operate more efficiently and thrive professionally. These grants can fund items such as staffing, consultants, plans, software, and hardware
    - Current funding model for non-profits industry means cash reserves are often used to keep the doors open, through capacity building grants organizations can become less reliant on fundraising operations to stay afloat
  - \$25 million for community development
    - Fund the support of creative placemaking (festivals, street fairs, etc.) and public art with an emphasis on historically underserved communities through Mass Cultural Council, the Commonwealth's state-designated Cultural Districts and the Local Cultural Council network
    - Create incentives for developers to create artists live/work spaces, including an accountability factor of reciprocity to the communities in which they are given the opportunity to build, and from whom they profit

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

- \$50 million to create subsidized arts programming for youth to promote accessibility to arts and cultural centers.
- Increase funding to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to support professional development for arts educators and arts administrators
  - Create programming to enhance staff training and retention
- Promotion of collaborations and partnerships with numerous museums, art organizations, other non-profit organizations is a way of developing more holistic programs to serve the community and increasing the number of people served

### Investment in Arts Education

- Recommend that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education allocate a portion of its Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funding to arts education programs, professional development for arts educators, and support for the safe reopening of arts spaces in public schools.
- Recommend to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education that the Department provide information and technical assistance to school districts regarding arts education as an eligible use of ESSER III funding to support school-based performances, virtual and/or in-person field trips to cultural facilities in Massachusetts, and to provide support for innovative curriculum development and the permanent integration of technology into arts classrooms
  - Appropriate funding to support enhanced partnerships between school-based arts programs and cultural organizations and programs in the Commonwealth

## Further Considerations

### Diversity and Equity Commission for Cultural Sector

- Formation of a Commission to focus on issues of Diversity, Equity, Access and Inclusion within arts and cultural funding. This Commission should focus on developing best practices for the sector to improve diversity training, accessibility to arts and cultural centers for all communities, and equality of opportunity of funding resources to both creative workers and organizations.

### Cultural Facilities Fund

- Increase state investment into the Cultural Facilities Fund and Mass Cultural Council over the course of 5 years to develop further development projects throughout the creative sector.

### Workforce Program

- \$50,000,000 to create a workforce program that hires artists and cultural organizations to create new art across disciplines in support of community cohesion and civic engagement, reigniting economic activity in main streets and downtowns and disseminating information that addresses public health disparities.

### Long-Term Funding Mechanisms

- *Explore statewide and local municipal mechanisms to increase public support and ensure stability for the arts and cultural sector long term*

### S.2246, An Act to Rebuild the Commonwealth's Cultural Future

- On March 29, 2021, An Act to Rebuild the Commonwealth's Cultural Future, also known as S.2246, was referred to the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development where it awaits a hearing. The bill has almost sixty co-sponsors including 19 members of the Senate and 39 members of the House. The bill calls for the establishment of a Massachusetts Cultural Economy COVID-19 Recovery Fund and stipulates that assets for the fund shall include no less than \$200 million dollars of eligible Local, State and Federal COVID-19 recovery funds received after January 1, 2021. The fund would be administered by the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Since the bill was filed in February of 2021, Massachusetts has received an additional \$5.3 billion dollars for COVID-19 relief from the Federal Government. Therefore, in recognition of the additional funding provided by the Federal government, the Commission suggests that S.2246 be redrafted to call for a minimum funding level well above the \$200 million minimum stipulated in the current version of S.2246 and considered by the legislature as a vehicle for the funding.



## Appendix

### Bibliography

- “Audience Outlook Monitor.” Audience Outlook. WolfBrown, June 14, 2021. <https://www.audienceoutlookmonitor.com/>.
- “Audience Outlook Monitor: Arts Boston.” Audience Outlook Monitor. WolfBrown, April 2021. <https://www.audienceoutlookmonitor.com/arts-boston>.
- “Baker-Polito Administration Celebrates COVID-19 Business Relief Program, Awards Final Round of Grants.” Mass.gov. Accessed June 23, 2021. <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-celebrates-covid-19-business-relief-program-awards-final-round-of-grants>.
- Commission Impact Hearing, June 25, 2021, 192nd MA General Court, Special Legislative COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission
- Commission Meeting Minutes, June 1, 2021, 192nd MA General Court, Special Legislative COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission
- Commission Meeting Minutes, June 15, 2021, 192nd MA General Court, Special Legislative COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission
- Commission Meeting Minutes, June 25, 2021, 192nd MA General Court, Special Legislative COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission
- Commission Meeting Minutes, May 4, 2021, 192nd MA General Court, Special Legislative COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission
- Commission Meeting Minutes, May 18, 2021, 192nd MA General Court, Special Legislative COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission
- “Commonwealth Revenues Room Occupancy Taxes 2019.” Commonwealth Revenues. MA Comptroller. Accessed June 25, 2021. [https://cthrurevenue.mass.gov/#!/year/2019//pay1/explore/0-0-0-0/revenue\\_class\\_name/TAXES+ROOM+OCCUPANCY/00/fund\\_category\\_name](https://cthrurevenue.mass.gov/#!/year/2019//pay1/explore/0-0-0-0/revenue_class_name/TAXES+ROOM+OCCUPANCY/00/fund_category_name)
- “Composition of MCC Board.” Mass Cultural Council, June 11, 2021. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/about/board/>.
- “COVID-19 Relief Fund for Individuals.” Mass Cultural Council, March 22, 2021. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/artists-art/covid-19-relief-fund-for-individuals/>.
- “COVID-19 Relief Effort for Organizations.” Mass Cultural Council, April 16, 2020. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/covid-19-relief-effort-for-organizations/>
- “Digital Capacity Grants Awarded to 59 Organizations.” Mass Humanities, April 2, 2021. <https://masshumanities.org/digital-capacity-grants-awarded-to-59-organizations/>.

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 358, § 1-112, (2020)

Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 358, § 99, (2020)

“One Year Later: Cultural Sector in Economic Crisis Due to Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic.” Mass Cultural Council. Mass Cultural Council, March 8, 2021. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/one-year-later-cultural-sector-in-economic-crisis-due-to-ongoing-covid-19-pandemic/>.

“Our Case Statement for Increased Public Investment in Arts & Culture.” Mass Cultural Council, February 13, 2020. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/our-case-statement-for-increased-public-investment-in-arts-culture-2020/>.

“Partnerships for Recovery: Grant Programs to Aid Recovery.” Mass.gov. Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. Accessed June 23, 2021. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/partnerships-for-recovery-grant-programs-to-aid-recovery>.

“Paycheck Protection Program.” SBA.gov. U.S. Small Business Administration. Accessed June 23, 2021. <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/covid-19-relief-options/paycheck-protection-program>.

“Regional Pilot Project Grant Program.” Mass.gov. Massachusetts Office of Business Development, January 22, 2021. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/regional-pilot-project-grant-program>.

“Restaurant Revitalization Fund.” SBA.gov. U.S. Small Business Administration . Accessed June 23, 2021. <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/covid-19-relief-options/restaurant-revitalization-fund>.

Rooney, James, David Howse, Kiki Mills Johnston, and Evelyn Francis. “Arts Factor 2019 Report: Changing Lives and Creating Community.” ArtsBoston, August 5, 2019. <https://artsboston.org/artsfactor-2019/>.

“Shuttered Venue Operators Grant”. SBA.gov. U.S. Small Business Administration. Accessed June 23, 2021. <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/covid-19-relief-options/shuttered-venue-operators-grant>.

Special Commission on COVID-19 CULTURAL IMPACT COMMISSION. The General Court of Massachusetts, 2021. <https://malegislature.gov/Commissions/Detail/551/Hearings>.

StageSource. “COVID-19's Impact on Freelance Theatre Artists.” SurveyMonkey. StageSource, 2020. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-7M2XP7N9/>.

Wu, Hsin-Ching, “The Role of Massachusetts Cultural Council in State Cultural Policy: Institutionalism, Policy Goals, and Perceived Outcomes in the Arts and Culture” (2020). Graduate Doctoral Dissertations.

