

CREATE THE VOTE

An initiative of [Connecticut Arts Alliance](#)

2022 LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATE ARTS 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!

*****PLEASE SEND YOUR COMPLETED SURVEY TO brett@ctartsalliance.org*****

Your Name: Sarah Keitt

What office and district are you a candidate for? State Representative District
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1. 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?

Your answer: One event I truly enjoy is the student Art Show at the Pequot Library in Southport. I love seeing the talent of our students. I've also enjoyed art exhibits at Fairfield University, and the Fairfield Theatre Company which also hosts live events. Our community also hosts live music on Sherman Green throughout the summer months. In Trumbull I recently attended the Piecemakers Quilt Guild annual show. I also belong to a local knitting group here in town.

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

Your answer: Absolutely. I would begin by increasing funding for arts programming in our public schools. School is the first, and for some, the only place children are exposed to the arts. Both my children have benefited from school-based arts programs ranging from theater, to music, to sewing and fashion design, to more traditional art classes. I believe early exposure to arts and music helps young brains develop. I would also support more funding for nonprofit arts organizations, especially those with community education programs.

2. 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?

Your answer: Personally, I believe arts and culture are essential for understanding our place in the larger world. Practically, arts and culture are a large contributor to Connecticut’s economy. According to the National Endowment for the Arts, in 2020 arts and cultural production in Connecticut added 3.2% or \$8.9 billion to the state’s economy and employed 49,159 workers. These workers earned wages and benefits totaling over \$5.1 billion.

Connecticut was the home to great American authors such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Mark Twain, and Old Lyme was the birthplace of the American Impressionist movement and home to one of the most famous art colonies of its time. The Hartford Symphony Orchestra is one of the oldest in the country. We need to protect and support our arts and culture if we want to grow as a state.

3. 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. They 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?

Your answer: I am an avid knitter. During the pandemic, I spent a lot of time exploring new (to me) knitting and crocheting techniques. My husband devoted more time to playing guitar. My youngest child (now 16 years old) struggled with

depression. They turned to visual arts as a method of coping, teaching themselves how to create digital art and exploiting more traditional methods of art such as pen and ink, pastels, watercolors, and acrylics. Art is now their passion and they are planning on attending art school after high school. My oldest, who turns 18 next week, likes to listen to music when she is stressed or upset. She also became involved with her school's theater productions once they reopened. She learned how to run lights and sound and had one the leads in the school's musical this spring.

4. 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 importance as an economic driver?

Your answer: I pledge to support funding for the arts in Connecticut. As Connecticut is on a path of fiscal responsibility, it is important that budget surpluses are spent on programs like the arts, and not on tax cuts for the wealthy.

5. 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?

Your answer: **ABSOLUTELY.** My children have had the opportunity to learn, challenge themselves, and find hidden talents all through the arts programs in their schools. I believe every child deserves the same opportunities, regardless of income or zip code.