

# SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT CULTURAL COALITION

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nancy Bulkeley  
Dominion Energy  
*Chair*

Keith Turner  
Homestead Funding  
*Vice Chair*

Wes Pulver  
Nat'l Coast Guard Museum Assoc.  
*Treasurer*

Dan McMahon  
Goodspeed Musicals  
*Secretary*

Caleb Bailey  
Eastern CT Symphony Orchestra

Carrie Dyer  
Reliance Health, Inc.

Jose Garaycochea-Ulloa  
Expresiones Cultural Center

Eric Garofano  
Conway, Londregan, Sheehan,  
& Monaco, P.C.

Kolton Harris  
Writer's Block Ink

Andrea Marcille  
U.S. Coast Guard Academy  
Alumni Assoc.

Nishant Sahoo  
Devoe/Sahoo Group-Merrill Lynch

Chandler Smith  
Eugene O'Neill Theater Center

## ADVISORY COUNCIL

Lisa McGinley  
The Day (retired)

Julie Menders  
Otis Library

Robert Mills  
Norwich Community Dev. Corp.

Robert T. Ross  
CT Office of Military Affairs

Robert Richter  
Connecticut College

Steve Sigel  
Garde Arts Center

Steve White  
Mystic Seaport Museum

Christopher Zendan

## STAFF

Wendy Bury  
Executive Director

Deb Mathiasen  
Assistant Director

May 8, 2020

To: Senator Richard Blumenthal  
Senator Chris Murphy  
Congressman Joe Courtney  
Southeastern CT Legislative Delegation  
Southeastern CT Council of Governments Members

The Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition serves a diverse community of 500+ individuals, businesses, groups and organizations. They range from sole proprietors, artists and small volunteer-run organizations, to internationally recognized museums, major tourist attractions, performing arts centers and musicians.

We know you are dealing with an overwhelming crisis during this unprecedented time and pandemic. We also know that you understand the tangible and intangible value and benefits of arts and culture to our communities, economy and quality of life. We ask for your support of a few key initiatives, as well as, offering you our support in helping our region reopen and recover.

**The arts and culture industry, one of the hardest hit industries by COVID-19, is critical to helping accelerate economic and social recovery, especially in partnership with adjacent industries, including restaurants and lodging.**

According to a recent Hartford Courant article<sup>1</sup>, **arts & culture is the second "worst performing industry in the Nation during the coronavirus"** behind transportation with -88% change in weekly revenue year-over-year, worse than restaurants and hotels.

Nationally, financial losses for our industry are estimated to be \$5 billion, to date and 62% of artists/creatives have become fully unemployed.<sup>2</sup>

Based on our Arts & Economic Prosperity study, New London County's nonprofit arts & cultural organizations alone generate \$168M annually, which includes \$87M in organizational spending and \$81M in audience spending.

Our **April Economic Impact Survey for Southeastern CT's Arts & Cultural Organizations, Businesses and Artists between March 13 and April 30** shows the following impact to our region:

- **\$10 Million** in estimated lost revenue
- **259,000 lost audience members, program attendees and/or customers**
- **700 local employees** impacted by layoffs, furloughs or reduced hours
- **80% of respondents have applied for one or more relief program**
- Our May economic impact survey will update data, ask how many have received relief

<sup>1</sup> Hartford Courant, [Industries Performing Best and Worst During the Coronavirus](#), April 14, 2020

<sup>2</sup> Americans for the Arts

# SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT CULTURAL COALITION

---

Every month that goes by during COVID-19, we creep towards that total amount of \$169M annually in lost revenue and closer to forever shuttering some of our region's arts and cultural businesses. The attached Overview is a current status summary of our sector.

We wanted to provide you with current information that may be helpful, and ask for your support and championing of a few key initiatives, as well as, offer you our support in helping our region to reopen and recover.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP SOUTHEASTERN CT'S ARTS & CULTURAL SECTOR:

