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MAYORS FROM ACROSS THE NATION SEND JOINT LETTER TO CONGRESS IN SUPPORT OF ARTS AND CULTURE FUNDING IN THE WAKE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Supported by San Francisco Mayor London N. Breed and spearheaded by **the San Francisco Arts Alliance**, the mayoral letter calls for specific relief fund efforts in the next stimulus package that focus on the long-term recovery of nonprofit arts and culture organizations and individual artists

SAN FRANCISCO (May 13, 2020)—This week, mayors from cities across the nation—supported by **San Francisco Mayor London N. Breed** and spearheaded by the **San Francisco Arts Alliance**, an alliance of arts organizations working with the San Francisco arts and culture sector to ensure community arts needs are met on a federal, state and local level—sent a joint letter to Congress in support of funding for the arts and culture sector in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The mayoral letter lays out specific relief efforts that will be essential in local, state, and national recovery efforts, including extending the duration of unemployment insurance for artists, arts professionals, and self-employed workers whose income has been negatively impacted by COVID-19; extending SBA and Paycheck Protection Program assistance for artists and arts professionals and providing additional forgivable SBA loans to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations, self-employed workers, sole proprietors, small LLCs, and eliminate the 500-employee cap for 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations; and adjusting the Economic Stabilization Fund or other mechanisms to implement programs to support nonprofit employers with between 500 and 10,000 employees, including loan-forgiveness and other provisions.

The letter also calls for additional funding to the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, and Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the support of policies that will ensure rapid processing of artist visas and consular appointments that are essential to supporting international cultural activity.

“The arts and culture sector exists to serve the creativity of the community and is an essential vehicle for healing and the equitable and sustainable redevelopment of cities across the nation,” said **Deborah Cullinan**, co-chair of the San Francisco Arts Alliance and CEO of Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. “As we evolve the ways we produce and bring audiences together, it is only by working hand-in-hand with the support of our government on the federal, state, and local level that we will be able to provide creative homes for artists and centers for community engagement.”

“Individuals and organizations in the arts and cultural fields are innately creative, and it’s imperative that we now use that creativity to shape our future,” adds Matthew Shilvock, co-chair of the San Francisco Arts Alliance and General Director of the San Francisco Opera. “We deeply appreciate the support of the mayors who are playing a pivotal role championing the vital role of arts organizations. Bringing people back together through shared cultural experiences will be essential to rebuilding communities and strengthening social cohesion.”

Contributing more than \$877.8 billion to the nation’s economy in 2017, the arts and culture sector is an economic engine that directly employs more than 5 million workers nationwide. The current losses sustained by the arts and cultural sector throughout the nation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have reached a staggering \$4.8 billion in just the first two months of this crisis.

The following mayors (*in alphabetical order*) joined in the signing of the letter: Steve Adler (Austin, TX); Jim Brainard (Carmel, IN); London N. Breed (San Francisco, CA); LaToya Cantrell (New Orleans, LA); John Cooper (Nashville, TN); Bill de Blasio (New York, NY); Mike Duggan (Detroit, MI); Jenny A. Durkan (Seattle, WA); Kate Gallego (Phoenix, AZ); Eric Garcetti (Los Angeles, CA); Michael B. Hancock (Denver, CO); Jim Kenney (Philadelphia, PA); Sam Liccardo (San Jose, CA); Lori Lightfoot (Chicago, IL); Erin Mendenhall (Salt Lake City, UT); Satya Rhodes-Conway (Madison, WI); Regina Romero (Tucson, AZ); Libby Schaaf (Oakland, CA); Darrell Steinberg (Sacramento, CA); Sylvester Turner (Houston, TX); Martin J. Walsh (Boston, MA); Ted Wheeler (Portland, OR); and Victoria Woodards (Tacoma, WA).

ABOUT THE SAN FRANCISCO ARTS ALLIANCE

The San Francisco Arts Alliance is an alliance of arts organizations working with the San Francisco arts and culture sector. Through a united front, the San Francisco Arts Alliance seeks to lobby legislative issues which impact the arts and culture community on local, state, and federal levels in order to ensure the artistic and economic vitality essential to the equitable recovery of San Francisco’s diverse communities and the rebuilding of social cohesion and trust.