



*Power of culture*

May 9, 2022

The Honorable Joan Lovely, Chair  
Senate Committee on Rules

**Re: H. 3378 An Act to expand membership opportunities in local cultural councils**

Dear Chair Lovely,

On behalf of the governing Council and staff of Mass Cultural Council, I am pleased to register the Agency's staunch support for H. 3378, *An Act to expand membership opportunities in local cultural councils*.

This legislation was engrossed by the House of Representatives, as amended, on May 5, and is now pending review by your Committee.

We are grateful to Rep. Ken Gordon and Senator Adam Hinds for sponsoring H. 3378 and its identical Senate companion, S. 2243, as well as for the support of the twenty-nine co-sponsors, a bipartisan group that includes a dozen Senators, notably Rules Committee Members Senators Hinds and Tarr. I ask that you help bolster Mass Cultural Council's work in rural communities, as well as the overall Local Cultural Council network, and release H. 3378 so it can be scheduled for consideration by the full Senate.

**Background:**

The Mass Cultural Council [Communities Initiative](#) proudly manages the Commonwealth's [Local Cultural Council \(LCC\) Program](#), the largest grassroots cultural funding network in the nation. There are 329 LCCs serving our Massachusetts communities.

Led by municipally appointed volunteers, each year the Commonwealth's LCCs award more than \$4 million in grants to promote and enrich cultural life in all 351 Massachusetts communities. LCC grants support more than 6,000 cultural programs statewide, providing residents in every city and town access to arts and culture.

**The Problem:**

State law ([MGL Ch. 10, Sec. 58](#)) prohibits "elected public officials" from serving on their LCC. Mass Cultural Council believes this restriction is appropriate for chief municipal decisionmakers: the appointers and the appropriators -- such as elected mayors, city

councilors and select board members. However, this law also prevents those who are elected to serve in other local and regional capacities -- like town meeting members, school committee members, local assessors, and library trustees -- from serving on their LCC. In smaller, rural communities this severely limits the number of residents willing and able to serve as an appointed LCC member. LCCs cannot convene to conduct their important business if they cannot achieve quorum, thereby threatening access to arts and cultural funding in some of our smaller communities.

**The Fix:**

H. 3378 offers a simple technical correction to address this situation. This legislation amends the statute and authorizes local and regional elected officials to also serve on LCCs, excluding the mayor of a city, the city manager in a city having a Plan D or E form of government, the board of selectmen of a town, or the executive officer in a town having a town council form of government.

Mass Cultural Council understands the challenges small and rural communities face to identify residents who are willing and eligible to serve in appointed municipal positions. We recently had to assist communities in Worcester and Plymouth Counties with no appointed LCC members – these towns were in real danger of losing their grant allocations, because without appointed members the panels cannot convene, reach a quorum, and run their grant cycles.

The Agency does not wish to see any community lose its access to grant funds because their local officials had difficulty identifying and appointing residents to serve on the LCC.

This bill offers a technical correction that is good for rural communities. H. 3378 promotes good governance and civic engagement and strengthens participation in our cultural sector. Mass Cultural Council believes residents with a commitment to advancing the Power of Culture who are willing to serve their community should be afforded the opportunity to do so on their LCC.

I urge the Committee to release H. 3378 to the full Senate and thank you in advance for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs Director [Bethann Steiner](#) if you require additional information.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Bobbitt  
Executive Director

cc: Senate President Karen Spilka, Sen. Adam Hinds, Rep. Ken Gordon