



Power of culture

June 3, 2024
Delivered Via Email

The Honorable Michael Rodrigues, Chair
The Honorable Cindy Friedman, Vice Chair
The Honorable Patrick O'Connor, Ranking Minority Member
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz, Chair
The Honorable Ann-Margaret Ferrante, Vice Chair
The Honorable Todd Smola, Ranking Minority Member
House Committee on Ways and Means

**Re: Mass Cultural Council FY25 Budget Conference Committee Testimony
Line Item 0640-0300**

To the Honorable FY25 Budget Conferees:

Mass Cultural Council recognizes the staunch support and investment proposed for the Commonwealth's creative and cultural sector in the coming fiscal year through the Agency's account, 0640-0300, in both the House and Senate budgets, and as such, submits this testimony with deep appreciation.

During this budget building cycle, Mass Cultural Council requested the House and Senate retain Governor Healey's H.2 \$25.5 million funding recommendation and is thrilled that both Chambers surpassed this level of support with their spending plans. Thank you. Your proposed increase to Mass Cultural Council's operating budget will allow us to equitably invest and provide financial support to more Massachusetts artists, creative practitioners and culture bearers, cultural organizations, youth arts programs, and communities in the coming year. This year, FY24, Mass Cultural Council was able to approve approximately 2,600 awards across all grant programs.

The House Budget provides Mass Cultural Council with an operating budget of \$25,895,000, while the Senate Budget proposes a slightly lower operating budget of \$25,546,197. During the Senate budget debate more than half of the Chamber Membership, 21 Senators, or 52.5%, indicated their support for increasing the Agency's appropriation by co-sponsoring Amendment 171. This amendment, filed by Tourism, Arts & Cultural Development Committee Chair Paul Mark, proposed increasing Mass

Cultural Council's line item in the Senate budget to match the higher House figure. While Amendment 171 was not adopted, we hope the support of the House of Representatives and a majority of the Senate for this level of funding for arts and culture will help you in your decision-making. **We urge you to retain the House figure in the FY25 Conference Budget and fund Mass Cultural Council operations at \$25,895,000.**

Additionally, we note that the Final House Budget includes eighteen earmarks supporting local cultural projects and initiatives, totaling \$855,000, while the Final Senate Budget includes two earmarks totaling \$100,000. Mass Cultural Council stands ready to partner with the amendment sponsors to deliver these resources as envisioned if funding is provided. As such, we respectfully request that all earmarks retained in 0640-0300 be funded by adding to the account's bottom line in the FY25 Conference Budget.

Lastly, Mass Cultural Council notes the Final House and Senate Budgets include different deadlines for the Agency's Annual Spending Plan Report filed with the Treasurer, the Secretary of Administration and Finance, and the Joint Committees on Ways & Means and Tourism, Arts & Cultural Development. The House Budget directs the Agency to submit the report by October 1, 2024, while the Senate Budget's deadline is November 1, 2024. As the Agency's Spending Plan is typically approved by our governing Council during the August business meeting, Mass Cultural Council can meet either reporting deadline; we defer to the Committee on this matter.

Mass Cultural Council proudly and gratefully acknowledges that a \$25.9 million state appropriation for arts and culture in FY25 will represent the highest state investment made through the Agency's budget line item since the late 1980s. We deeply appreciate the partnership and support shown by the House of Representatives and Senate for our work to elevate the Power of Culture across the Commonwealth.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, or Senior Director of Public Affairs, [Bethann Steiner](#), if you require additional information.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Bobbitt
Executive Director

cc: Senate President Spilka, House Speaker Mariano, TACD Chairs Mark & Domb