

Create the Vote – An Initiative of the Connecticut Arts Alliance

2022 Legislative Candidate Arts Survey

Due: Friday, September 23rd, 2022

Your Name: Ceci Maher

What office and district are you a candidate for? State Senate, District 26 (Wilton, Westport, Weston, Ridgefield, Redding, Stamford, New Canaan, and Darien)

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

As a child, I was a member of Stage Door for Youth in Stamford and remember the summers spent in rehearsals, and working with both professional and semi-professional actors — all with great happiness. And, for years I have enjoyed attending music and productions at the Ridgefield Playhouse, the Westport Country Playhouse, as well as A Contemporary Theater (ACT) of Connecticut in Ridgefield.

I am also involved in, and am a board member of the Wilton Historical Society. For cultural events, I was happy to attend the Pride events in Westport, Ridgefield, Pride in the Park in Norwalk, and the first annual Pride Day in Darien this year.

If elected, will you work to strengthen the arts and culture community in the town(s) you serve? If so, how?

I am excited by the Ridgefield Arts District and believe it should be a model around the state. If elected, I promise to meet with the arts and cultural community. I will make sure that their voices, needs, and feedback are heard. In addition, I will also connect them with other legislators who are in key positions – for example, those of the committee of cognizance within the legislature for the topic at hand – so that those lawmakers in positions of authority are aware of the situation on the ground, have a full picture, and understand what the needs are.

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

I believe that arts and culture are an asset in Connecticut that distinguishes it from other states. The proximity of historical, artistic, and cultural sites between Stamford, New Haven, Hartford is significant and is equal to any state in the Northeast.

One thing unique about Connecticut is that we are one of the few states in the nation which does not have county-level government. When it comes to the arts and cultural institutions, this has both positives and negatives. The positives are that a more localized approach allows for a closer relationship within the community. However, with differing

resources available for the 169 towns across Connecticut, it can also exacerbate existing inequities. The towns with more resources have more funding for arts and cultural organizations than those towns or cities with less resources.

3. *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?*

During Covid many in my extended family found solace in creating art – each in their own way. A brother who is a writer who took the extra time the pandemic afforded to write a book that he has been wanting to work on. Other members of my family have degrees in art but have jobs in other fields. Each of them was able to pursue their passion – from painting to jewelry making – with the additional time they were provided during the upheaval of Covid.

As a legislator, I will provide support to artistic and cultural community organizations. I look forward to ensuring that they can continue to provide outlets for individuals of all ages to express themselves. These institutions allow a wide range of people to experience something memorable. This should be celebrated and supported, as much as possible.

4. *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 importance as an economic driver?*

As an elected official, I will fight to make sure that arts and creativity receive their fair share of funding in the state budget. I would work to make sure that they receive at least their historical amount of funding, including inflation.

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

Yes, I would support refilling the Arts Education Specialist at SDE. As I mentioned in my answer to question #2, there are inequities which must be resolved and I believe that filling this position would be a solid first step into taking action to minimize such inequalities.