Dear Wisconsin Congressional Leader:

I am contacting you today as director of Arts Wisconsin, the state’s community cultural development organization, in support of the National Independent Venue Association (NIVA) and its growing number of members located throughout Wisconsin (current list included at the end of this letter).

Independent for-profit and non-profit music venues including the Pablo Center at the Confluence in Eau Claire, Big Top Chatauqua in Bayfield, Thelma Sadoff Center for the Arts in Fond du Lac, and Riverside Theatre in Milwaukee, are among the vibrant cultural offerings in our state, helping to define Wisconsin as a unique place where creativity thrives.

As you are well aware, the travel industry and the arts and entertainment sectors have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. Independent music venues, big and small, in every corner of the state, have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic. Given the immediate bans on mass gatherings, social distancing requirements and current plans for phasing back public congregating, these independent music venues were among the first to close as COVID-19 spread across the country and are likely to be among the last to reopen. All of Wisconsin’s music venues are currently closed and anticipate not being able to return to business as usual for 12 to 18 months.

To give you a sense of the strength of Wisconsin’s creative sector before the pandemic, according to the latest data issued on March 17, 2020 by the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Economic Analysis of the US Department of Commerce and the National Endowment for the Arts, the creative sector is a vital component of the U.S. economy. To sum up the most recent numbers for Wisconsin (as of 2017):

- **$10.1 billion** in value-added to the state’s economy through the arts (up from $9.7 billion in 2016)
- **96,651** jobs in the arts – more than the state’s beer, papermaking and biotech industries (up from 94,167 in 2016)
- **$5.8 billion** arts worker compensation (up from $5.6 billion in 2016)
- **3.1%** arts’ value-added as a share of state’s economy (same as 2016)

Nationally, arts and cultural economic activity accounted for 4.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), or **$877.8 billion**, in 2017.

In the age of coronavirus, the negative economic impact of the pandemic shutdowns, just since March, currently stands at **$4.8 billion nationally** and **$16.3 million in Wisconsin. We know those numbers and the stress on venues and communities will grow as the shutdowns go on.**

To ensure that this vital part of our communities’ economic and cultural fabric survives as we all emerge from...
the crisis, we support the request from NIVA to extend and amend the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) to address the unique needs of Wisconsin’s music venues. The current requirements and rules associated with the PPP under the CARES Act do not meet this sector’s needs. Most importantly, the period of validity must be extended beyond eight weeks given their expected timeline for reopening. The other requested changes are all valid ways to help them survive, and I urge you to work to address them in the coming stimulus legislation.

As the United States navigates a time of economic uncertainty due to the spread of COVID-19, it is important to recognize and champion the economic and civic contributions of the arts to all 50 states, the U.S. territories, and the nation as a whole. **A strong creative sector is key to Wisconsin’s – and the nation’s – recovery, re-emergence, and revitalization.**

We appreciate your support in ensuring that Wisconsin’s creative businesses and workers move through the pandemic towards economic and community strength so that we can again welcome visitors to share in our unique Wisconsin experience.

Sincerely,

Anne Katz, Director
Arts Wisconsin

**NIVA member venues/organizations (as of 5-1-20)**

- Arts Wisconsin - Madison
- Barrymore Theatre - Madison
- Big Top Chautauqua - Bayfield
- Cactus Club - Milwaukee
- Cavalier Theater - La Crosse
- Chippewa Valley Theatre Guild's Grand Theatre - Eau Claire
- Grand Theater - Wausau
- Hypervibe - Neenah
- Liquid & Ruby - Madison
- LuCille Tack Center for the Arts - Spencer
- Pablo Center at the Confluence - Eau Claire
- Pabst Theater - Milwaukee
- Pine Hollow - EAU CLAIRE
- Pump House Regional Arts Center - La Crosse
- Riverside Theater - Milwaukee
- Shank Hall - Milwaukee
- Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts - Brookfield
- Site 1A - Milwaukee
- The Back Room - Milwaukee
- The Cooperage - Jason Burczyk Milwaukee
- Thelma Sadoff Center for the Arts - Fond du Lac
- The Mabel Tainter - Menomonie
- The Metro - Eau Claire
- The Mineral Point Opera House - Mineral Point
- The Miramar Theatre - Milwaukee
- The Plus - Eau Claire
- The Rave / Eagles Club - Milwaukee
- The Shitty Barn - Spring Green
- The Venue on Winnebago St / T Presents - Madison
- Turner Hall Ballroom - Milwaukee
- Westby Area Performing Arts Center - Westby