

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 *

senatorberthel32@gmail.com

Please share your name

Eric Berthel

What office and district are you a candidate for?

State Senate, District 32

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 Palace Theater, fine arts through our many schools, small performances and art shows in many of the towns in the 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?

Yes. I was proud to introduce a bill in priors sessions that afforded tax relief to property owners who rented space to artists. This was a creative way to help artists and to help landlords fill empty space. It also draws people to our economic centers on our wonderful Main Streets.

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?

Our position between Boston and New York actually enhances the opportunity for artist to live here and thrive. Our arts institutions add to that. The legislature should continue to look at reasonable opportunities to grow our cultural landscape.

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?

Music has always been my personal connection to the arts, as a performer years ago, to supporting my children and as avid listener to an eclectic selection. Music was immune from COVID and provided an emotional attachment to the wealth of issues we all had to contend with. This will continue to positively influence choices I make about supporting the arts.

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?

Arts are an important part of the economy of the state of CT. The legislature must make the support of all types of Arts related businesses (from a single artist to a large entertainment troupe) a priority. Artists drawn people to their galleries, performance halls, museums and stages, and along with that comes the wonderful side effect of benefit to other businesses as well. This is a large part of the fabric of our economy and economic engine.

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, absolutely!

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