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

“The Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA) - Regional Data.” Bureau of Economic Analysis, March 31, 2021. Hyperlink

“\$30K in COVID-19 Relief Awarded to Berkshire Theater Professionals.” Mass Cultural Council, June 3, 2020. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/30k-in-covid-19-relief-awarded-to-berkshire-theater-professionals/>

## Minutes of Commission Meetings



**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
COVID-19 CULTURAL IMPACT COMMISSION  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133

Representative Carole Fiola  
House Chair

Senator Edward J. Kennedy  
Senate Chair

### **Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, May 4, 2021

1:00PM – 3:00PM

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**Commission Members in Attendance:** Representative Carole Fiola (Co-Chair), Senator Edward Kennedy (Co-Chair), Michael Bobbitt, Emily Ruddock, Dan Yaeger, Dennis Canty (Left early), Chris McCarthy, Sarah Bogosian, Dawn Simmons, Magdalena Gomez, Dr. Aminah Pilgrim (Joined late), A. J. Pietrantone, James Marsh

**Also in attendance:** James Ostis, Tyler Cotta, Derek Dunlea, Patti Kirwin-Kielty, Bethann Steiner, Jennifer Myers, Carmen Plazas, and around 20 members of the public

**Senator Kennedy Called the Roll at 1:05pm (all present minus Pilgrim)**

#### **1. Statement of Purpose from the Co-Chairs:**

Representative Fiola started the meeting by greeting members, informing them of the virtual aspect of this meeting and compliance with the Open Meeting Law, before restating from the language of the law what purpose this Commission serves.

Senator Kennedy followed this with remarks concurring with Rep Fiola and emphasized the mission of the Commission.

Both Fiola and Kennedy stated the challenges and hardships artists, business owners, and constituents have faced throughout the cultural sector.

#### **2. Commission Member Introductions:**

Commission members gave brief introductions:

Michael Bobbitt - Mass Cultural Council

Emily Ruddock - Mass Creative

Dan Yaeger - New England Museum Association

Dennis Canty - Mass Theatre Educators Guild

Chris McCarthy - Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Provincetown Cultural District

Sara Bogosian - Whistler House Museum of Art/Lowell Artists Association

Dawn Simmons - Stage Source

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

Magdalena Gomez - Poet Laureate, City of Springfield, playwright, and teaching artist  
Aminah Pilgrim - Humanist, artist, author, community organizer and award-winning educator

A. J. Pietrantone - Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, School

James Marsh - Lynn Auditorium and Community Development Director

### **3. Presentations from Commission Members regarding their priorities and top concerns:**

James Marsh – Runs a 2000-person auditorium, has been empty since last March. Convincing people to come back will be the largest challenge. Small audiences means margins are too tight to have shows that will end up being losers. Attempted a virtual livestream show but it was not successful.

A. J. Pietrantone - Sector really needs to do exploration of the business model of arts and culture to sustain changes past the pandemic. Began process of renovating air conditioning system. If they had not renovated air conditioning system, they would not have been able to plan for opening in 2022.

Primary concern is about the artists, the tight economic models currently in the sector, one setback really takes a toll on the entire ecosystem.

Magdalena Gomez - We need to think beyond COVID, think beyond things that no longer serve people. Need to look at decolonizing marketing, becoming more inclusive when targeting audiences. Need to decolonize, decentralize, and desegregate sector.

Informal economies can decentralize the funding that goes into downtown areas and create a strong foundation other neighborhoods. What is defined as artis essential to decolonizing the language (e.g. A carpenter is an artist).

Battling a Eurocentric lens and how we look at arts and tourism. The arts need to be desegregated and a lot of that comes from how the arts are marketed. One suggestion from her experience would be to make downtown Springfield all of main street, create a culture trolley, that connects Latino section of the city. Economic development through a whole new lens. Lastly stated that grants need to evolve.

Dennis Canty - Described how the pandemic has continued to disrupt everyday work. Seeing lower student engagement in programs. Something special about being in the room for the art that is not captured over virtual school

Short term challenges - social and emotional wellbeing and arts are critical aspects students gain from art programs. Long term - the more students that don't get involved with art in school, the less likely they are able to access all of the facilities the rest of the sector runs, feeds rest of the sector. COVID-19 further exacerbates the arts programming gap, especially in BIPOC communities

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

Concerns about impact on the gig economy, and artists usually hired as short-term hires. Also concerned about a lack of coherent message about safety of being an audience member

Dawn Simmons - Costs are a huge concern related to personnel and keeping spaces safe. More places are going to be competitive with each other within the sector in order to manage costs this second year of the pandemic. Needs to be sector wide marketing on why to come back to the arts

Arts hold an important part in the lives of MA residents. First thing the governor wants to do is go to a concert with his family.

There needs to be funding to keep folks and gig workers afloat – there is going to be an underlying competitiveness of smaller shows in order to keep margins down. So many people lost a majority of their income in the first month, a lot of folks have or will be leaving the industry unless action is taken.

Not what we were doing before but moving forward better than before. This means being equitable, many smaller organizations are going to need massive support, how do we make sure that the folks who need funding the most get it.

Digital platforming brought in more eyes, but it did not create money, although it also made it more inclusive of geography and disability.

Sara Bogosian - Located in the most economically challenged part of Lowell, her organization is a multicultural organization, which includes programs for low- and middle-income families, artist membership, interns are a cross-section of community. Survey from MCC and other concerns mentioned were important. Virtual programming didn't go as well as they wanted

Whistler House museum has an extensive renovation to replace the current gallery, which included multicultural organizations. Had raised the funds to do this and a sustainable endowment for that center. But now due to COVID related construction price increases of upwards of 40%, this is in jeopardy.

How do we recoup those costs and lost opportunity time, how do they start those programs?

Dan Yaeger – New England Museum Association covers art museums to Zoo's. The MA museum universe is 55% history, 25% art, remainder children's, science, etc. Sizes range from MFA and Museum of Science to local town historical societies.

Needs to each of these are different, but there are a lot of similarities. How do museums rehire? Approx 25-30% museum staff has been laid off or furloughed permanently. How do we get those resources back to hire? MCC has been instrumental and taken program funding to operational budget. Going forward how will this be sustainable? The facilities in the museums continue to be a concern, the museum is the collection, Mass cultural facilities fund needs to continue to be robust

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

Every museum has begun to pivot to online programming, but how do you make money off of this? Technology is part of the facilities infrastructure, access to broadband technology, hardware and wherewithal to use it are all necessary.

Raised concern about consistency of messaging, getting people into museums and spaces. What will the vaccine policies for visitors and workers be? Recognition that there needs to be stronger connections and marketing standpoints for sector. Tourism funding essential to get people in the door.

Decolonization work and anti-racism work, more institutions are becoming aware of institutionalized racism, no more just ticking off boxes, -- this is an opportunity for cultural sector to have more robust conversations about this.

Chris McCarthy – Provincetown is a very different community since the pandemic started, more people year-round than ever before, 2nd and 3rd homeowners have lived here for a full year. Arts have been shown to be more essential than ever before, not just a luxury. Thanked for being open, just opening the Museum doors has been helpful.

Have created and developed youth education programs, outdoor and online programming. Begun collaborating with social service organizations on days Museum is closed to bring youth in. The Museum has created an art trek to encourage more engagement. Has started to recreating themselves. There are issues regarding having both virtual and inhouse programming, as there is twice as much works for the same labor force.

One size fits all does not work for the art sector. Sector marketing is essential, and money needs to get out of Boston and to the rest of the Commonwealth.

Emily Ruddock - Mass creative statewide – last 14 months has been about disruption – national disruptive events involving racism. Creative sectors not immune to those things. Additionally, its not just dollars that are lost, loss of time using and practicing their art should be examined.

Some positive developments that have occurred over the past 14 months include the formation of alliances and coalitions of similar arts/cultural organization. For decades disability community has been asking for virtual accessibility. How do we best serve this community going forward now that we know virtual accessibility is an option? How do we do this while keeping in mind incredibly tight margins these organizations face?

Reopening for all not for some – Not simply just one piece of sector that is allowed to reopen; instead, how do we urge the MA Reopening Board to use sector inclusive language. Also how do we get officials to mention that not just Gillette and Fenway that are open, but many smaller venues throughout the Commonwealth.

Sustained reopening plans, as this will not happen overnight – Johns Hopkins says it will be at least 3 years before nonprofit arts and culture organizations get back to pre-pandemic levels. There should be a dual effort between getting these gig workers in work connected with the art and services they produce in order to keep them in the sector.

Publicly support sector - how do we think about new public funding vehicles and dramatically increase that for this sector? How are we making this equitable? Recovery

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

to Resiliency – breaking down barrier that impeded art from happening in more places. How are we identifying strategies to make sure students are getting an arts education?

