July 23, 2020

Dear Senator Baldwin, Senator Johnson:

You may recall that we wrote to you in May on behalf of the independent music venues in the Eau Claire region. With the impact of the COVID-19 health and economic crisis continuing to impact all aspects for our community, these organizations by their nature are experiencing even greater distress because they were among the first to close and will likely be the last to open. While current federal relief programs have provided some help, by their nature they are not a very good fit for these organizations, who are unlikely to be able to return to business as usual for another 12 or more months.

We now understand there are two active bipartisan proposals in Congress that would address these issues: The RESTART Act, S.3814, introduced by Senators Bennet and Young, which adds flexibility to the Paycheck Protection Program for hospitality and entertainment organizations, and the Save Our Stages Act, S. 4258, being introduced by Senators Cornyn and Klobuchar, that would provide direct support to small music venues for the next six months.

As the Senate considers makes decisions over the coming days about the next phase of federal relief efforts, we encourage consideration and incorporation of the provisions of these bills in the final legislation.

These venues are critical to the economy of the Eau Claire area, which in recent years has undergone a dramatic economic resurgence, in no small part due to its growing reputation for culture and the performing arts. Several of our local venues and festivals are members of the National Independent Venue Association (NIVA), which represents this unique segment of the industry. They include The Pablo Center at the Confluence, The Grand (Chippewa Valley Theatre Guild), The Metro, The Plus, The Mabel Tainter, The Blue Ox Festival, Country Jam, Eaux Claires and the Sounds Like Summer Concert Series. The economic survival and recovery of these organizations will have a direct impact on our local economy.

Sincerely,

David W. Minor
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