



*Power of culture*

October 26, 2021

The Honorable Edward J. Kennedy, Senate Chair  
The Honorable Carole A. Fiola, House Chair  
Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts & Cultural Development

*Delivered Via Email to:*

[Derek.Dunlea@mahouse.gov](mailto:Derek.Dunlea@mahouse.gov) and [James.Ostis@masenate.gov](mailto:James.Ostis@masenate.gov)

**Re: S. 2243/H. 3378 An Act to expand membership opportunities in local cultural councils**

Dear Chair Kennedy and Chair Fiola,

On behalf of the governing Council and staff of Mass Cultural Council, I am pleased to register the Agency's strong support for S. 2243 and H. 3378, *An Act to expand membership opportunities in local cultural councils*.

We are grateful to Senator Adam Hinds and Representative Ken Gordon for working with us to sponsor this legislation, as well as for the support of the twenty-nine co-sponsors, many of whom serve on this Committee. 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 these bills with a favorable recommendation.

**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:**

S. 2243 and H. 3378 offer 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 community's chief appointing authority and members of the local appropriating authority, as defined in [MGL Ch. 59, Sec. 21C](#).

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 are currently trying to assist a community in Worcester County with no appointed LCC members -- this town is in real danger of losing its grant allocation from FY21 and FY22 if they cannot appoint LCC members and reach a quorum to 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.

These bills offer a technical correction that is good for rural communities. S. 2243 and H. 3378 promote good governance and civic engagement, and strengthen 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 report these bills favorably, 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: Senator Adam Hinds  
cc: Rep. Ken Gordon