Aminah Pilgrim - Serves youth and immigrant people in Boston/Brockton. Her organization has a particular interest in equity and anti-racist work and wants to focus make sure these issues are not let to the wayside when discussing actions taken for the sector now.

Michael Bobbitt – Commented we are not even close to being out of the pandemic. The commission needs to look at the larger industry. Specifically looking at business model issues, and how strained and vulnerable that business model. Yet we know its predominantly white, how will we address that?

The Digital world and increased virtual access are currently being used as a stop gap, there needs to be more work done to create profit out of that space. MA needs to be leading the world in making this innovation, otherwise we will be stuck catching up.

Young people, people of color will not come to our sector events because of a discount or other surface-level marketing, there needs to be real, targeted outreach.

There should be a collective impact marketing campaign that included tourism and restaurant industry – Thinking long-term rather than just looking at stopgaps.

The cultural sector always living in scarcity mode means there is a problem with the business model. Being in MA we have the resources to talk to scholars and industry professionals to make a change, that outreach needs to be made.

Additional Conversation:

Senator Kennedy asked about the distinction between the situation James Marsh spoke about at his auditorium and other venues around the state.

James Marsh discussed his particular organization and issues they have been dealing with in terms of attendance and keeping up with operating costs at the venue. Says he cannot imagine being responsible for multiple utilities that the City of Lynn pays for, otherwise the margin for shows would not be profitable, especially over the past year.

Michael Bobbitt said an underlying issue may be organizations nonprofit status – every show loses because we work on donations, which is why we need to take a greater look at the model.

Emily Ruddock gave a rhetorical example from another industry, when a plane takes off you can't sell the seats anymore. Meanwhile the federal government subsidizes these empty airline seats. We need subsidization for art too. Also she discussed a look at losers vs winners in terms of shows, and that we need to be more inclusive. We can't continue to turn away diverse artists from marginalized communities. The shows are important regardless of if they sell out or not.

Dawn Simmons - What are we doing for the most marginalized groups? How do we leverage this moment and make the case for what the arts do for our economy. They do more than sports in terms of bringing money in to the state, this should be recognized.



**4. Opportunity for a Public Survey & Future Meeting Format and Guest Speakers:**

Representative Fiola began the conversation to cover topics related to the creation of a public survey and to get ideas from Commission members regarding speakers for additional commission meetings.

Dan Yaeger recommended Colleen Dilenschneider who is a demographer. She surveyed 2700 people nationwide on audience surveys.

Emily Ruddock recommended Slover Linnett (audience survey) and WolfBrown (Audience survey with Arts Boston), in terms of services with more locally sourced audience surveys. Also mentioned that SMU Data Center released new report and that the organizations Artists at Work and the Trust Transfer Project may be worthwhile to talk to.

Michael Bobbitt recommended the Harvard Business School and MIT Media Lab as sources of innovation in terms of business models and marketing strategies. Also mentioned that John Abbott at GBH is all in for helping to market the Cultural sector

Chris McCarthy recommended Arthur Cohen of the organization Culture Track who has important data about the state of cultural non-profits.

Magdalena Gomez recommended Jim Lescault, the Director of Amherst Media to cover issues on the Digital Divide and more. She stated the importance and access Local access stations have. This service allows for individual artists and communities to build an audience.

**5. Next Steps:**

Representative Fiola stated that we would accommodate speakers over the next few meetings, and that any additional recommendations be sent to her and the Senator's staff.

**Motion to Adjourn Called by Chair Fiola and seconded by Michael Bobbitt  
Senator Kennedy Called the Roll (all present minus Canty)**



**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
COVID-19 CULTURAL IMPACT COMMISSION  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133

Representative Carole Fiola  
House Chair

Senator Edward J. Kennedy  
Senate Chair

**Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, May 18, 2021

1:00PM – 3:00PM

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**Commission Members in Attendance:** Senator Edward Kennedy (Co-Chair), Michael Bobbitt (Joined at 1:30pm), Emily Ruddock, Dennis Canty, Chris McCarthy, Sara Bogosian, Dawn Simmons, Magdalena Gomez, Dr. Aminah Pilgrim, A. J. Pietrantone, James Marsh

**Also in attendance:** Kelly Barsdate, Catherine Peterson, Alan Brown, James Ostis, Derek Dunlea, Bethann Steiner, Carmen Plazas, and 10 members of the public

**Senator Kennedy Called the Roll at 1:05pm (Fiola, Bobbitt, and Yaeger not present)**

**Approval of the Minutes - All in attendance approved**

**Introduction and Review of Last Meeting -**

Brief introduction to the meeting from Co-Chair Kennedy

**Speakers Panel on National and Local Data and Trends related to the Arts/Cultural Reopening**

**Kelly Barsdate** from the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies :

Studies have been predicting audience intent to return but there are very mixed views on how soon they will. Audiences might not return to pre pandemic levels in 2022 or even 2023. I caution organizations as getting audiences back to pre-pandemic levels as you do not want to replicate weaknesses from previous. Normal was a problem before. Not everybody has access or are welcomed into the arts and cultural institutions. Previously there has been a shortchanging of certain minoritized groups in art education. Policy makers need to set the stage and better to equip for the future. The ones going beyond relief and going to a renewal and repositioning lens. Governor Newsom's \$100 billion comeback plan is an example.

Examples from other states

California Comeback Plan art

provisions: <http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/FullBudgetSummary.pdf#page=197> : 60 million

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

creative core, water and energy conservation. Funding for youth development and workforce development. Roadway and infrastructure public art improvement

California creative workforce bill

SB628: <https://legiscan.com/CA/text/SB628/2021> : workforce training program

Colorado SB252 creative space

revitalization: <https://legiscan.com/CO/text/SB252/2021> :Colorado 252 which would appropriate workspace for workforce housing repurposing blighted spaces.

Nebraska LB566 Shovel-Ready Capital Recovery and Investment

Act: <https://legiscan.com/NE/text/LB566/2021> : Shovel ready capital funding Nebraska

looking at state and federal relief funding to help arts orgs for adaptations that got deferred

New York Excelsior Pass: <https://tinyurl.com/33asszch> and New York Arts Revival Pop-

Ups: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-marshals-return-performing-arts-new-york-ny-popsup> : Capital outlay for facility adaptation. Programmatic strategies.

Innovative policy including controversial covid 19 vaccine passport program for sports and other entertainment venues.

Philadelphia task force

recommendations: [https://issuu.com/raheem621/docs/actf\\_final\\_findings](https://issuu.com/raheem621/docs/actf_final_findings)

Chicago Arts 77 initiative: <https://tinyurl.com/h9y3hbvh> :Focuses on marginalized groups, youth engagement and art infrastructure projects

Los Angeles County task force

recommendations: <http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/146502.pdf>

### **Catherine Peterson** from ArtsBoston:

Reopening announcement does not mean the industry will be ready to go. First there is a need to rehire those who have been laid off. And cant just change plans. Performing arts takes time for ramp up, and because of infrastructure that has suffered severe consequences

Boston is a big sport city – But we are equally passionate about the arts. Where are the citizens of MA spending their time, where are they getting their joy. 4 times as many people attend arts events then attend the big 4 sports teams combined. As we heard before from Kelly, when are those local audiences going to come back. Really think about and hearing from majority. There will be caution and some might not come back until later or not at all.

At least 18 months of significant earned income was lost. March until September, more than just reopening guidelines. Things need to be done for frail infrastructure. It is not enough to just go back to the way it was, but now things need to be better in terms of racial equity, access for all people. And why does this matter. 4 reasons. Arts are an economic driver – 2 billion for local Boston economy, Real jobs, Livability and desirability want to visit, study, and work, and Building community and providing mental health - people turned to the arts.

