

Legislation Text

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Calling on the Kenney Administration to delay the elimination of the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, including its workforce, and the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, the principal supporters for the City's \$3.4 billion creative arts industry, generating annual tax revenue of \$157 Million, until Council completes the City's fiscal year 2021 Budget and Recovery Plan for the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHEREAS, The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has wreaked havoc on the \$3.4 billion art and culture industry in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's creative arts economy generates \$157 million in tax revenue, accounts for \$930 million in household income, and sustains over 37,000 jobs; and

WHEREAS, In the month of April, however, 92 percent of performances and events were canceled, and 60 percent of local art organizations shut down entirely due to COVID-19 related shutdowns - costing over \$48,589,349 in lost revenue and 879,366 lost audience members; and

WHEREAS, There have also been widespread reports that artists and other creative arts workers in the gig economy are being excluded from unemployment benefits despite federal legislation aimed at expanding eligibility; and

WHEREAS, On top of these crushing blows to the creative arts economy, the revised City budget proposal calls for the elimination of all funding to the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy (OACCE) and the Philadelphia Cultural Fund; and

WHEREAS, The OACCE serves as the first point of contact for organizations, businesses, artists, and creative entrepreneurs in Philadelphia and will play a key role in reopening Philadelphia's economy; and

WHEREAS, In this year alone, the Philadelphia Cultural Fund has assisted 349 arts organizations, awarding over \$3 million in grants; and

WHEREAS, Like education and medicine, Philadelphia is known internationally for its rich arts and culture scene which drives conventions and other tourism revenues to the City; and

WHEREAS, In addition to cultural enhancement and tourism, the sector also serves as a key driver of jobs and economic development, which will be critical in aiding the City's recovery from COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, While difficult decisions must be made to stabilize the City's finances, completely defunding the OACCE, and laying off its staff on June 1, would damage our City's creative arts economy and hinder economic recovery in the wake of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, The original budget allocation of \$4.1 million for the OACCE, taken in the context of the industry's \$3.4 billion valuation, is a worthwhile and financially sound investment to make in our creative arts community; and

WHEREAS, Given the integral role arts and culture play in Philadelphia, defunding decisions on arts and culture should be delayed until after passing the fiscal year 2021 budget when further evaluations can be made; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby calls on the Kenney Administration to delay the elimination of the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, including its workforce, and the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, the principal supporters for the City's \$3.4 billion creative arts industry, generating annual tax revenue of \$157 Million, until Council completes the City's fiscal year 2021 Budget and Recovery Plan for the COVID-19 pandemic.