

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

Julie Kushner

What office and district are you a candidate for?

State Senate 24th 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?

The Cultural Alliance of Western CT, Musicals At Richter, the Danbury Museum, the Playhouse in Ridgefield, the JCC in Sherman.

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, The Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut has done a lot to promote the arts in Danbury. From the murals on Main Street to the art exhibits at the mall, Lisa Scails and the Cultural Alliance have taken great strides to enhance the arts in our city and bring art to the people. Danbury is a very diverse city, we could do so much more to promote the arts and traditions of these diverse communities. It would also be good if the music and arts programs at WestConn were brought more into the community.

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?

The arts and culture are essential to a vibrant community. Museums and music venues and art exhibits bring life to a city. There’s already a lot to enjoy in our State, but unfortunately it seems like a lot of people don’t know about it, or don’t know how to access the art that is already here.

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 brother is a musician, of course Covid made it very hard for him to perform and hard for him to support himself and his family. I have direct experience with the underfunding of artists and the lack of support for their art forms. For my family, we've always appreciated music and art, so much of our time in COVID isolation was spent listening to music and enjoying the art in our home. As we began to venture out, it was clear that having the opportunity to walk through a museum, go to a play, enjoy an art exhibit was more than an outing, it was a life experience that we truly missed. I think understanding the importance of that social experience, the creative experience, makes it clear to me that it must be supported and expanded in our communities.

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/)

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 worked with local organizations to secure funding for their projects, I'd like to see us invest more in the arts in Connecticut. I will support efforts to make that happen.

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?

Absolutely— I always cringe when I hear about “Art on the Cart”. Our students deserve art classes, they deserve music classes. They arts critical to expanding these young minds and offering opportunities to explore their own creativity.

This form was created inside of ctartsalliance.org.

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