- **Help to provide immediate relief for businesses and organizations that have not received ANY assistance/relief** – Help ensure relief for those that applied for and did not receive PPP, EIDL or assistance due to funds running out, no banking relationship, and/or too late in queue
- **Recognize that some businesses will NOT be able to reopen with social distancing requirements and remain financially viable** so additional support will be needed longer-term
- **Support extension and/or third round of PPP Program or alternative resource** for businesses unable to reopen before the June 30 deadline to rehire
- **Ensure adequate supply, supply chain information, and access to PPE** so that when reopening is possible under state guidelines, organizations are able to do so
- **Include arts & culture in economic recovery planning & plans** – Not only have the arts helped people to cope with the pandemic through music, film, books, and creativity, we need arts & culture for individual, community and regional recovery
- **Recognize that re-opening arts and cultural venues (safely) will help fill the restaurants and hotels to help ACCELERATE recovery** in our downtowns and communities
- **Include or support shovel-ready cultural capital improvement projects** as part of Federal Infrastructure funding
- **Treat self-funded nonprofits fairly<sup>3</sup> by increasing the federal unemployment insurance reimbursement for self-funded nonprofits to 100% of costs** to rectify section 2103 of the CARES Act (Emergency Unemployment Relief for Self-Insured Nonprofits)

Our leadership is ready to meet with you individually or collectively to further detail needs and funding options. I look forward to discussing how we can best support each other.

Thank you and stay healthy!

Sincerely,



Wendy Bury  
Executive Director

---

<sup>3</sup> [“DOL Issues Breathtakingly Cruel Guidance Inflicting Billions in Immediate Costs onto Charitable Organizations Struggling to Serve their Communities”](#) National Council of Nonprofits, April 28, 2020

# SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT CULTURAL COALITION

## SOUTHEASTERN CT'S ARTS & CULTURAL SECTOR COVID-19 OVERVIEW

### CURRENT STATUS (MAY 8, 2020):

- **Remain closed as non-essential** with no revenue coming in from admissions, fundraisers, ticket sales, events
- **Making decisions** on a day-to-day basis regarding reopening by following state guidance, assessing indoor/outdoor space, assessing ability to adhere to social distancing guidelines, and weighing the financial and experiential impact of decreased capacity and audiences
- **Mapping out** ability to reopen based on parameters, capacity, indoor/outdoor spaces, facility, programs. [Note: The CT Office of the Arts, Designated Regional Service Organizations (including the Cultural Coalition) and CT Arts Alliance just released "CT's Arts & Culture Industry Guidelines for Operating in COVID-19"]
- **Maintaining facilities** even when not in use (often large community facilities with high utility costs)
- **Unable to re-schedule postponed events without clear opening date** creating a long lag time between reopening date and actual events taking place
- **Cancelled/postponed critical fundraiser events due to pandemic and now in** in a challenging fundraising environment
- **Artists, gig workers, self-employed and 1099 contractors** have limited relief options and are seeking support for their lost work and income with PUA being a much-delayed resource
- **Communicating with audiences & ticket holders to provide various options** (keep tickets until new date announced, refund with a request to consider donating instead, "we'll be back" and "invest in our future" messaging)
- **Pivoting online to maintain connectivity with their audiences**, but not possible to monetize it in a meaningful way
- **Tapping into reserves and endowments** where and when available, asking funders to un-restrict program and project grants to be used for general operating support
- **Creating financial projections utilizing 3, 6, and 12-month scenarios** and various mitigation options

### ECONOMIC RECOVERY IMPACTS & INSIGHTS ABOUT SOUTHEASTERN CT'S ARTS & CULTURAL SECTOR:

- **Public health crisis impacting peak season** for arts, culture & tourism
- National data shows that **cultural audiences want a vaccine for them to feel safe to return**<sup>4</sup> (#1 factor)
- **Arts & cultural audiences tend to be older** (more vulnerable, less likely to return)
- **It is not financially feasible for some businesses to reopen** given capacity reduction, costs to implement new social distancing guidelines
- **Some arts venues cannot reopen and be sustainable with social distancing requirements** (fixed seating, large capacity venues, size and scale)
- **Reopening too soon could cause a second wave of both the virus and financial damage**, especially once PPP funds run out
- **Tourism Fund, is derived from hotel lodging tax, which is currently being decimated**, and is CT's public funding of arts & culture & tourism in the state budget
- **Some small businesses and self-employed have not been able to access any relief** (PPP, EIDL, etc.) likely due to the confusion and delay around availability, eligibility and capacity
- Museums arts & cultural organizations with outdoor spaces will likely be first to re-open, and indoor, large performing arts venues the last

---

<sup>4</sup> Colleen Dilenschneider, [Meeting Visitor Needs: What Will Make People Feel Safe by Age & Income \(DATA\)](#), May 4, 2020