



Power of culture

December 6, 2021

His Excellency Charles Baker
Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House, Room 360
Boston, MA 02133

Delivered Via Email: Charlie.Baker@mass.gov

Re: H. 4269 An Act relative to immediate COVID-19 recovery needs

Dear Governor Baker:

I write on behalf of the governing Council and staff of Mass Cultural Council to urge you to approve the recovery funding directed towards the cultural sector in line item 1599-2043 of H. 4269, *An Act relative to immediate COVID-19 recovery needs*.

This \$135M reserve account, for cultural and tourism assets, will allow Mass Cultural Council to equitably award \$60.1M to artists and cultural organizations across Massachusetts, spurring recovery and supporting operational efficiency through new grant programs.

Mass Cultural Council is ever-grateful that our partners on Beacon Hill recognize that the Commonwealth's economy cannot fully recover from the pandemic if the cultural sector – artists, creative workers, and cultural organizations (nonprofit, for-profit, and municipal) – is not nurtured and aided to thrive once again. In 2019, prior to the pandemic, [Massachusetts' cultural sector](#) contributed \$25.5 billion to the Commonwealth's economy, representing 4.3% of the state GDP, 142,578 jobs, and total compensation of \$13.6 billion. At that time the financial impact and contributions of our sector in Massachusetts were greater than construction, education services, and agriculture.

Closures and cancellations necessitated by COVID-19 financially devastated cultural organizations and artists. In March 2021 Mass Cultural Council released [impact data](#) collected from the sector reporting more than \$600 million in lost revenue and personal income, and more than 30,000 sector jobs impacted statewide. Additionally, in June 2021 the [Massachusetts COVID-19 Cultural Impact Commission](#) called for a total of \$575 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) monies to be invested into the sector to mitigate pandemic impacts.

H. 4269 is a much-anticipated spending plan to guide Massachusetts back to pre-pandemic economic strength. Mass Cultural Council is prepared to act, and is ready to invest these monies into the cultural sector.

The Agency does, however, note with caution that more than half (55.4%) of this line item is earmarked for local projects, and of the \$74,831,000 in total earmarks contained in 1599-2043, only \$13,596,000 are germane to the cultural sector and Mass Cultural Council's mission. I hope, once the bill becomes law, to have a conversation with the Executive Office of Administration and Finance to determine the most efficient course forward for paying out these specific spending mandates.

Thank you, Governor for your time and consideration. Mass Cultural Council looks forward to working with your Administration to equitably and efficiently distribute this urgently needed relief assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact me, or Public Affairs Director [Bethann Steiner](#), if you require additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Bobbitt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael J. Bobbitt
Executive Director