### **Alan Brown** from WolfBrown:

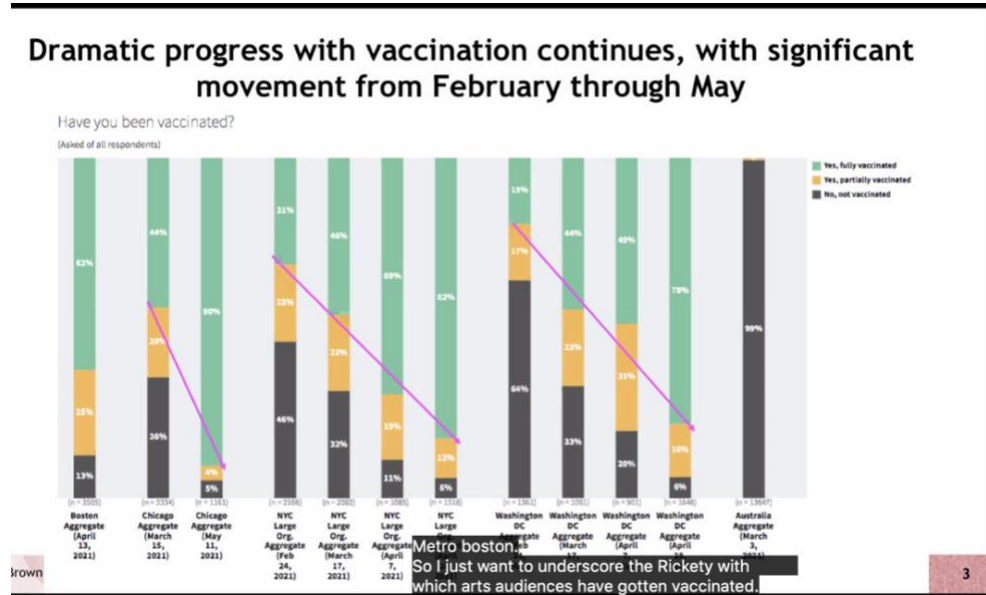
Been studying audience attitudes since May of 2020. 15 cohorts. 600,000 survey responses, enormous amounts of data from across country. 95% of arts cohort is and will be vaccinated. 87% as of a month ago of arts audiences vaccinated as of April 13<sup>th</sup> in Massachusetts. Only 2 or 3 percent of arts respondents are not going to get vaccinated.

When are people going to go out? Don't have MA numbers yet. NYC is one that is looked at and for large audiences about 50% are ready to go out. Arts sector doing health promotion work. Things are moving in a positive direction.

When will vaccinated folks feel better about going out? Readiness has been moving forward, 27% are ready in Boston, but that data is from April. Both masks and distancing required by some facilities and this will limit capacity still. Not out of the woods yet.

Currently doing the 2 year evaluation of the Californian arts council portfolio. In a way covid has created real opportunity to change some fundamentals.

Slides from Alan Brown's Presentation



### National and International Study Cohorts Phase 2 (Feb. - Nov. 2021)

- Boston (multi-disciplinary cohort, Arts Boston) Bi-monthly (April)
- Chicago (multi-disciplinary cohort, League of Chicago Theatres) Bi-monthly (March)
- Detroit (multi-disciplinary cohort, CultureSource) Bi-monthly (Feb.)
- Milwaukee (multi-disciplinary cohort, Imagine MKE) Bi-monthly (April)
- New Jersey and Connecticut theatres (New Jersey Theatre Alliance) Bi-monthly (Feb.)
- New York City (Off-Broadway theatres, TDF) Monthly (March)
- New York City (large institutions, multi-disciplinary)\* Monthly (Feb.)
- Pittsburgh (multi-disciplinary cohort, Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council) Bi-monthly (March)
- National orchestra cohort (League of American Orchestras) Monthly (Feb.)
- Performing Arts Centers (US national cohort)\* Monthly (Feb.)
- San Francisco (multi-disciplinary cohort, Theatre Bay Area) Bi-monthly (March)
- University presenters cohort (US national cohort)\* Monthly (March)
- Washington DC cohort\* Bi-monthly (March)
- Norway (nationwide, multi-disciplinary cohort, NPU/Audiences Norway) Three times (May)
- Australia (nationwide, multi-disciplinary cohort, Patternmakers) Three times (March)

\*managed in partnership with AMS Analytics



Our cohorts are regionally based or discipline based Cohorts. We have just over, 600,000.

### Question and Answer

James Marsh: Who are the people surveyed for Massachusetts? -

Alan Brown: In your state, ArtsBoston was the organizer. Assembled a cohort of cultural institutions.

Catherine Peterson: worked with 15 arts organizations of different genres. Museums, organizations of different sizes and geographies. Folks from Company 1, Huntington Theatre, Museum of Science, Peabody Essex, Boston sympathy. Cross-section of folks.

James Marsh: Was it buyers of tickets, random cross-section of ticket buyers – 95% were vaccinated. 73% said they were not going?

Alan Brown: Data needs to be checked

Catherine Peterson: Open ended questions to add their thoughts. Two that got most responses, why are you excited about coming back. And the pent-up demand of coming back.

Boston vs MA responses compared to other states

Alan Brown: Eastern seaboard got hit hard, there has always been an extra level of caution in Boston and NYC audiences. Higher obstacles for everything. Changing rapidly at the moment. Curious passionate, work in health of education professions. Artists safety, and other topics. Deep analysis of these results by race and ethnicity, respondents of color having a more difficult time with reopening and with COVID in general.

2022-2023 -

Kelly Barsdate: Implication from what she has seen; Venues with fixed seating are going to have more challenges in regards to perceived safety question. And the two biggest perks is physical distancing and masks. That is not disappearing as vaccinations increase. Well see if that change is on the horizon. Venues and people need to make their own decisions

Is there any correlation between airlines and packed theaters?

Alan Brown: The airlines may be a helpful analogy. Manage to enforce masks with some disruptions. That would sort of give the arts a very helpful benchmark. When it is safe to be on an airline with a mask then it would be safe to be in and audience with people; that would just make sense to me

Kelly Barsdate: Peoples experiences of flying are still new and chaotic, but yes there is a benchmark today but that might be a little different 30 days ago. Airports are total chaos, the airplane was safe, there might be useful benchmarks there.

Michael Bobbitt: How much of response should be a collective messaging campaign? Needs to be done as a whole group?

Alan Brown: Underscores that – strategic communications is the most important ballgame for the cultural sector. Boston sympathy recorded videos for people at Tanglewood, he thought that was effective. Coordination of health safety policies now that the state is not that benchmark.

Catherine Peterson: BSO Tanglewood videos are great. Alan presented most recent findings to ArtsBoston members, and the number one thing they were looking for was uniformity of messaging to audiences. We are looking on a messaging campaign and a welcome back campaign. Thinking about 9/11, how many days were theaters and concert halls shut down,

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

but it was hard to get people back. Getting all of the organization, backstage, designers, unions people, gathering in a parking lot, with a big rally to say we are open again, we are back, it is safe. That type of word of mouth will be very important. Orgs that can lead that effort

Dawn Simmons: So for major events like this, how have they bounced back? What are the lessons we can learn?

Catherine Peterson: One of the things was a major investment into the infrastructure, major funding coming back, from what could have been from an annual state arts council budget. So inspired by California's plan. It will need to be a big infrastructure investment is, because it has been 18 months, it has not been two weeks, it has been 18 months. Also wanted to commend the Senate legislation S2246 the act to rebuilt the commonwealths cultural future. Quadruple that, make that 200 million per year for 4 years. 1 billion per year over 4 years for California as a comparison.

Also, investment in arts services organizations. There is a need for investment in service organizations, none of the 10 million of the MCC money was for art service orgs because of the way the legislation was written. Lets look at the infrastructure of these organizations and efforts.

Alan Brown: How to invest now in the future. Relief money is gone, there was never enough anyway. Looking at the pandemic as a psychological event, there is a need for healing. What kind of artistic work will signal to the public, that MA is reopen and better than ever? Artistic practice is more important than ever. To think about the artistic experience that will be offered over the next 6-12 months. And if you might stage some sort of statewide art event that could happen in multiple locations simultaneously, like First Night, hundreds of thousands if not millions of people, and focus public attention on art for one night. That will bring culture into the public consciousness and achieve something wonderful.

Another is the future of digital programming. To take leadership in this space and by having arts organizations take advantage.

Kelly Barsdate: Devils advocate learned from last recession. Private and public assets into small number of institutions. Have an opportunity and necessity to democratize funds and how shape how they are deployed. Take a highlighter around the concentration of resources because otherwise you may be leaving communities left behind.

