

House Business Affairs & Labor
04/28/2021 Upon Adjournment
HB21-1285 Funding To Support Creative Arts Industries
Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Shawna Schultz For Self	To whom it may concern. I was born and raised in Colorado. I went to film school at CU Boulder and I started my business, Mass FX Media 10 years ago with the goal to build more of the film industry right here in my own state. I am in the process of developing a feature film about one of our own Colorado heroes, and as I raise money and find creative partners, I constantly get told to "shoot in another state that has incentives." Film incentives matter to producers and the gatekeepers for films. Production and post-production on a film and on series creates jobs for me, my employees and people who want to stay and build their career here in Colorado as a creative. I support this bill because it will support me, my family and my business and it will bring more work to the small, but mighty film industry that exists here in Colorado. Help me tell my stories right here. Help me and my business stay. Thank you for your time today.

To the Esteemed Committee,

First of all, I want to thank you and your colleagues in the Colorado Legislature for reinstating Colorado Creative Industries' (our state arts agency) and Colorado Film Office's budgets, which were substantially cut back in May 2020. We also appreciate your recent efforts in creating HB 21-1285.

Arts and culture is the second hardest hit industry due to COVID-19 and expected to be one of the last to recover. Because there is such a long lead time for performances, festivals and musical entertainment and because, even today, the future surrounding COVID-19 restrictions is so uncertain, many events have already been canceled for 2021. This results in loss of revenue through ticket sales, fundraising events and shuttered venues to name a few. In rural Colorado, in communities where economic diversity relies heavily on arts and culture, especially in years of low moisture like 2021, arts and culture tourism is critical to our economic health.

The arts give us more than hope. The arts help us understand and empathize with different points of view, different religions and cultures. Arts and culture are a common ground where people come together to laugh, to grieve, to celebrate and to understand. But more than that, the arts in Colorado are critical to attracting tourists and stimulating rural economies. Cultural tourists stay longer and spend more money than other tourists – on average an additional \$37 per event. They stay in hotels, eat in local restaurants and spend money with our downtown businesses.

Last year Steamboat Creates piloted Pivot Point: Creative Tools for Personal Empowerment, creative classes led by mental health professionals to help people cope with the stress, isolation and grief surrounding COVID-19. The courses were offered at no charge and served to remove the stigma around mental health, a critical barrier in rural communities. We had 168 participants and are continuing the classes this year with a focus on the LGBTQIA+ community. The arts serve to improve health, mental wellness and quality of life as well as to entertain.

According to a study by Colorado State University and Colorado Creative Industries, it is projected that Colorado's creative industries **lost an estimated 59,588 jobs and \$2.6 billion in sales revenue between April and July 2020** due to the COVID-19 crisis. This four-month period of estimated losses **contracted the region's creative economy by 31% in terms of employment and 8% in annual sales revenue.** *The losses are substantially greater as creative businesses and cultural organizations remain shuttered.* Thus, funding arts and culture in Colorado is more critical than ever if our creative sector is to survive! Organizations in Routt County have said over and over that this is the year that will make or break them. If they can't perform or hold gatherings this year they will have to close their doors. Colleagues in other rural communities are already seeing galleries and performance venues close. Individual artists struggle to pay rent and buy food.

Through the SB20B-001 funding, the Colorado Arts Relief Fund, 599 individuals in 41 counties were awarded a total of \$1.365 million; and 123 arts, culture, and entertainment organizations in 33 counties across the state received general operating support grants totaling \$5,985,500. This was a great start, but didn't even begin to address the needs of all arts organizations and individual artists who cannot work, not because they don't want to but because they have been told they cannot.

This bill is more than just a piece of paper. This bill will help rebuild our creative economy. Every time you listen to music, read a book, see a mural, look at a brochure, watch TV or a movie, go to a festival or a gallery, buy a hand-knit scarf or mittens, ask yourself what that's worth. I strongly encourage you to support this bill. Colorado's rural and urban communities need your help.

Sincerely,

Dagny McKinley
Development Director, Steamboat Creates

