

# 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

David Bedell

What office and district are you a candidate for?

State Senate District 34

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?*

North Haven Art Association; Wallingford Women's Art Show; Hungarian Festival of CT; Spanish Community of Wallingford; Gallery 53

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

Yes, funding for the arts is essential to the well-being of communities. The state should support the CT Office of the Arts, and all public schools should have art and music programs. For students not on an academic track, these are often key to keeping them in school.

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?*

CT has one of the only National Park Service sites dedicated to visual arts: Weir Farm National Historical Park. The New Britain Museum of American Art is the first museum to focus entirely on US artists. In addition to first-class museums like the Hartford Atheneum and the Yale Art Gallery, CT has many smaller art museums and galleries, ethnic culture museums, symphony orchestras, etc. These are important not only to attract tourists from out of state, but for the quality of life of CT residents. Most important are art and music programs in the schools.

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?*

Personally, I tried to cope with COVID through perspective and humor; I even created a couple of humorous music videos about the pandemic. My niece and nephew continued taking music and dance lessons remotely even though it was a struggle. In my community of Wallingford, two theater groups received grants from the COVID Relief Fund for the Arts; local art studios and the public library provided art kits to do at home; and so many people took up new creative hobbies, from needlework to carpentry, to do at home. Seeing the importance of the arts in people's lives, I will support arts funding not only in the schools, but for children and adults who still are unable to leave their homes.

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?*

I would earmark education funding to support art and music programs in all public schools. For some students who are not oriented toward academics or athletics, art or music may be the only avenue that inspires them and keeps them in school. Many of these students will go on to careers in the arts, contributing to our economy and quality of life. Also, taking a broader view of creativity and culture, grants should be available so every town can maintain a quality public library. So many poor and immigrant children have stories of how they raised themselves out of poverty thanks to a public library. Andrew Carnegie understood this, and so should we.

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 was not familiar with the position of Arts Education Specialist, but if it helps to assure art and music programs in every public school, I will support it.

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