Arts education you also saw a contraction of arts education in public schools after the 2008 recession, still paying long-term consequences of that. Broad-spectrum, especially for low income students and students of color who did not have the same access of digital education opportunities. Public will, political will, earned income and innovation challenges for the next generation. It is actually putting more money into arts. Double or tripling down on education funding for arts mis what is needed

Dr. Pilgrim: I believe there is a way to leverage Alan's idea/ question to perhaps address some of the issues Kelly has raised. With creativity and innovation, there must be ways to do something powerful that can simultaneously nudge us towards a powerful shift towards equity

Emily Ruddock: Wanted to vocalize support for S2246. Incredibly important and amazing leadership on behalf of the Senator. Looking at what folks are doing in other states, California and Illinois legislation. Are there really clear uses for the funding described in the

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

legislation? And is being broad or specific on a nationwide scale having more success? And the other question is do you have any examples of states taking advantage of ESSR (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funding and is that an opportunity?

Kelly Barsdate: Yes there is an opportunity on ESSR funding. People are trying to get bearings on immediate triage situation of next school year. Purposeful integration and district and school level practices for creative education is important. Yes there is a nationwide trend of specific components within arts relief legislation, NASAA has legislative tracking system. What are the patterns and how is that manifesting? We are seeing the start of a turn. It was all about the loss. Once done with stabilization, what are the infrastructure needs to bolster baseline capacity of arts/cultural sector?. We are seeing finer grain programs and policy strategies being proposed and may originate that a specific idea can capture legislative enthusiasm if it is just framed as ongoing relief. Part of it has to do with political positioning. How do we build a more inclusive and more sustainable and what do we need to do that. We have the opportunity to do that now.

Magdalena Gomez: Springfield and Holyoke are multilingual. What is being done in terms of surveys who do not speak English and untapped resources and underserved people as artists? And making sure that people in Western MA are going to be part of this amplification of a unified message. Support what Dawn and Emily said last time, including the nonmonetary value of the arts, and I just want to say that the cultural innovative economy has inclusive social development, and soft power influence. And Dawn spoke about how do we get people to understand the values of the arts. How do we get more people into these surveys? Needs to be a reemphasis on the cultural sector of the entire economy. Do not want Western MA to be treated as the forgotten child in terms of the arts.

Alan Brown: Worked with an LA based group to do qualitative vs quantitative surveys in communities of color, and out of that came to think of art and artists as second responders. Serve a special role in time of crisis, provide resources and connection points to people directly. Essential role they play especially in times of culture. For what its worth, I believe there's a way to do a "BIG" statewide event that is also hyper-local.

Kelly Barsdate: Dominate culture evolving in a dominant way. Instead of one unified event, lets look at democratizing power, hyperlocal the most important assets can be activated that way and respond to communities. When the Western MA creative economy thrives, those communities flourish. NASAA did case studies on how the creative economy does after major economic shocks and crisis's The findings show that the creative sector grows more that the great that growth and the more powerful it was accelerated across many different geographies and those who have been disfranchised. Invest in creative economy for human flourishing.

Gomez: Mutual and a reciprocal, it is about skill sharing

Senator Kennedy: Tried the best to spread around the composition of the Commission to reflect different parts of the Commonwealth, and ensure that no part is forgotten.

Dr Pilgrim: Love the point about an asset-based, non-deficit model. So important.

### **Approval of Public Survey**

Emily Ruddock: About survey fatigue, asking our members to answer one more survey. How we are thinking about combatting that.

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

James Ostis: The question of how do we get outside people to participate and give feedback to this commission. Thus this survey stands in place of an open hearing and allows for a way to submit written testimony to the commission.

Aminah: Creating focus groups on this issue instead of participating in survey fatigue. What specific subjects you would like focus groups to focus on?

Magdalena Gomez: Open mic of people to give feedback of an active hearing. Sexier than a focus group or a public hearing.

### **Next Steps for June 1st Meeting**

Senator Kennedy: Staff will send out email updates with focus groups or open meeting suggestions. Remains to be seen if we will be able to meet via zoom for our final two meetings. Can be recommendations that are communicated over email.

### **Roll Call: All in attendance said yes**

Magdalena Gomez: Thanking the panelists for their time and would like the comments made in the zoom chat to be saved.

### **Motion to adjourn: Approved by all in attendance**





**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
**COVID-19 CULTURAL IMPACT COMMISSION**  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133

Representative Carole Fiola  
House Chair

Senator Edward J. Kennedy  
Senate Chair

**Meeting Minutes**  
Tuesday, June 1, 2021  
1:00PM – 3:00PM  
Virtual Meeting

**Commission Members in Attendance:** Representative Carole Fiola (Co-Chair), Senator Edward J. Kennedy (Co-Chair), Michael Bobbitt, Emily Ruddock, Dennis Canty, Dan Yaeger, Chris McCarthy, Sara Bogosian, Dawn Simmons, Magdalena Gomez, Dr. Aminah Pilgrim, A.J. Pietrantone, James Marsh

**Also in attendance:** James Ostis, Tyler Cotta, Derek Dunlea, Bethann Steiner

**Representative Fiola Called the Roll at 1:03pm (All Present)**

**Approval of the Minutes - All in attendance approved**

**Discussion of Mission**

Rep. Carole Fiola: Instead of jumping in with more guest speakers today, the co-chairs believed we could have time for more open discussion related to the mission itself on creating the report. It is important that we look at the mission again of the Commission. As we open it up for discussion, please remember the mission. We are in the deep era of the pandemic. Little did we know where we would be by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Co-chairs are more making sure we are pushing the Commissioners in the right direction.

Rep. Fiola read the bill language of the Commission again.

Where do we stand today? Is our mission different today?

Dan Yaeger: Suggest that most museums are trying to build back better. Incorporating lessons into transforming ourselves to our new normal. Acknowledgement of a hybrid type of model of programming in the future, like creating online access to collections and fieldtrips. Part of new demand. Incorporating that into education curriculum both formal and informal. Challenge is a reduction of staff, how do we have the bandwidth to do both?

Rep. Fiola: How is it working? Are people coming back?

Dan Yaeger: Folks are remerging and the public want to visit. The intuitions themselves are faced with mixed messages. Should we insist on masks should we not, what is a

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

consistent message to send. CT Governor has proposed \$15 million dollars earmarking or funding federal pay for families with children to visit museum as grant funding.

Partnering with tourism industry to get families back in doors.

Michael Bobbitt: Reading a lot about return to venues. Research is that we see a swell, that this surge will only last for a little while. Need staff to run to digital markets. Hybrid is not a fad, will be around forever. Will see cell phone allowed performances. Organizations have not monetized digital world because it was seen by both sides as a stopgap. People will long for experience and there will be a greater ROI on digital content.

Senator Kennedy: Sara Bogosian what do you want to see?

Sara Bogosian: Our biggest problem is getting people to want to come back to work. Received a lot of those grants for children for children focused programming. Trying to bring back instructors and to teach children. Using art in educating the children, introducing many different types of mediums. Having a problem deciding how are we going to change our curriculum due to layoffs and furlough. Confident in getting people back into the museum, but in the middle of all that there are complexities regarding new building.

### **Reopening and Hybrid Operations**

Rep. Fiola: What is the percentage of museums that have opened?

Dan Yaeger: At least 70/80 percent of museums are open or opening, trying to ramp up as that rehiring process continues. Need to raise the funds to hire staff but can't do that until they have programs going

Sara Bogosian: Received funds but need to have staff to put programs together. Present these programs for the community.

Senator Kennedy: Do you need to achieve a certain comfort level for staff?

Sara Bogosian: I know we can do this safely. I think the volunteers will come back but it has been challenge.

A.J. Pietrantone: Second what Michael said. The hybrid environment meant there were different types of resources were needed. Changes to be made to make people comfortable to coming back. As we move into digital world that organizations have not been trained to deal with in terms of intellectual property for new digital formats and monetization of those.

Dawn Simmons: In terms of digital organizations are under resourced to incorporate that change. How can that be added into already stretched budgets? I think there is board pressure for theaters, now that things are open, to produce something in the summer, but those things have not been budgeted for, so there is a pinch point in doing something now. Digital programming can't look like a Zoom meeting, there are production costs for that. For under resourced orgs vs multi million dollars organizations, pivoting on a dime is tough, along with ensuring pay equity.

Representative Fiola: Local performance center, the Narrows are not going to their 450 capacity they are keeping it smaller to keep people comfortable and to ensure they are ready.

Chris McCarthy: Open since July, Memorial Day was very busy. Regular constituents are not coming in since it is too crowded. First few time slots are masks required, staff still required to wear as well. Hybrid class enrollment has doubled class participation.

