April 27, 2020

Governor Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

As the only comprehensive, multidisciplinary organization focused on advancing and building public awareness of the value and impact of arts, culture and creativity across California, we thank you for your leadership during these unprecedented times and want to extend our support for your administration and your Task Force on Business and Jobs Recovery. We recognize the committee’s goals are to present you with tangible actions that leverage the task force’s expertise to rebuild California, emphasize smart, green technologies and provide a model for just economic development for our country with an emphasis on those communities hardest hit by the pandemic. We suggest the arts and culture sector should be a part of the solution.

Artists, creatives and non-profit arts organizations provide vital services to our communities and they are ready to work to aid the State in its priorities to protect public health and safety, to end homelessness and to provide hope, comfort and wellness to Californians as the second responders in disaster recovery. We would love to see more diverse representation for the arts and culture sector on the task force and we stand ready to help as needed.

As 15.4% or 2.7 million of all jobs in California are in the creative industries, generating $650.3 billion per year, we can assure you the arts, culture and creative sectors are ready to get back to work to rebuild California’s economy.

As some of the first industries to shut down and likely some of the last to reopen at full capacity, the creative sector has been disproportionately affected by the crisis. This has only served to highlight the inequitable access to resources in communities of color and rural areas, and how arts organizations like many other social service organizations serve as vital lifelines.

In communities such as San Diego, a recent survey of 80% of their organizations reports 1 in 5 would cease programming and close. The impacts are likely to be higher for smaller neighborhood organizations. We hear this same story across all communities in California.

And in a recent survey by Americans for the Arts we’ve learned the following for creative workers across the United States:

- 96% have lost revenue due to the Pandemic
- 36% had savings to cover 3 months of expenses prior to COVID-19, only 20% do now
- 28% had no savings prior to COVID-19, and 53% have no savings now
- 80% report a decline in revenue-generating creative productivity
- 66% say they can’t access supplies/resources/spaces/people necessary for their creative work

As the first industries to shut down and likely some of the last to reopen at full capacity, the creative sector has been disproportionately affected by the crisis. This has only served to highlight the inequitable access to resources in communities of color and rural areas, and how arts organizations like many other social service organizations serve as vital lifelines.

In communities such as San Diego, a recent survey of 80% of their organizations reports 1 in 5 would cease programming and close. The impacts are likely to be higher for smaller neighborhood organizations. We hear this same story across all communities in California.

And in a recent survey by Americans for the Arts we’ve learned the following for creative workers across the United States:

- 96% have lost revenue due to the Pandemic
- 36% had savings to cover 3 months of expenses prior to COVID-19, only 20% do now
- 28% had no savings prior to COVID-19, and 53% have no savings now
- 80% report a decline in revenue-generating creative productivity
- 66% say they can’t access supplies/resources/spaces/people necessary for their creative work
Despite unprecedented hardship, artists and creative workers are helping their own communities. Costume shops transitioning to mask makers for hospital workers on the front lines, artists stepping up to design posters and record video messages to encourage people to shelter in place, arts organizations from the mountains to the coast using digital platforms to bring cultural offerings into the homes of millions and maintain a sense of community and connection. Arts instruction and engagement for all ages has forged new partnerships with school systems and others to reach school aged students as well as veterans and seniors who are particularly at risk and therefore isolated as a result of this pandemic.

Artists are second responders, willing to respond to a crisis to rebuild lives but like any other profession, should be compensated for their work and service.

• 75% say they have used or plan to use their creative practice to address the needs of the community
• 77% say they have used their creative practice to raise morale, create community cohesion, or generally lighten the experience of the community (67% of them have done it without being compensated for time or materials)
• 82% say they will deploy their creativity to support the recovery and 47% say they will do so whether or not they get paid to do it.

There has never been a more needed time for hope, inspiration and healing and the mental health benefits arts and artists can bring to our communities as well as arts education to our students. Please consider the impact and the benefits the arts and creative economy provide for California as your task force sets out on the hard work to rebuild California. We are ready to lend our support and suggestions for arts and culture leadership to your task force as needed.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Baker
Executive Director, Californians for the Arts

Victoria Hamilton
Board President

cc: Senator Toni Atkins, President Pro tem, California Senate
    Speaker Anthony Rendon, California Assembly