

May 21, 2025

Dear Senate Finance Chair James Gray and Honorable Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

This letter is being submitted by City Councilor Kate Cook on behalf of the Portsmouth Arts and Cultural Commission.

We, the Commissioners, write to express our full and urgent support for the **New Hampshire State Council on the Arts (NHSCA) and to advocate for the restoration and continued public investment in its essential work.**

The nonprofit arts and culture sector is not only a vital contributor to New Hampshire's identity—it is also a powerful economic engine. In the greater Portsmouth area alone, nonprofit arts and culture organizations and their audiences generated over **\$70 million in total industry expenditures** in 2022, according to the Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 (AEP6) study conducted by Americans for the Arts. This activity supported **1,250 jobs** and generated over **\$3.3 million in state and local tax revenue.**

These numbers reflect **real impact**—artists employed, venues sustained, downtowns revitalized, and local businesses thriving. The NHSCA has played an indispensable role in creating this environment through its grantmaking, program leadership, and policy work. Its support helps leverage additional local and private investment, making it a high-return partner in building vibrant, resilient communities. These investments ripple outward—stimulating our economy, enriching education, supporting mental health and well-being, and preserving New Hampshire's distinctive cultural heritage.

The arts are also deeply valued by our residents and visitors. In greater Portsmouth, nearly **850,000 people attended nonprofit arts and culture events** in one year—almost 40% of them from outside our region, demonstrating the sector's draw as a tourism asset. Attendees spent an average of **\$48.45 per person per event beyond admission**, contributing significantly to our hospitality and service industries.

The current funding challenges facing the Council jeopardize this momentum. **Without sustained investment, we risk losing not only individual artists and arts-based nonprofits, but also the economic and social benefits they bring to Portsmouth and our state.** The City of Portsmouth has adopted legislative principles that support revenue streams to aid municipalities. Any reduction in funding for the arts will impact jobs in the arts, travel, and tourism, thereby negatively impacting the City of Portsmouth.

As the designated local cultural commission for the City of Portsmouth, we see the arts as a powerful tool for public good. The NHSCA is a critical partner in this work—not just as a funder, but as a connector, convener, and advocate. Its leadership ensures that New Hampshire's

creative economy thrives and that the arts remain accessible to all, from the largest cities to the most rural towns.

We urge you to continue and restore full funding for the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts. Doing so ensures that New Hampshire remains a state where creativity flourishes, where arts are accessible to all, and where culture continues to be a cornerstone of economic growth and community well-being. The arts are not a luxury—they are a vital part of what makes New Hampshire a place we are proud to call home.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your commitment to a thriving New Hampshire.

Sincerely,

Kate Cook, Portsmouth City Councilor, Arts and Cultural Commission Member

Portsmouth's Arts and Cultural Commission

Emma Stratton, Co-Chair, Portsmouth Historical Society

Linnea Grim, Co-Chair, Strawberry Banke Museum

Kenneth Goldman, Vice Chair, Artist

Jeffrey Cooper, Secretary, Artist

Genevieve Aichele, Artist

Jason Goodrich, Portsmouth resident

Eli Kaynor, Portsmouth Music & Arts Center

Theresa McDowell, Portsmouth resident

Karen Rosania, Artist

Courtney Perkins, Prescott Park Arts Festival

Catherine Saarela, Portsmouth resident