

# 2022 Create the Vote Candidate Survey

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts on Arts and Culture in advance of the 2022 election. We'll post your responses on our website so that voters can make informed decisions about who will best represent the Arts and Culture community at the legislature.

We ask that you complete the survey by Friday, September 23rd. **We know your time is limited so we understand that your responses will be brief.**

Don't miss out on this important opportunity to be an Arts champion!

Email \*

aimee4ridgefield@gmail.com

Please share your name

Aimee Berger-Girvalo

What office and district are you a candidate for?

State Rep 111th

Every town in Connecticut can boast cultural assets that contribute to a vibrant community and improve the quality of life for its residents.

*What are some exciting arts and cultural events and organizations that you have experienced in your community?*

Ridgefield Play House, CHIRP, Theater Barn, ACT, Aldrich Museum

*If elected, will you work to strengthen the arts and culture community in the town(s) you serve? If so, how? If not, why?*

I will continue to support the arts as I have done in my first two years in my seat by continuing to assist orgs in finding funding, supporting all budgetary and legislative endeavors that support and grow the arts and sharing the value of these orgs with my district and beyond.

Sandwiched between Boston and New York, Connecticut is often dismissed as a “pass through” state when it comes to tourism. Yet, our state has many world class arts institutions and a rich cultural landscape.

*Why do you think arts and culture are important in Connecticut? What is unique about our state’s arts and culture?*

Arts and Culture are important EVERYWHERE. Our proximity to both NY and Boston offer us the opportunity to be extensions of those cultural hubs, but you only have to spend a short time anywhere else in the state to stumble upon local arts and culture that hold great value and can and should be a draw.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many people discovered that arts and creativity play a critical role in helping us cope with emotional stress and sustain our mental health. Art helped us process loss, fight loneliness, stay connected and feel hopeful.

*Can you share a way that the arts have helped you, your family or your community get through the difficult times of Covid? How will that experience influence choices about the arts you would make as a legislator?*

My family and I spent our months at home streaming offerings from the local venues mentioned above and from anywhere else we could find. We have gone back to in-person events, largely. But there are still many folks who are not comfortable attending in person. I would support any endeavor that made these events accessible to those who are still homebound or medically unable to attend.

The arts and creativity have a proven track record of economic benefit to our state. The National Endowment for the Arts' Office of Research & Analysis and the Bureau of Economic Analysis report that, in 2020, arts and cultural production in Connecticut added \$8.9 billion to our economy and accounted for 3.2 percent of our gross state product, while the arts and cultural industries employed 49,159 workers with wages and benefits totaling more than \$5.1 billion. ([https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa\\_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/](https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/))

*Despite these contributions, the arts have historically been first on the chopping block when it comes to budget priorities. What would you do to help keep arts and creativity funded in our state at a level that recognizes their economic importance?*

Just as I fought this kind of cut at the local level when my school district tried to make these changes I will fight it at the state level.

Connecticut has not had an Arts Education Specialist at the State Department of Education (SDE) since 2016, when the last specialist left. This position is critical to assuring that our State and National Arts Education Standards are consistently implemented in all of Connecticut's school districts, especially those in under-resourced communities where students' access to the Arts is often extremely limited compared to affluent communities.

*If elected, would you support refilling the Arts Education Specialist at SDE? If not, why?*

I certainly would, given that I'm seeing firsthand how the arts are always the first to be cut when public schools are making these decisions.

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