

Arts & Culture

Leaders of St. Louis

October 14, 2021

To the Mayor of St. Louis, the St. Louis County Executive, the Comptroller of the City of St. Louis, the St. Louis Board of Aldermen, and the St. Louis County Council

We, the below signed, represent a consortium of arts and culture organizations and institutions throughout St. Louis City and St. Louis County. We have come together to request support of and investment in the arts and culture sector of the region.

Arts, culture, and creativity are big business in the St. Louis region. Pre-pandemic research estimates total economic impact from this sector to be nearly 600 million dollars—larger than all regional sports activities combined. The sector includes non-profit cultural organizations that support over 19,000 FTE jobs; numerous commercial entertainment venues that launch careers and provide well-paying union jobs; and more than 15,000 individual artists working in a wide variety of disciplines. Across artistic disciplines, from performing to visual arts, we nurture and hire local talent in large numbers (musicians, actors, artists, teaching artists). Money earned or raised by these businesses and institutions flow directly to the individual artists and creatives in the region, providing unparalleled support and sustainability for our creative landscape. In addition to leveraging event-related audience spending, driving tourism, attracting and retaining knowledge workers, arts and culture are a fundamental component of healthy communities. Cultural workers are valued partners in addressing pressing challenges in community development, neighborhood revitalization, public and mental health, public safety, place making, and infrastructure.

All of the undersigned provide a wide array of arts education for our region's children. We now empirically understand that arts education has remarkable impacts on students' academic, social, and emotional outcomes. Arts education stimulates compassion and empathy, allows for a broadening in

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independent thinking, and often increases aptitude for learning in other disciplines—from writing to science, as the move towards STEAM learning (integrating the arts into STEM instruction) attests. With such a diverse group of organizations offering K-12 programs in so many of our regional schools, arts programs (long ago curtailed or completely dismantled) are equitably and consistently offered regardless of any school's or student body's socio-economic standing.

We request a direct line-item allocation of 5% of the federal relief funds committed to the City along with 5% of federal relief funds committed to the County be distributed to arts and culture organizations throughout the region. During the Covid pandemic, arts and culture funding was devastated. Per the US Census Bureau's Small Business Pulse Survey, "Arts, entertainment, and Recreation" business were second only to "Accommodations and Food services" in "large negative effect" and "severe impact", and by several measures, are not getting the same level of relief as other sectors of the economy. This allocation would bring the region's organizations to pre-pandemic levels of support and therefore allow for the full scope of offerings and services to the citizens of our community. We believe that the Regional Arts Commission (RAC) is best positioned to coordinate the allocation and distribution of funds in both City and County. As your designated regional arts governmental agency, RAC has the governance model, organizational infrastructure, and long-standing community relationships to ensure these funds are invested equitably in our short-term recovery needs and our long-term resilience. Further, a local investment from the City and County will enhance RAC's ability to bring new funds to our arts and culture sector from national sources of philanthropy.

When we talk about pandemic recovery, it is essential that the arts are included. The arts support jobs, draw visitors, and shape the identity of our cities and our citizens. We urge you to consider not only this request bringing cultural organizations to their pre-pandemic levels, but also ask for commitment to continue to invest in the sector throughout the region.

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The arts strengthen our community bonds in ways no other aspect of our civic life can achieve. Without our arts and culture organizations, our cohesion as a society is diminished, our shared humanity is weakened. We urge you to take action now and ensure the St. Louis region does not lose its cultural preeminence and remains at the center of the nation's creative life.

Sincerely,

Fannie Belle' Lebbby
Artistic Director
A Call to Conscience Interactive
Theater for Social Change

Cynthia L. Cosby
Executive Director
African Heritage Association

Anna Karpinski
President
AIGA St. Louis

Robin Hirsch-Steinhoff
Artistic Director
Art St. Louis

D Lohr Barkley
President
Artica

Sheila Suderwalla
Executive Director
Artists First

Paul Reuter
Executive Director
Arts and Faith

Delores Hardwick
Executive Director
Artscope

Melissa Payton
Executive Director
Bach Society of Saint Louis

Susan Barrett
President
Barrett Barrera Projects

Elyse Dianne Mack
Executive Director
Bread and Roses Missouri

John H. Remelius III
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Carondelet Historical Society

Marie Oberkisch
Director
Central Print

Marc Gordon
Executive & Artistic Director
Chamber Music Society of St. Louis

Dana Hotle
Executive Director
Chamber Project St. Louis

Judy Bentley
President and CEO
CHIPS Health and Wellness Center

Cliff Froehlich
Executive Director
Cinema St. Louis

Karen Shoulders
Managing Director
Circus Flora

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Jessica Hentoff
Artistic/Executive Director
Circus Harmony

Anne Stirnemann
Executive Director
City Sewing Room of St. Louis

Kelly Pollock
Executive Director
COCA - Center of Creative Arts

Nicole Springer
Director
Community Music School of
Webster University

Lisa Melandri
Executive Director
Contemporary Art Museum St.
Louis

Kyle J. Montgomery
Co-Founder and Board
President
Continuity

Mark Witzling
Executive Director
Craft Alliance

Meridith McKinley
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Critical Mass for the Visual Arts

Richard Dee
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Dance St. Louis

Nartana Premachandra
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Kaetlin Lamberson
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DaySpring Arts and Education

Dexter Silvers
Owner/Artist
Dexter's Art Studio

David Stein
Artistic Director
Focal Point

Andrew Gibson
Executive Director
Freedom Arts & Education Center

Michael Franzoni
Executive Director
Gateway Men's Chorus

Sr. Glynis Mary McManamon,
RGS
Executive Director
Good Shepherd Arts Center

Rich Simmons
Executive Director
Grand Center Inc.

