



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

Representative Carole Fiola  
House Chair

Senator Edward J. Kennedy  
Senate Chair

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**COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission Releases Recommendations**

**BOSTON** – The COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission released its final report today, concluding in a series of recommendations to the Legislature that include the utilization of \$575 million of the \$5.3 billion in federal funding received by the state through the American Rescue Plan to address the recovery of the creative and cultural sector over the next four years, as well as several additional policy recommendations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating for the Commonwealth's arts and cultural institutions, with the latest figures coming from the Mass Cultural Council showing a loss of \$588 million by non-profit and municipal cultural organizations and \$30.4 million in lost revenue reported by individual artists, teaching artists, and scientists/humanists from March 2020 to April 2021.

In addition to adding a great deal to our quality of life, arts and culture represent a significant economic sector in our state that we must help rebound and rebuild in the coming months and years. Prior to the pandemic, arts nonprofits in the Commonwealth supported more than 73,000 full-time jobs, generating more than \$2.2 billion in total spending and bringing in nearly \$100 million in state tax revenue. The Massachusetts arts and cultural industries generated over 25 billion dollars for the U.S. GDP in 2019 alone. 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.

“The work of this commission confirms what we already knew – the arts and cultural sector is the lifeblood of the Massachusetts economy and needs substantial investments to aid in its recovery,” said **Sen. Edward J. Kennedy (D-Lowell), Co-chair of the Commission**. “The recommendations in this report, as well as the bill I filed, S.2246 An Act to Rebuild the Commonwealth’s Cultural Future, are critical not only to rescuing and rebuilding this hard hit sector but positioning it to be stronger and more resilient moving forward.”

"After over a year in a mandatory shutdown, the cultural industry of Massachusetts was decimated, lost hundreds of millions of dollars, and is still losing money today," said **Rep. Carole Fiola (D-Fall River), Co-chair of the Commission**. "That is why the bold recommendations made by this Commission are important to revive this industry, which is a vital economic engine in Massachusetts. I thank my fellow commissioners, industry stakeholders and the public for guiding these recommendations."

"The Commission's report articulates the need for robust investment in the arts and culture sector and provides a roadmap for recovery from the devastating impact of the pandemic," said **Dennis Cauty**, Executive Director, Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild. "The report highlights the importance of investing in arts education as one component of that recovery-- today's students are tomorrow's audiences. I am proud to have served on this Commission and look forward to our vibrant arts and culture sector returning from intermission!"

"The Commission's recommendations are a holistic look at the cultural sector's needs, post-pandemic," said **Michael J. Bobbitt, Executive Director, Mass Cultural Council**. "It cannot be overlooked that the Commonwealth's economy will not fully recover without robust public investment to rebuild and safely reopen cultural organizations and bolster the economic security of individual artists. These targeted investments will ensure Massachusetts remains competitive as place to live and work. As such, I urge our legislators to treat these recommendations as a roadmap. Doing so will help the cultural sector move past recovery to economic growth."

"As we come out of the pandemic, we are going to need every tool at our disposal to revive the economy, bring people together again, and proactively work for racial equity. The arts and cultural community are central to these efforts." said **Emily Ruddock, Executive Director of MASSCreative**. "In partnership with more than 400 member organizations and thousands of arts and cultural advocates, MASSCreative fully supports the recommendations included in the Commission's report. We look forward to working with the Legislature to ensure a robust and equitable road to recovery for the entire arts and cultural sector."

Recommendations of the commission include:

- **\$375 million for a Recovery and Reopening Grant Program to be distributed by the Mass Cultural Council to be broken down into:**
  1. \$75 million for grant funding to independent, for-profit venues to support recovery and stabilization funding, prevent closures, rebuild and reopen.
  2. \$100 million for grant funds to individual, practicing artists for career recovery and professional development.
  3. \$100 million for grant funds to performing arts organizations and venues to support recovery and stabilization funding, prevent closures, rebuild and reopen.
  4. \$100 million for grant funding for museums, visual arts and cultural heritage to support recovery and stabilization funding to prevent closures, rebuild and reopen.

- **\$40 million for a broad and inclusive statewide marketing campaign funded over 4 years by the Massachusetts Office Travel and Tourism, to be developed in partnership with Mass Cultural Council.**
  
- **\$60 million for infrastructure and equipment upgrades, broken down into:** \$20 million to create targeted grant funding through the Cultural Facilities Fund for infrastructure and equipment upgrades that allow organizations to improve upon and monetize hybrid and digital programming.
  1. \$20 million to create grants for non-profits to assist in infrastructure costs to safely and sustainably reopen distributed by Mass Cultural Council.
  2. \$20 million to create grant opportunities through the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism to assist with facility upgrades.
  
- **\$100 million for Workforce Development, Youth Education, and Community Development broken down into:**
  1. \$25 million for Mass Cultural Council to develop capacity-building Organizational Business Development grants for non-profit arts organizations to fund items such as staffing, consultants, plans, software, and hardware.
  2. \$25 million for community development to 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 .
  3. \$50 million to create subsidized arts programming for youth to promote accessibility to arts and cultural centers.
  
- **Additional recommendations include:**
  - 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.
  - The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 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.
  - Formation of a commission to focus on issues of Diversity, Equity, Access and Inclusion within arts and cultural funding.
  - Increase state investment into the Cultural Facilities Fund and Mass Cultural Council over the course of 5 years.

- \$50 million 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.
- Explore statewide and local municipal mechanisms to increase public support and ensure stability for the arts and cultural sector long term.
- The redrafting of S.2246, An Act to Rebuild the Commonwealth's Cultural Future. The bill currently calls for no less than \$200 million of local, state, and federal COVID-19 recovery funds be used to establish a Massachusetts Cultural Economy COVID-19 Recovery Fund administered by the Mass Cultural Council. The Commission recommends the bill be redrafted to call for a minimum funding level well above the \$200 million minimum stipulated in the current version and stipulate that the funding come from the \$5.3 billion in federal funds received by the state through the American Rescue Plan.

The commission, a special legislative commission established by the 2020 Economic Development Bill, was co-chaired by Sen. Ed Kennedy (D-Lowell) and Rep. Carole Fiola (D-Fall River), the co-chairs of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development.

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.

Commission members included:

**Michael Bobbitt**, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Cultural Council

**Emily Ruddock**, Executive Director of MassCreative

**Dan Yaeger**, member of the Commonwealth Association of Museums

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

The co-chairs, Sen. Kennedy and Rep. Fiola were tasked with appointing an addition seven members to round out the group, representing a diversity of geographic and disciplinary backgrounds.

Appointed Commission Members included:

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

**Sara Bogosian**, Executive Director of the Whistler House Museum of Art/Lowell Artists Association, Representing the Lowell Canalway Cultural District

**Dawn Simmons**, Executive Director of Stage Source

**Magdalena Gomez**, Current Poet Laureate of Springfield, award-winning performance poet, playwright, and teaching artist

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

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

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