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CONTACT: Julie Baker, julie@californiansforthearts.org, 916-296-1838

Sacramento, CA – One year into the pandemic, one of California’s largest industries is still in crisis. Artists, arts workers, and nonprofit cultural organizations and creative businesses, along with performing and visual arts organizations and the live events industry are facing utter devastation. Yet in the face of such dire conditions for the creative sector, the arts and artists have shown we are essential and are a keystone in our state’s economy, identity, and social fabric.

This April, organizations and individuals across the state will gather to celebrate and raise awareness for Arts, Culture and Creativity Month (ACCM). Now in its third year, ACCM was declared by the California Senate in a concurrent resolution to recognize and celebrate the significant impact the arts have in California. The month-long campaign, led by Californians for the Arts (CFTA), encourages all Californians to join the movement to bring public awareness of the value and impact the arts have our communities and state, and features multiple opportunities to participate through trainings, storytelling, public action and online events such as Advocacy Week April 19-April 23 and the ACCM Virtual Convening on April 27.

This is a time where advocates can unify their statewide voice around key issues and speak to elected officials during the state’s budget process; encourage representatives to increase permanent funding and to value arts, culture and creativity as transformational, impactful and just as worthy as any other social service providing solutions to California’s communities.

“Arts, Culture and Creativity Month comes at a critical time for arts organizations and artists in the history of our state,” explained Julie Baker, Executive Director, Californians for the Arts. “The arts are even more essential now that we are trying to derive meaning from a world that we have never experienced. Access to the arts will help us survive and overcome the pandemic, and as we emerge from the crisis, we will be a changed society.”

How the Pandemic Has Been Devastating to the Arts
1 in every 10 California workers is a creative worker and the arts and culture sector contribute $174.6B to California’s economy. That is nearly double what the construction industry ($93.3B) and more than three times the agriculture industry ($54B) contribute to the economy. According to the 2020 Otis College Report, last year the state lost 175,000 jobs in the arts, which includes architecture and related services, creative goods and products, entertainment and digital media, fashion and fine arts. At the end of 2020, CFTA launched their own independent survey to measure the impact of the pandemic on the arts and creative industries, organizations and workers. Key takeaways from the study include the arts are among our most vulnerable workforce, there has been disproportionate impact to BIPOC workers and organizations, and with continued closures and no state guidelines for the arts, we are facing a California creativity crisis.

“A strong arts and culture foundation unites us in the best of times and makes communities resilient, sustainable, and vibrant places to live and work. In the worst of times, the arts do all of this and more. “said Baker.

Advocacy is Crucial
Advocacy is the number-one way to advance social change that affects the people we serve. A perfect example of that is after months of discussions with local arts organizations, artists and government representatives, along with CFTA’s lobbying efforts, Senate Bill 87 was signed into law on February 23 approving $50 million in funding for nonprofit cultural institutions.

“It is a prime example of how advocacy works,” said Baker. “This funding will provide some much-needed relief, but a $25,000 grant program won’t solve all our funding needs to rebuild the arts back more equitably. We must restart the arts in California and create programs to get artists back to work.”

Investing in the arts now is support for immediate social services in our most vulnerable communities and a high return investment in long-game economic recovery. CFTA is asking the state to increase funding for the California Arts Council, the state arts agency to at least $1 per capita per person. At the state’s current $26 million funding level, California only invests .73 cents per person. By comparison New York invests $2.31 and Minnesota over $7.00. If California is truly going to be the creative capital, we must demonstrate true commitment to its survival and sustainability. This April CFTA is encouraging advocates to ask their representatives to increase the amount of arts funding to $1 per person per capita in funding with a $14 million budget increase to the California Arts Council. This would fund the California Arts Council at $40 million for the 2021-2022 budget year.

CFTA and our partner organization California Arts Advocates (CAA) are also excited to share information about the introduction by Senator Ben Allen of SB 628 which would establish the California Creative Workforce Act of 2021, a job and training program to employ and deploy artists and creative workers with the intent to achieve specified goals related to civic, cultural, and economic improvement of the state. CAA also supports Governor Newsom’s California Creative Corps Pilot program which he introduced his January budget proposal.

Save the Date for these upcoming ACCM events
CFTA are hosting the following state events, but encourage people to seek out local and regional events sponsored by Arts Councils, artists and arts organizations.
Advocacy Week – April 19-23
Advocacy Week involves speaking directly with elected officials organized based on our nine CFTA Regional Conversations Districts. In these meetings advocates can encourage elected officials to support increased public funding for the arts, along with legislation and policies that are pro-arts, arts education, culture and the creative sector. Register at https://www.californiansforthearts.org/about-accm to be a regional captain and linked with other arts advocates in your region and statewide.

ACCM Virtual Conference – April 27
Join arts advocates from across the state at the ACCM Virtual Convening on Tuesday, April 27. This year’s conference includes advocacy action updates, breakout sessions on relevant topics facilitated by leaders in their field, and a celebration of the rich California artistic community.

“The pandemic has shown us what a year without the arts looks and feels like, it also showed us how resilient the arts and artists are,” said Baker. “This experience confirmed that the arts are essential and offer the needed support, relief and guidance that makes for a healthier world.”
Advocacy Day at The Capitol in Sacramento, 2019