

# 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 \*

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Please share your name

Cristin McCarthy Vahey

What office and district are you a candidate for?

State Representative, 133rd District

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?*

Fairfield Theater Company, Quick Center, Sacred Heart Community Theater, Fairfield Museum and History Center, The Klein, CT Youth Orchestra (formerly GBYO), Hartford Healthcare Amphitheater

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

Absolutely. As a Selectman, I helped the Fairfield Theater company in its early days as a public private partnership. As a state rep, I have helped to secure grant funding for the organization to help them expand their ability to serve children from across the region, particularly those who are lacking opportunity to engage with such a group. FTC and other organizations such as those mentioned about are the heartbeat of our communities. They bring joy and vibrancy, gather the community, and provide outlets and opportunity for people of all ages, especially our young people. They are economic drivers. I will support funding, the work of the Tourism Caucus, and policies and incentives that will help these organizations thrive.

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?*

Please see above for some of this answer. What is unique is the opportunity for intimate performances, venues close to home and easily accessible, opportunity to see world class artists and performers in our own backyard. CT has tremendous talent and these organizations help to nourish and encourage individuals who take their gifts beyond our borders.

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?*

I remember early on in the pandemic, Keith Urban and his wife were streaming from their home. It helped all of us feel a sense of connection and togetherness in the midst of the isolation. The arts has the opportunity to encourage empathy and connection. I recognize the value and importance of the arts, and have seen its power to transform the Fairfield downtown and bring people in our communities together. I understand this on an experiential level, which is why I will continue to support our arts and cultural organizations.

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?*

Work alongside our tourism caucus to advocate for dedicated funds.

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 would. Just today knocking on doors I spoke to the husband of an art teacher who talked about the importance of her work. I have seen this same teacher work to bring an entire school community together via an art project. I recognize the importance and would support this position. And I appreciate the focus on equity and providing opportunity to under resourced communities.

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