



*Power of culture*

December 10, 2024

Her Excellency Maura Healey  
Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
State House, Room 360  
Boston, MA 02133  
*Delivered via email.*

**Re: Mass Cultural Council FY26 H1 Budget Request – Line Item 0640-0300**

Dear Governor Healey:

As I reflect upon this year, I am immensely grateful for the partnership and support your Administration has consistently demonstrated for the Commonwealth's creative and cultural sector and the work Mass Cultural Council performs to bolster it. I am confident that calendar year 2025 and Fiscal Year 2026 will be positive and impactful years for our ongoing collaborations, and I am especially keen to deliver and execute the recommendations from your Creative Sector Advisory Council in April. The creative and cultural sector is poised to support the economic growth and competitiveness of the Commonwealth. This will happen through strategic policy and public investment into the sector. We are ready as your partners to work with you in generating these ideas.

I am writing to outline Mass Cultural Council's funding request for Fiscal Year 2026. I hope the following information will be helpful to you as you finalize your H1 budget recommendation.

**Mass Cultural Council seeks a \$28 million appropriation in FY26.** This figure, equal to what we requested in FY25, is \$1,150,000 higher than our current \$26.85M appropriation. If enacted, the Agency would invest additional resources into grants supporting creative individuals, youth arts, and operating support efforts for cultural organizations and would bolster creative communities through the Local Cultural Council, Tribal Cultural Council, and Cultural District Initiatives. Further, Mass Cultural Council will continue to make progress in our [equity goals](#), as we strive to engage with underrepresented communities and support and develop initiatives addressing systemic inequities across the sector.

A \$28 million appropriation represents a strong public investment in arts and culture, the humanities, and the interpretive sciences – what we define as the creative and cultural

sector, a celebrated and valued economic player across the Commonwealth. It would be the largest state budget appropriation in the history of the Agency (FY88 holds this distinction at \$27.4 million) and would propel many of the goals outlined in both the Commonwealth's Economic Development Plan and Mass Cultural Council's [Strategic Plan](#) forward.

Your 2023 Economic Development Plan for the Commonwealth calls upon Massachusetts to capitalize on the opportunity to be a national leader in tourism, arts, and culture. Mass Cultural Council, the Commonwealth's state arts agency, is poised and ready to partner with the Executive Branch on this goal. Our charge is to bolster the Massachusetts creative and cultural sector. Our efforts advance economic vitality, support transformational change, and celebrate, preserve, and inspire creativity across all Massachusetts communities. We pursue our mission through a broad range of programs, services, advocacy, and the equitable investment of public resources.

Our [FY25 Spending Plan](#) anticipates awarding approximately 2,500 grant awards across the creative and cultural sector. These will be funded through various public sources: the FY25 state budget, casino tax revenues, state capital funds that support the Cultural Facilities Fund, and federal monies from the National Endowment for the Arts. Yet, even with these combined resources, our data shows the sector is so much larger, and the collective need for financial support is so much greater than our funding sources alone will ever be able to satisfy.

### **New Data: Massachusetts Cultural Asset Inventory**

In the coming months Mass Cultural Council will release the data collected to develop a Massachusetts Cultural Asset Inventory. The Inventory describes and will strengthen our understanding as we direct policy and support efforts for the individuals and organizations that populate the state's creative and cultural sector. This large undertaking was done with the Diversity North Group and supported by several partners, funders, and data contributors statewide.

What we've found is that there are **13,648 cultural organizations and 112,190 creative individuals** (3% of the Commonwealth's workforce) working primarily as sector generators in Massachusetts.

From FY22-FY24 Mass Cultural Council and our statewide network of Local Cultural Councils proudly awarded grants to 5,500 organizations (40%) and 6,247 individuals (6%). While these figures are higher due to \$60M in one-time pandemic-related funding invested in FY23, we understand that even with a record-setting \$28M appropriation Mass Cultural Council will still not be able to fund all eligible grant applications received next year.

We know the creative and cultural sector's financial needs will not be solved with grant-making alone. This is why Mass Cultural Council's Strategic Plan calls for a dual strategy: equitable public investments paired with a robust advancement initiative that ensures

other state agencies, policy decision-makers, economic sectors, and partners are consistently including the sector in their work.

We also know creativity is central to all problem solving. The arts are healing, and culture is a dynamic force for enriching communities, growing the state's economy, increasing accessibility, and fostering individual creativity. Culture is intrinsically valuable and unique in its ability to lift the human spirit. Here in Massachusetts, [culture embraces everyone, drives growth and opportunity, and empowers a new, creative generation](#).

This is evident in economic data: in April, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis [reported](#) that in 2022 arts and culture production in Massachusetts accounted for a \$28.6 billion economic impact -- 4.1% of the state's economy, while just last week Massachusetts was ranked the [third most arts-vibrant state in the nation](#), for the second year running, by SMU DataArts, the National Center for Arts Research.

**Mass Cultural Council is proud to lead this vibrant sector in Massachusetts and urges you to consider the impacts a \$28M appropriation will have across the Commonwealth as you finalize the FY26 H1 budget.**

Madame Governor, thank you again for the collaborative and positive relationship your Administration has developed with Mass Cultural Council. We are proud members of Team Massachusetts and are committed to enthusiastically continuing our participation on the STEM Advisory Council and the Creative Sector Advisory Council, as well as our ongoing cross-sector efforts to scale our first-in-the-nation statewide arts prescription initiative and redesign the Cultural District Initiative, as informed by guidance received from an inter-agency task force. We know these activities are helping to advance and secure your vision of an equitable, affordable, and competitive Commonwealth. I appreciate your support of our work and the Commonwealth's creative and cultural sector. Thank you for reviewing the Agency's \$28 million funding request for the coming fiscal year.

Please do not hesitate to reach me, or Senior Director of Public Affairs [Bethann Steiner](#), if you have any questions or would like more information. Additionally, we are available to meet with you and your team at any time to further discuss this, and other matters of mutual concern and priority.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Bobbitt  
Executive Director