Harvey Lockhart
Founder, Executive and Artistic
Director
HEAL Center for the Arts

Haniny Hillberg
President
Hispanic Festival, Inc.

Kimberly Melahn-Kavanagh
Managing Director
Ignite Theatre Company

Patricia Wentz
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International Photography Hall
of Fame

Sarah Bernhardt
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Intersect Arts Center

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Gene Dobbs Bradford
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Jazz St. Louis

Dawn Karlovsky
Founder & Executive Director
Karlovsky & Company Dance

Kelly Wells
Executive Director
KDHX Community Radio

Sabine Eckmann
Director & Chief Curator
Kemper Art Museum

Chris Hansen
Executive Director
Kranzberg Arts Foundation

Andrew Weil
Executive Director
Landmarks Association of
St. Louis

Elisa Bender
President
Latinx Arts Network

Lauren Ross
Executive Director
Laumeier Sculpture Park

Joe Gfaller
Managing Director
Metro Theater Company

Sayer Johnson
Executive Director
Metro Trans Umbrella Group

Liz Deichmann
Co-Founder
Midwest Artist Project Services

Phyllis Pasley
Executive Director
Missouri Alliance for Arts
Education

Kyna Iman
Lobbyist
Missouri Citizens for the Arts

Sharon Hunter
Artistic Director-Producer
Moonstone Theatre Company

David Brinker
Director
Museum of Contemporary
Religious Art, Saint Louis
University

Erin Simon
Director
National Blues Museum

Eddie Coffield
Artistic Director-Producer
New Jewish Theatre

Dave Day
President
New Music Circle

Amy Shaw
President and CEO
Nine PBS

Larry Clark
Artistic Director
North St. Louis Arts Council

Andrew Jorgensen
General Director
Opera Theatre of Saint Louis

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Mark Sarich
Executive Director
Orchestrating Diversity/Lemp
Arts Center

Katie Carpenter
Executive Director
Perennial

Matt Brinkmann
Executive Director
Pianos for People

Trish Brown
Artistic Director
Prism Theatre Company

Rachel Tibbetts
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Prison Performing Arts

Cara Starke
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Pulitzer Arts Foundation

Molly Harris
Managing Editor
River Styx Literary Magazine

William Roth
Founder, Producing and
Artistic Director
Saint Louis Actors'
Studio/Gaslight Theater

Sarah Umlauf
Executive Director
Saint Louis Art Fair presented by
Centene Charitable Foundation

Monique Levy
CEO
Saint Louis Fashion Fund

Erin Quick
Executive Director
Saint Louis Poetry Center

Susan Colangelo
Founding President and
Executive Director
Saint Louis Story Stitchers
Artists Collective

Shelley Layton
President
Saint Louis Wind Symphony

Balachandran Anantharama
President
Sangeetha, St. Louis, MO

Diane McCullough
Founding/Artistic Director
Scottish Partnership for Arts and
Education (SPAЕ)

Tom Ridgely
Producing Artistic Director
Shakespeare Festival St. Louis

Peter Palermo
Executive Director
Sheldon Arts Foundation

Matthew R Kerns, MFA
Producing Executive Director
St Lou Fringe

Kathryn Nahorski
Executive Director
St. Louis Artists' Guild

Sandy Brooks
Executive Director
St. Louis Arts Chamber of
Commerce

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Jacqueline K. Dace
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St. Louis ArtWorks

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President
St. Louis Black Authors of
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Scott Kennebeck
Executive Director
St. Louis Cathedral Concerts

Katie Sandquist
Executive Director
St. Louis Chamber Chorus

Travis Lewis
Executive Director
St. Louis Classical Guitar

Marie-Hélène Bernard
President and CEO
St. Louis Symphony Orchestra

Sue Greenberg
Executive Director
St. Louis Volunteer Lawyers and
Accountants for the Arts

Jack Lane
Executive Producer
STAGES St. Louis

Syrhea Conaway
Co-Founder, Executive Director
START St. Louis

Robert Ogden
Executive Director
Stray Dog Theatre

Carrie Houk
Executive Artistic Director
Tennessee Williams St Louis

Joan Lipkin
Producing Artistic Director
That Uppity Theatre Company

Erin Prange
Executive Director
The Big Muddy Dance
Company

Ron Himes
Founder and Producing Director
The Black Rep

Tim Schall
Executive Director
The Cabaret Project of St. Louis

Kathryn Feldt
Executive Director
The Frank Lloyd Wright House
in Ebsworth Park

Lois D. Conley
Founder & Executive
Director/CEO
The Griot Museum of Black
History

Cheryl A. H. Watts
Treasurer/Business Manager
The Legend Singers Choral
Ensemble

James McAnally
Executive Director
The Luminary

Joe Hanrahan
Artistic Director
The Midnight Company

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Kwofe Coleman
Managing Director
The Muny

Hana S. Sharif
Artistic Director
The Repertory Theatre of St.
Louis

Barbara Berner
Artistic Director and CEO
The St. Louis Children's Choirs

Douglas Auer
Co-Founder and CEO
Third Degree
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District

Emily Stolarski
Administrative Director
Union Avenue Opera

Leon Burke III
Artistic Director
University City Symphony
Orchestra

Philip Boehm
Artistic Director
Upstream Theater

MK Stallings
President
UrbArts

Gina Galati
General Director
Winter Opera

Lisa Morovitz-Geger
President
Columbia Performing Arts
Center

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