

Interested Party Testimony for Arts Funding  
Senate Workforce & Higher Education  
Chad Whittington, President and CEO, CAPA  
May 4, 2021

Chair Johnson, Vice-Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Committee, I'm Chad Whittington, President & CEO of CAPA, proud steward of many of the historic theatres here in Columbus including the Ohio, Palace, and Southern Theatres. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with all of you today.

I know that you all understand the importance of the arts to our society, and that arts, culture and entertainment are a critical and irreplaceable component of creating the communities that we desire to live in all throughout the State of Ohio. Since you understand how important we are from the quality of life perspective, I want to focus on our importance as businesses within our communities.

Consider CAPA – prior to COVID we employed over 100 full-time employees, and when you include the hundreds of part-time staff that work our events, our total FTE count in any given year was over 250 employees. Our theatres generate over \$90M of economic impact annually. And CAPA is just one of many of the arts businesses in our community and in our State. When you combine us, arts, culture, & entertainment is an industry that generates \$40B+ of economic impact in the State of Ohio and employees approximately 300,000 workers. We are vital to the soul of our collective community, but we are vital to our economy as well.

Additionally, arts and culture venues drive significant activity to the many businesses around us. Just last week I had lunch at Due Amici, a wonderful restaurant on Gay Street that I'm sure many of you are familiar with. The owner said that there are two things really important to his recovery in the coming months: people coming back to the hotels and people coming back to the theatres.

Our venues, our industry, was one of the first to close as a result of the pandemic and will be one of the last to fully re-open. We accepted this reality long ago, and have done everything we can in terms of cutting expenses and managing our reserves to ensure that we survive this shutdown and our able to re-open our doors when the time is right.

Throughout the pandemic I've talked about lifelines that are needed to help our industry survive. "Lifelines" because there is no single solution to providing the level of support that we need in order to survive. It has been lines of support from local government, from the State, from the federal government, and from our communities. When you piece enough of these together, the net becomes strong enough to keep afloat until we re-open.

I want to thank all of you for your past support of the arts. The state CARES money that was allocated to the arts last November was critical to buying us time. And now, I'm here to ask you to support the arts again. It is not enough to see the light at the end of the tunnel, we need to get to the end of the tunnel with enough forward momentum to carry us into the future. I ask for your help in two ways.

First, you can support an increase in the State Program Subsidies line item from its current \$28.9M. These funds, distributed by the Ohio Arts Council, provide direct operating support to hundreds of arts organizations across the State.

Second, I ask you to consider additional one-time support for the arts. A survey of arts organizations last fall indicated that \$70M was needed to help our industry survive until Summer of 2021. The \$20M of CARES Act funding was a great first step, but more is needed.

The Ohio and Palace theatres, built in 1928 and 1926 respectively, were born as a result of a roaring economy that succeeded our last pandemic. These beautiful buildings stand ready to once again accommodate a rush of people looking to experience live performing arts that inspire us and, just as importantly, power the economies of our cities and towns all across this great State. Thank you for your continued support of this industry that is so important to our State, both culturally and economically.