Memo

Date: June 2, 2021

To: State and Local Arts Leaders

From: Jay Dick, Senior Director of State and Local Government Affairs

RE: Call to the National Governors Association to Convene Governors on the topic of High Unemployment Among Artists

As you well know, Covid-19 continues to have a devastating impact on America’s arts sector even after vaccines have been made available to most residents. As arts organizations cautiously begin to open, artists and creative workers remain among the most severely affected segment of the nation’s workforce.

But, even with tentative re-openings, the unemployment rate for artists is still way above the national unemployment rate and like other hard-hit industries such as hospitality, it has not recovered.

A statistic that we are all familiar with: “Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation” jobs dropped from 2.5 million in February 2020 to 1.2 million in April 2020 (-53%). **By January 2021, jobs rebounded to 1.7 million and are up to 1.9 million in April 2021. Positive news, but arts jobs are still down 25% since pre-pandemic** ([U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CES7071000001)).

Americans for the Arts works with a variety of national partners who represent the various levels of elected officials, from city managers to governors. Some friends in governor’s offices around the country recently let us know that there is some interest by governors into why the unemployment rate of artists is still so high and what can be done to help get artists back to work.

This is where we need your help**. Please take the attached letter, customize it to your state (perhaps with data** [**from these docs**](https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/disaster-preparedness/coronavirus-covid-19-resource-and-response-center/the-impact-of-covid-19-state-by-state)**), and send it to your governor asking them to request that the National Governors Association (NGA) convene a national conversation on the unacceptable high rates of unemployment for the creative workforce, including for-profit and non-profit employers.**

If enough governors communicate to NGA that they want to have this conversation, it will happen and we will not only be able to shine a national spotlight on this issue, but work with governors to identify and implement long term solutions.

In addition to the state policy possibilities, an NGA convening would be an opportunity to consider how the CREATE Act, or PLACE Act, two national proposals in Congress relating to economic and community development that would be of assistance to the creative workforce, small businesses and entrepreneurs in the arts.

Please share this document with colleagues (esp. those representing other industries) and if you have any questions, just let me know.

DATE

The Honorable XXXX XXXXX  
Governor  
The Great State of XXXXXX  
Address 1  
City, State ZIP

Dear Governor XXXX,

Thank you for your leadership in guiding our state over the past 16 months as we battled Covid-19. While the entire economy was affected, several industries were decimated: retail, hospitality, tourism, and the arts/creative sector.

While the retail and hospitality industries appear to be returning, and the tourism industry may see a positive summer, the arts/creative sector is still struggling.

Nationally, financial losses to nonprofit arts and culture organizations are an estimated **$16.5 billion**, to date. 99% of producing and presenting organizations cancelled events—a loss of **528 million cancelled ticketed admissions** impacting both arts organizations and audiences. Additionally, local area businesses, such as restaurants, lodging, retail, and parking, have also been impacted by cancelled arts and culture events with a loss of **$16.6 billion in audience ancillary spending**. **Local government revenue losses are also now topping $5.6 billion** with **970,000 in jobs** **negatively affected as a resulted of cancelled events**. ([Americans for the Arts Survey](https://surveys.americansforthearts.org/s3/2021COVIDSURVEY))

**The** **U.S. Census Bureau’s** [**Small Business Pulse Survey**](https://portal.census.gov/pulse/data/#data) reports that “arts, entertainment, and recreation” businesses are among the most likely to take longer than 6 months to recover from the pandemic.

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The arts are a formidable industry. Prior to the pandemic, the nation’s arts and culture sector (nonprofit, commercial, education) was **a $919.7 billion industry** that supported **5.2 million jobs** and represented **4.3% of the nation’s economy** in 2019. ([U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis](https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/arts-and-culture)).

Given the importance and value of the arts/creative sector to our state, the disproportionate negative impact and lagging recovery, **I respectfully ask that you request that the National Governors Association convene a national conversation of governors to discuss the unacceptable high rates of unemployment by artists and member of the creative economy which would include identifying both short and long term solutions to allow this industry to not only recover, but help fuel a national economic boom post Covid-19.**

Respectfully,

NAME  
Title  
Organization