

CREATE THE VOTE

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. Candidates who choose not to participate by that date will be tagged "no response." **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*****

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: My family and I recently attended the Trumbull Arts Festival, which featured some wonderful musical performances, art exhibits, and crafts tables. We have attended several dance events and community talent shows at Quinnipiac University where I work. We have seen Beauty and the Beast at West Hartford Community Theater, The Fabulous Lipitones at Goodspeed Musicals, and a few different productions at the Westport Country Playhouse. We have attended the Litchfield Jazz Festival many times in the past. We regularly attend productions of the Trumbull Youth Association, an organization in whose events my eldest daughter is beginning to become involved. My husband is active in the Barbershop Harmony Society, so we attend many events of both the Bridgeport/Trumbull and Danbury chapters of that organization.

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

Your answer: Our arts organizations were able to survive the pandemic due to the grant opportunities afforded largely by one-time Federal funds such as those from

the American Rescue Plan. The critical question is how these organizations, especially the small ones, will fare once these time-limited sources of funding dissipate, especially considering that we are now learning that public behavior in regard to leaving the home for entertainment may have been permanently changed by the pandemic. Connecticut does very well with line-item budget funding for the arts, but ranks among the bottom of states when line items are excluded. We need to increase legislative appropriations to arts organizations that are not included in line-item funding.

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: The very fact that Connecticut is located between Boston and New York makes it a vibrant arts environment. It is easy for Connecticut arts organizations to attract the top talent and convince them to make the relatively short trip from those cities. Connecticut has several important universities which anchor arts life and increase the vibrancy of arts programming in cities from New Haven to Hartford to Danbury. Our proximity in the western part of the state to New York increases our ability to offer opportunities to see top musicians and artists in venues ranging from the Litchfield Jazz Festival to the Ridgefield Playhouse.

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: Our family's spirits were buoyed during the pandemic by the wide variety of online performances available. I recall in particular the online "concerts" by Yo-Yo Ma and Neil Sedaka. We were able to connect to my sister-in-laws in California, whom we could not see because of covid restrictions, because of the recordings made by their chorus. My husband joined several virtual choruses. But it was not the same, and I missed seeing live performances. I do know of many people

who found the performing arts to be literally a lifeline during the lockdown periods, both in the United States and in other countries. This is precisely why we need to prioritize funding the arts.

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: In addition to what I said above about the necessity of addressing low non-line-item funding in Connecticut, we need to expand funding for the Connecticut Arts Council to reverse decades of cuts or flat spending on the Arts in Connecticut. Moreover, we should work to preserve the Digital Media and Motion Picture tax credit. Finally, we must lobby the Federal government to return to adequately funding the National Endowment for the Arts, rather than threatening to defund it every year. Each of these investments will pay dividends for Connecticut by generating substantial economic activity in the arts.

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: We should absolutely have such a position. In an era in which so many of our music, art, and theater educators in our schools have to shuttle between multiple schools, work on carts rather than in classrooms, making sure that there is an advocate for arts students and teachers within the Department of Education itself has never been more important.