Dawn Simmons: For individual artists coming back into this moment there is less opportunity. Need to keep folks whole top preventing brain drain, while they are waiting for system to full reboot and reopen large scale programming. Important to keep in mind race equity.

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

Chris: 400 dollars a night in Provincetown prices people out, people take classes online. Airing to side of caution, smaller programming, more intermittent groups, make sure stakeholders feel involved and safe.

Magdalena Gomez: Underscore what Dawn said. To add to that, classicism as well, segregation that happens within sector. Looking at all of that. So inspired by what Sara said that she is being very creative, multidisciplinary and creating art from that. Spoke about own experience accessing and utilizing small theater space, interdisciplinary was of using underutilized spaces in institutions. Working with access stations to bring folks into that space. There can be reciprocity there. Bartering and growing trust and new audiences within sector.

### **Lost Artists and Funding**

Rep. Fiola: Class, racial equity are all very important to keep in mind. The Narrows, very creative and adaptable, modified capacity. Also working with city and community to put on events, going to pockets that don't normally see art, informal economy, going into these pockets or neighborhoods that don't normally see this work. This is a good way to adapt

On remote programming operations: We are not going to see hybrid go away. Instead will be more professionalized, people are still going to need and want to access online opportunities. How to monetize it is important. How to find these organizations and people to do that. How to hang on to the individual artists that are waiting around until later seasons.

Emily: Number of opportunities on how to put this into action. Economic bond bill, there was specific money included for digital programming and upgrades along with reopening costs. That money should be released. In addition, \$5 billion that the Commonwealth gets from American Rescue Plan some should be set aside. As municipalities in MA receive money, are there recommendations that we should say to towns as the best way to leverage money and keep arts community afloat in this period of time?

Additionally, there needs to be a workforce training program. To Michaels point, new expansion of digital content creation, specific skill set that will need training.

Rep Fiola: How do we make sure those funds help the cultural sector?

Michael Bobbitt: There are many millions of dollars left to push for. We are losing artists permanently and that would be devastating. There should be a job creation program, a department of public works or developers or affordable housing , incentivize lease holders to convert spaces for workshops or housing space.

Rep. Fiola: When we say we lost artists, what are the numbers?

Michael Bobbitt: Six artists that I know personally.

Dawn Simmons: 20 percent of membership thinking about leaving industry all together. That number has grown since March 2020. We are about to be in a position to see who has actually left and who is going to hang on. Fully leaving the industry and was already hard to find jobs. I am also seeing a dip in membership, many of them say they are leaving the industry altogether, or leaving for other markets.

Senator Kennedy: Are these artists leaving Massachusetts altogether?

Michael Bobbitt: Moving back with parents. Lost a third of their income had to move back home.

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

Rep. Fiola: Doors are open, only a small amount of time to think about more professionalized details regarding virtual events, and the training and professionalizing, of Zoom and other more video conferencing platforms.

Michael Bobbitt: There is more sophisticated platforms as well, accessed through phone or computers.

Emily Ruddock: To Chair Kennedy's points, there are a number of states considering propping up their creative sectors to make sure they do not leave state or city. California, Illinois, Oregon were out early to save their artists with CARES money.

Rep. Fiola: So many different bills are out there. If you have very specific policy language what might be worth taking a look at?

James Marsh: Talking about margins, they were so slim even before COVID, a lot of these artists have no other options.

Emily Ruddock: One of these tricks is that we are in a gig economy. That basically said the amount of folks who can make full time income from creative practice is very small and they need to go into other work to support it, but losing their cornerstone of art is very bad for retention. It should be considered to make the mission looking at revenue streams of arts practices, so they are not as dangerous.

Dan Yaeger: We are in a moment where we need to reimagine some of this.

Real significant equity issue. Cultural sector generally, changing people's hearts and minds means they are taking a vow of poverty, which does not work and there is something wrong. This is an opportunity for us to catalyze a conversation to bring stability for the field. Change has been forced on us. We have an obligation to continue what we are working on to provide a roadmap for our cultural facilities. We love what we do, but we are not fully loved by the consumers out there. This is the moment to change that.

### **Marketing Strategies**

Rep. Fiola: Moving onto the next topic, have you consider strategies for increased marketing and cross promotional partnerships including the hospitality industry? How are we going to help each other? We don't spend marketing dollars that promote arts culture tourism as an umbrella that all folks could take advantage of. This is an opportunity to address inequalities and other issues.

Michael Bobbitt: Collective impact. Hire somebody. The effort to recover New Orleans arts and culture after Katrina. When NYC was looking at bankruptcy, government travel tourism they all got together with cultural scene, and they focused on bringing people to Broadway. There is a bunch of low hanging fruit in this state we can focus on and market it to the masses.

Rep. Fiola: We have many diverse geographic areas and RTCs to support. We cannot have an only Boston-centric event. How do we feed these geographic areas to make sure they are fed enough marketing support, so they are strong enough for their region to tweak for their areas?

Michael Bobbitt: Idea of creating a franchisee model, everybody gets the branding and the marketing guide then make it work for them.

A.J. Pietrantone: Community foundations, represent geographic areas that could be a really good partner to work with and bring in other philanthropic organizations.

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

Emily Ruddock: 14 that are a part of current foundations, poised to do some really incredible work. Specific money to community foundations to grant out for marketing would be important.

In terms of a marketing or branding campaign. How do we approach a campaign that doesn't rely on one or two major intuitions and looks at the whole? Lynn used reopening of auditorium to talk about other assets in Lynn, that is an ecosystem model of many serving the community. Give them tools as not every RTC is in the same boat.

Dawn Simmons: Should be talking about a marketing campaign that brings people in and then targets people in that community, that includes marketing the value of the arts.

Reeducation campaign that the arts are part of innovation and vice versa.

### **Public Hearing**

Senator Kennedy: Adding a meeting, as a public hearing an open mic hearing, everybody on commission could invite people from every portion of the state. Worthwhile idea, and something that this commission can do.

Rep. Fiola: That is a great idea and we need to check in on survey results and continue to distribute that. Hearing from folks in all of these places.

Our mission was to include bringing meetings on the road, but due to the pandemic we will continue our work virtually.

Senator Kennedy: An open mic hearing is a good alternative to that bringing it on the road.

Michael Bobbitt: Strategic ideas, what happens when we have an open forum and how do we get the best strategic ideas rather than tactical ideas?

Senator Kennedy: Want it to be beneficial, not just a rehashing of what we already know.

Rep Fiola: **Motion moved to approve an additional Commission meeting to allow public input. (Unanimous approval)**

### **Missing Data and further business**

Is there any data we are missing?

Emily Ruddock: Young people's access to culture, at least 3 communities planned on cutting arts programs. Might want to take a look at data sources on how arts education is being impacted.

Rep. Fiola: Education was not discussed in mission but we should be looking for it through DESE, James and Derek can ask DESE to see what their knowledge may be in terms of arts and culture in school.

Dennis Canty: Have not heard of districts making wholesale cuts. Going to do survey of 150 theater-based programs, asking if they do expect cuts. Also will ask if there are potential shifts in core studying and accessing arts during the day and what impact that have in after-school arts programs. We are helping to shift folks to think how do schools advocate in that space, in order to have more creative thinking.

Magdalena Gomez: Need more data on digital divide and how that will affect artistic communities.

**Representative Fiola Called the Roll (All present) - Meeting Adjourned**



**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
**COVID-19 CULTURAL IMPACT COMMISSION**  
**STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133**

Representative Carole Fiola  
House Chair

Senator Edward J. Kennedy  
Senate Chair

**Meeting Minutes**  
Tuesday, June 15, 2021  
1:00PM – 3:00PM  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**Commission Members in Attendance:** Senator Edward Kennedy (Co-Chair), Representative Fiola (Co-Chair), Michael Bobbitt, Emily Ruddock, Dennis Canty, Dan Yaeger, Chris McCarthy, Sara Bogosian, Dawn Simmons, Magdalena Gomez, Dr. Aminah Pilgrim, A. J. Pietrantone, James Marsh

**Also in attendance:** James Ostis, Derek Dunlea, Bethann Steiner, Tyler Cotta

**Senator Kennedy Called the Roll at 1:06pm (All in attendance)**

**Approval of the Minutes - All in attendance approved**

**Introduction and Review of Last Meeting -**

**Discussion of Draft Report and Recommendations**

Draft Report – Considered to be a skeleton of the report, discussion of draft report and what goes into that report going in

Representative Fiola: Discuss putting meat on the bone of the skeleton report. Walked through of report sections thus far and gave overviews of each section.

