

# 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

John-Michael Parker

What office and district are you a candidate for?

State Representative, 101st District (Madison and Durham)

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?*

Arts and culture are strong in Madison and Durham, infusing and improving so many aspects of our community. From concerts (like the re-launched Madison Cultural Arts summer series) to fairs (like the one-of-a-kind Durham Fair!) to educational programs (like Daniel Hand High School's award-winning VIBE), inspired, creative, cultural activities and groups abound across our district.

*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! Locally, I will continue to be an ally for our arts and culture community and organizations, lifting up groups like the Shoreline Arts Alliance to bring attention to the critical role they play in our towns. And at the state level, I will continue to be a leader in the Arts, Culture, and Tourism Caucus and support efforts to ensure that these overlapping sectors are well-supported and thriving.

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?*

As in cities and towns across the world, arts and culture in Connecticut support expansive and intersectional outcomes—strengthening communities, bolstering economic development, enriching education and improving mental-healthcare, supporting small businesses and solo entrepreneurs, and so much more. What makes our state’s arts and culture unique is the diversity offered in such a manageable and easy-to-access area. Right here in the 101st district you can go from one of the region’s leading agricultural fairs to beachside cultural concerts in less than 25 minutes, hitting galleries, theaters, and historic museums on your way. And when we look across our communities—urban, suburban, and rural—there is a rich set of offerings, rooted in both history and a spirit of innovation, that are reflective of the extraordinary people throughout Connecticut.

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?*

Given my personal and professional experiences, I’ve seen firsthand how the arts and culture have strengthened school communities and supported a variety of student outcomes during these difficult few years. The opportunities for Social and Emotional Learning that arts programming offer—especially in communities hit hardest by the negative effects of the pandemic—are extraordinary, and have made the difference for a number of students struggling to re-engage. These experiences reinforce my belief that the value of arts and culture is broad and cross-cutting, and that these sectors must remain a focus of our work in the legislature.

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 have been working with leaders across the arts, culture, and tourism industries—and a set of bipartisan legislative leaders in the A, C, T caucus—on a substantial project to develop a funding model that ensures meaningful, reliable, and equitable funding. I will continue these efforts and work to realize our model in future state budgets. If re-elected, I will also continue to emphasize the importance of arts and culture with my colleagues, pointing to the important work right here in my district as an example!

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?*

Yes! I have been working on this issue with advocates and agency officials, and will continue to push for this change in the future.

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