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Testimony for budget hearing on arts and economic development in the NYS legislature

My name is Lucy Sexton and I lead New Yorkers for Culture & Arts, a coalition of more than 400 artists and cultural groups. We work with an alliance of groups across NYS to strengthen the creative sector which is so critical to our economy and our communities.

This being a hearing on Economic development as well as arts, I need to start by reminding the committee that the creative economy comprises more than 7.6% of the State's GDP. It generates more than \$160B in economic activity\*.

Equally important, in upstate towns and cities, the growth in creative sector jobs currently outpaces every other industry\*\*, providing a much needed economic spark to towns and cities across the state. We are the state's economic driver and its workforce.

We realize this is going to be one of the tightest budget years in recent memory----but ask you not to cut the very sector that is creating jobs, driving economic activity to small businesses, and making people want to live and raise families in our state! The investment we make now in arts pays back many times over for years to come.

When people are hard pressed for spending money, having a low price dance class for their kids, or a free music concert in the town hall, or an open air festival in the park, are affordable and enjoyable activities that connect us as neighbors and communities. These low-to-no cost offerings are not free to produce. They are only possible with public subsidy. Think of it as an investment in the lives and well being of your constituents, and indeed in the town centers that thrive when there is foot traffic on their streets.

A recently released report\*\*\* on the Social Impact of the Arts shows that kids in lower income communities with robust arts and culture centers and activity scored 91% higher on standardized test compared to their peers in areas lacking in arts and culture assets. showed that areas with robust arts and culture have stronger community connection, better outcomes in education, mental and physical health, public safety and civic engagement.

At this critical moment in our state and in our country, this is what we desperately need----communities where people feel safe and connected, a state filled with vibrancy, community, and joy. That is what NY can offer. This is the state we can build, a place where art, culture and community is supported, where everyone can thrive.

Invest in this future for our state. It's a small cost with a huge return on investment, economically and socially.

Thank you for hearing my testimony

\*NASAA [https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa\\_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/](https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/)

\*\*Center for Urban Future  
<https://nycfuture.org/research/upstates-creative-spark>

\*\*\*UPenn Social Impact of the Arts  
<https://repository.upenn.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/bac14eb0-07b6-4579-9c56-bd8e98b89c57/content>