Michael Bobbitt – MCC did not get their asks from state, only 10 million of 24 million through the Cultural Facilities Fund, of which 10 million has been funded every year recently

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

Representative Fiola: Bond Bill is capital investments, all that was done in bond bill has been done and I wouldn't expect any more.

Senator Kennedy: I agree, we need your input to the challenges and recommendations sections of the report.

Emily Ruddock: Thanked Chair and staffs. Referring to the Mass Growth Capitol Grants, it is important to note how much money went to for profit organizations in the cultural sector and that non profits were not eligible to receive these funds.

In addition to American Rescue Plan Funds that will be administered to the state, every town will also receive local allocations. Is there an opportunity to incentivize to use if for arts and cultural sector? Municipality funds received through the American Rescue Plan should be considered for arts education funding

Magdalena Gomez: Thank you again. Participated in a very positive event at the Pioneer Valley Cider Hill farm. There were outdoor performances by groups who had been struggling since COVID were able to stay afloat through local access. Through local access, the group received consistency and partnership with people they trusted. And they made money.

Dawn Simmons: I would like to reinforce Emily's point about getting data on how much funding in dollars that went to the arts and culture sector.

AJ Pietrantone: Other business section perhaps incentives in funding for organizations outside of cultural sector to help with labor shortage and competition for rehiring. There is a challenge from disruption to the support sectors networks because of other sectors problems. The opportunities for overlap within the sector might get a better results for rehiring.

Emily Ruddock: MASSCreative supports AJ's point: There is a scarcity of qualified workers to hire which is prolonging the road to full reopening.

Michael Bobbitt: It is important to get impact data from MOTT regarding the tourism and hospitality sector to show the wide impact that the lack or arts and culture this past year has had on restaurants and hotels, etc.

Report should include a section on historically underfunded communities, BIPOC and Rural communities. Listing of financial support, way to word it so we do not diminish it and that the need is still needed

Suggests that the recommendation section should be referenced earlier in the report.

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

Derek Dunlea clarifies that the Executive Summary will be used for that purpose of referencing the recommendation section earlier in the report.

Michael Bobbitt: Consumer confidence is going to peak and slowly decline and miss convinces of being home, Wolfbrown Report, is that too Boston focused?

Senator Kennedy: Can be narrative report and in executive summary Everybody in legislature knows the needs of this industry. Noted there is always chance of a new variant rising

Rep Fiola: There was devastation and Legislature knows that spells out need for this industry what they call out brief guidelines use of funds.

Dan Yaeger: Need to use this report as an opportunity to think really big and explore big picture issues. Recommend commissioning a group or think tank for bigger framework discussions.

Fleeing the sector and never returning, racial standpoint, things needed as a sector. Guess what is suggesting framing work of the thought leaders of people that we have in this field. How is our sector sustainable. Nice to know from an economic and justice equity standpoint things that can be squeezed out, funding and resources are needed, bigger moment that needs to be framed . Some sort of think tank to bring this to the next level. Perhaps more sustainable way.

Dawn Simmons: Is there a way for funding to be broken down and to break down what is met recommendation to show what this looks.

Showing people what it takes to work in the cultural sector, do it effectively and scale and show and scale from a deficit, 200 million only get us this far, 20 million at MCC only get you this, what is the longer narrative. Use this to seed conversations. What is the real money that we are asking for , and what strategies actually look like and get support from constituents.

Senator Kennedy: Quantify how much money is needed to bring the whole sector back and I think that help with people in the legislature who is concerning how much is need, otherwise report is just a bunch of ideas rather than a list of actions needed

Representative Fiola: I agree, I would envision these recommendations will have number attached to them.

We have a lot out there that we haven't honed in on. What Emily has sent us artists at work program, challenge's of artists leaving, New York program need collaborative partners like community foundations that is going to leverage money, working artists program.



## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

Dan Yaeger: Private sector philanthropy can/should be encouraged. Think of how the hotels/restaurant sector depends on our success.

Emily Ruddock: Part of recommendations: CA statewide level not passed yet, and in San Francisco they have pooled city workforce program. S2246 Commonwealth Futures Act, that is an important piece of this equation and it is a direct call for American Rescue funding to increasing number to 500 million.

Immediate uses, Joint Committee on Emerging Technologies on sports betting precedent set that portion of that money is dedicated to arts part of recommendations that there is an opportunity to increase money to cultural communities.

Dr. Pilgrim: Great points

Michael Bobbitt: Agree with Emily's comments on need of S2246

Senator Kennedy: I will speak on that during the Public Hearing.

Dr. Pilgrim: I have a poor wifi signal so I'll include a comment here... on page 12, where "Vulnerabilities" are listed... I wonder if we can also frame those as areas of growth/opportunities for the sector. I'd be willing to help edit. Adding what Michael Bobbitt just mentioned would be great here... and some state data on the representation of BIPOC/immigrant communities in the state, languages spoken, etc. that paints a picture of the cultural and linguistic diversity that is an asset to our sector.

Representative Fiola: Want to put to pen or type, specific thoughts, we will bring them back to the committee, please feel free to use words you want to use and points you want to make, bullet points, thoughts paragraphs etc.

Emily Ruddock: Absence in MASSCreative recommendation would like to see is funding for arts education in Massachusetts, ARP funding being distributed significant opportunity some communities using that funding to rebuild education for every person and include specific point about arts education.

Senator Kennedy: Good idea, something that we should be able to do. Cross of something that should be in the report. Parents are going to follow the kids, great suggestions.

Emily Ruddock: Anecdotal stories of creative youth development organizations extraordinary way, artists for humanists and ICA, creative expressive humanities

Dan Yaeger: The State of CT is committing I think \$20 million this summer to offer free museum admission to kids & their families.

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

Dennis Canty: Disparity of access in schools that have received resources and money that has flowed into school districts, but there are a lot of districts where those investments have not happened.

Dr. Pilgrim: To Emily's point, the ICA and Artists for Humanity are also two great models re; attempts to address diversity equity and some of the art engaging social justice issues in the field

Magdalena Gomez: Trust that is going to build and built in terms: Families to follow, Sara Bogosian is doing massive things for children. Building communities and building trust, programs are getting funded and they are not reaching those who need it most

Funding, where is there checks and balances on things. How do we get the “doers” the money. Keep an eye on where tourism is going, will it be promoted and who will guide that.

James Marsh: Distinguish what we are doing from Shuttered Venues Grant, the worst process, only 90 have been awarded money so far, needs to be clean, fast and opposite of SBA has done, has had to forgone shows thinking would have money so far,

Magdalena Gomez: Unaffiliated artists here, no institutional support get awards or a grant. Standing alone, what happens to us, MCC is all we got, so competitive, so what happens to unaffiliated artists in community, other artists who fall through they don't belong

Representative Fiola: They are going to be ensuring that it is MOTT/MCC and encouraging a statement to the effect of racial equity as a condition behind the funding. Not just going to be an endless pot of money, what is the formalized fashion.

Senator Kennedy: Marrying accountability with getting the money, making sure we do not forget the little guy there needs to be some way to. M.

Emily Ruddock: not using the organizations as a pass through but instead engaging artists in their work, put it into the report and into action.

Mentioned need for private philanthropic along with corporate partners, happening at Mass Economic Development, Transformation Districts initiative , Lynn put together, that program be expanded beyond Gateways Cities not saying that but rather how important Barr foundation is in all of this. Not a policy recommendation but that this is a best practice.

COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

**Next Steps for June 25 Hearing and June 29 Meeting**

Representative Fiola: Please get feedback on the report in by Friday. Please get people to join the Public Hearing.

Motion to Adjourn

**Senator Kennedy Called the Roll (All in attendance)**

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission



**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
**COVID-19 CULTURAL IMPACT COMMISSION**  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133

Representative Carole Fiola  
House Chair

Senator Edward J. Kennedy  
Senate Chair

**Meeting Minutes**  
Friday, June 25, 2021  
10:00AM – 12:00PM  
Virtual Meeting

### **COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission: Public Input Hearing**

The purpose of this meeting was to provide all arts and cultural organizations and members of the Massachusetts artistic community an opportunity to provide input to the Commission prior to the publishing of a final report.

