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Mass Launches EBT Card to Culture

**Nation’s Most Comprehensive Effort to Expand Cultural Access for Low-Income Families**

(Stockbridge, MA) – The Mass Cultural Council and the Baker-Polito Administration are pleased to introduce the EBT Card to Culture, the most comprehensive effort of its kind in the nation to open doors to arts and cultural experiences for low-income families.

The EBT Card to Culture provides free or discounted admission to more than 100 nonprofit arts, history, and science venues across Massachusetts, from the Boston Children’s Museum and Tower Hill Botanic Garden in Boylston, to the Cotuit Center for the Arts on Cape Cod. State officials and cultural leaders formally launched the new program here today at the Norman Rockwell Museum, which offers free admission to cardholders.

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the Dept. of Transitional Assistance (DTA) are already promoting these cultural opportunities to the one in eight Massachusetts residents who are served by DTA. The approach has seen remarkable success at institutions that have employed it: Boston’s Museum of Science, for example, has seen participation in its EBT card discounts rise steadily from a few hundred to more than 13,000 visitors annually in less than five years. A full list of participating organizations is online.

Adrian Stair used the EBT Card to Culture to attend the Ko Festival of Performance in Amherst.

“I got to two performances which were, as usual, compelling views into the current state of affairs in our culture, and inspiring as well,” he said. “Best of all, I participated in Kali Quinn’s “Compassionate Creativity” 6-day workshop, which turned out to be an extraordinary and transformative event – leading me effortlessly to heights of creativity that I never knew I had in me. It changed my life and literally launched me into my next career. I couldn’t have afforded the workshop if it hadn’t been for the discount provided through my SNAP card.”

Mass Cultural Council will continue to work with the Administration to encourage additional nonprofit cultural organizations to sign up to offer the Card to Culture, and with the organizations to promote its benefits. It is part of the agency’s Universal Participation Initiative, which supports the growth and development of organizations that embrace inclusivity as core to their mission and employ universal design principles to meet the needs of their patrons. Nonprofit cultural organizations can sign onto the program online.

“Learning does not take place in the classroom alone,” said DTA Commissioner Jeff McCue. “The Commonwealth is rich with incredible cultural institutions that provide essential educational opportunities, and I am thrilled so many organizations have stepped up to provide greater access for DTA clients. Their generosity will help families access opportunities once financially out of reach and assist in breaking the cycle of multi-generational poverty.”

“State support for culture is premised on the idea that it enriches the lives of individuals, families, and communities,” added state Senator Adam Hinds of Pittsfield, Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development. “The Card to Culture ensures that those experiences are shared by all of us here in the Berkshires and across the Commonwealth.”

“In our new strategic plan the Mass Cultural Council envisions a Commonwealth where culture is inclusive, accessible, and embraces our diversity,” said Anita Walker, Executive Director. “The EBT Card to Culture is an important step toward achieving that vision in concert with our amazing partners in the cultural community. We look forward to expanding the reach of this program in the months and years to come.”

**About the Mass Cultural Council**

The Mass Cultural Council is a state agency that promotes excellence, inclusion, education, and diversity in the arts, humanities, and sciences to foster a rich cultural life for all Massachusetts residents and contributes to the vitality of our communities and economy. The Council pursues this mission through a wide range of grants, initiatives, and advocacy for artists, communities, organizations, and schools. The Council also runs the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund in partnership with MassDevelopment.

**About the Department of Transitional Assistance**

The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) serves one in eight residents of the Commonwealth through a comprehensive system of benefits including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), as well as financial and employment supports. DTA’s mission is to assist and empower low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, improve their quality of life, and achieve long-term economic self-sufficiency.