**Commission Members in Attendance:** Senator Edward Kennedy (Co-Chair), Representative Fiola (Co-Chair), Michael Bobbitt, Emily Ruddock, Dan Yaeger, Chris McCarthy, Sara Bogosian, Dawn Simmons, Magdalena Gomez, Dr. Aminah Pilgrim (Arrived at 10:50am), A. J. Pietrantone, James Marsh

**Also in attendance:** James Ostis, Derek Dunlea, Bethann Steiner, Tyler Cotta

The Commission heard testimony from the following individuals.

- **Sue Kim** - President of the Board of Director, Angkor Dance Troupe
- **Jason Montgomery** - Founder, Attack Bear Press and an individual artist
- **Erin Williams** - Cultural Development Officer for Worcester and Executive Director of the Worcester Cultural Coalition
- **Karthik Subramanian** - Managing Director at Company One Theatre
- **Adam Bright** - Producing Executive Director, Double Edge Theatre
- **Carlos Uriona** - Co-Artistic Director, Double Edge Theatre
- **Jim Lescault** - Executive Director, Amherst Media
- **Kenisha Coy** - Artist, an Artrepreneur and owner of My CARE Initiative

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

The hearing included providing additional resources and opportunities for individual artists, the need to focus on less endowed organizations and individual artists when it comes to funding opportunities, the need for unrestricted operating support, and the supports needed in BIPOC and other historically underfunded communities. There was also a particular emphasis on the impact of the pandemic on performance arts-related organizations that have missed out on fundraising opportunities because of the timing of the pandemic.

Those who spoke referenced the need for grant makers to take into account the financial restrictions of the applicants and the amount of funding that actually makes its way to the artists. More specific actions mentioned included making more affordable artist workspaces available and creating an easier, less time-consuming application processes that does not create more of a burden for applicants.

This testimony was recorded and preserved online at [www.malegislative.gov](http://www.malegislative.gov)

# COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission



**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
**COVID-19 CULTURAL IMPACT COMMISSION**  
**STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133**

Representative Carole Fiola  
House Chair

Senator Edward J. Kennedy  
Senate Chair

**Meeting Minutes**  
Friday, June 25, 2021  
12:00PM – 1:00PM  
Virtual Meeting

**Commission Members in Attendance:** Representative Carole Fiola (Co-Chair), Senator Edward J. Kennedy (Co-Chair), Michael Bobbitt, Emily Ruddock, Dan Yaeger, Chris McCarthy, Sara Bogosian, Dawn Simmons, Magdalena Gomez, Dr. Aminah Pilgrim, A.J. Pietrantone, James Marsh

**Also in attendance:** James Ostis, Tyler Cotta, Derek Dunlea, Bethann Steiner

**Representative Kennedy Called the Roll at 12:15pm (Dennis Canty Not Present)**

**Approval of the Minutes - All in attendance approved**

The Commission met after the Public Hearing to discuss testimony heard today and to clarify the process leading to the publication of the final Commission report.

Commissioners spoke about idea for concerted advocacy around the publication of the report, most notably a press release.

Motion to Adjourn

# COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission



**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
**COVID-19 CULTURAL IMPACT COMMISSION**  
**STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133**

Representative Carole Fiola  
House Chair

Senator Edward J. Kennedy  
Senate Chair

### **Meeting Minutes**

Monday, June 28, 2021

1:00PM – 2:00PM

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**Commission Members in Attendance:** Senator Edward Kennedy (Co-Chair), Representative Fiola (Co-Chair), Emily Ruddock , Sara Bogosian, Magdalena Gomez, Dr. Aminah Pilgrim, A. J. Pietrantone

**Also in attendance:** James Ostis, Tyler Cotta, Derek Dunlea, Bethann Steiner

**Roll Call** - Michael Bobbitt, Dennis Canty, Dan Yaeger, Chris McCarthy, Dawn Simmons, and James Marsh were not present

Sara Bogosian: So happy with much of the report. I would encourage an increase in the Cultural Facilities Fund. Increases in costs and materials necessitates this increase. These funds go to organizations like Whistler House.

Rep Fiola: We do mention Cultural Facilities Fund in report.

Sara Bogosian: If that is included, I think this is wonderful.

Dr. Pilgrim : Few places in recommendations where racial equity and cultural diversity can be added to balance and prioritize how it is placed in the previous sections. Will send over edits to the staff to incorporate.

Magdalena Gomez: Wants to make sure weakness and vulnerabilities within report is specific . Do not want specifics to be lost because we didn't state it.

With realtors, incentivizing communities and getting them funds is an important step that can be taken

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

Senator Kennedy: Important to stay on mission, another commission could be a good avenue to address these other concerns. Everybody is sensitive to racial inequities, and there should be a separate Commission just to deal with that. Police reform bill for example, many commissions that deal with specifics. Maybe something that needs to be done to answer all questions and concerns.

Magdalena Gomez: Agrees and is proud to sign off on it

Emily Ruddock: If there is an ability to add a further consideration or a review around opportunities for cities and towns to raise further funds for arts and culture. Something like an Arts CPA program. Additional ways to raise support on the state and local

Representative Fiola: We all want to talk about our space, but the lens needs to be broad. There also needs to be a focus on racial equity. For the report, when we say funding, we can't ignore that there is a bill out there. Once this report is filed, you can use it to take your cause further.

Senator Kennedy: Cultural Facilities Fund might have been enough at one point, not anymore

Emily Ruddock: Prior to pandemic Cultural Facilities Fund was underfunded. Money that is authorized in the 5 year bond process and how to work on that, can happen outside of this space.

AJ Pietrantone: Breadth of this report is great, given that is being recommended for four years of spending. A checkpoint in a year of two could be helpful

Emily Ruddock: We as individual actors can do that, do not see the role of the commission through our statute.

Senator Kennedy: Other entities that can do that work so it should be okay

Magdalena Gomez: Thank you to the staff.

## **Motion to Adjourn**





**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
COVID-19 CULTURAL IMPACT COMMISSION  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133

Representative Carole Fiola  
House Chair

Senator Edward Kennedy  
Senate Chair

**Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, June 29, 2021  
1:00PM – 3:00PM  
Virtual Meeting Via Teams

**Commission Members in Attendance:** Representative Carole Fiola (Co-Chair), Senator Edward Kennedy (Co-Chair), Michael Bobbitt, Emily Ruddock, Dennis Canty, Dan Yaeger, Chris McCarthy, Sara Bogosian, Dawn Simmons, Magdalena Gomez, Dr. Aminah Pilgrim (arrived after roll call at 1:10pm), A. J. Pietrantone, James Marsh

**Also in attendance:** James Ostis, Tyler Cotta, Derek Dunlea, Bethann Steiner

**Representative Fiola Called the Roll at 1:01pm**

**Approval of the Minutes** - All in attendance approved of the following meeting minutes: June 15<sup>th</sup>, June 25<sup>th</sup> Public Hearing, June 25<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting, June 28<sup>th</sup>

**Discussion of Commission Report**

Commissioners discussed the specifics of the collaboration between

Mass Cultural Council and the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism on the statewide marketing campaign.

The Commissioners discussed final edits to the report before final approval. These changes included the addition of reference to Mass Humanities into the report, the edit of the bullet point noting the call for collaboration of the statewide marketing campaign through the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism be in collaboration between Mass Cultural Council other industry stakeholders, and the addition of the term “cultural service organizations”, to three bullets of the recommendations section labeled “Create Recovery and Reopening Grants Programming”.

Further discussion about a press release was had between Commissioners

**Approval of Commission Report**

**Representative Fiola called a motion to approve the report with the revisions discussed in today’s meeting, including the addition of the minutes approved by the Commission. - Passed by a roll call vote with unanimous approval**

## COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission

Motion to approve the report with the revisions discussed in today's meeting, including the addition of the minutes approved by the Commission. – Unanimous Approval

	Yes	No	Present
Co-Chair Carole Fiola	x		
Co-Chair Edward J. Kennedy	x		
Michael Bobbitt	x		
Emily Ruddock	x		
Dan Yaeger	x		
Dennis Canty	x		
Chris McCarthy	x		
Sara Bogosian	x		
Dawn Simmons	x		
Magdalena Gomez	x		
Aminah Pilgrim	x		
A. J. Pietrantone	x		
James Marsh	x		

The Co-Chairs gave closing remarks stating the importance of this Commission's report, and thanked Commissioners for their time serving the cultural sector.

### **Call to Adjourn and Closing Roll (All present)**

---