

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17

18
19

H.624

Introduced by Representatives Jerome of Brandon, Austin of Colchester,
Brumsted of Shelburne, Burke of Brattleboro, Campbell of St.
Johnsbury, Cina of Burlington, Coffey of Guilford, Cupoli of
Rutland City, Dolan of Waitsfield, Durfee of Shaftsbury, Hango
of Berkshire, Killacky of South Burlington, Kitzmiller of
Montpelier, Mulvaney-Stanak of Burlington, Nicoll of Ludlow,
Noyes of Wolcott, Page of Newport City, Pajala of
Londonderry, Rachelson of Burlington, Scheuermann of Stowe,
Sims of Craftsbury, Stebbins of Burlington, White of Bethel,
Wood of Waterbury, and Yantachka of Charlotte

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Commerce and trade; economic development

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to provide grants
and other incentives to support creative sector businesses and cultural
organizations that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

An act relating to supporting creative sector businesses and cultural
organizations

1 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

2 Sec. 1. FINDINGS; PURPOSE

3 (a) Findings. The General Assembly finds:

4 (1) The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly jeopardized the economic
5 viability of creative sector businesses, museums, theaters, galleries, studios,
6 performing arts venues, and other cultural organizations.

7 (2) Creative sector businesses and nonprofits are important to Vermont's
8 economic growth and community vitality, attracting tourists, boosting local
9 sales, and generating more than nine percent of Vermont's jobs.

10 (3) These businesses and organizations were among the first to close to
11 protect public health and are also among the last to fully reopen.

12 (4) Even as performances and cultural activities slowly return to
13 operation, they are often are not able to operate at pre-pandemic capacity, and
14 the public remains trepidatious to gather in close proximity with others, even if
15 masked.

16 (5) Past financial support for creative sector businesses, performing arts
17 venues, and other cultural organizations has provided a bridge to this point, but
18 these entities continue to have significant need until vaccinations and other
19 public health measures allow them to return to economic health.

1 (b) Purpose. The purpose of this act is to provide \$17.5 million in
2 additional financial assistance to creative sector businesses and cultural
3 organizations as follows:

4 (1) to provide direct financial assistance for COVID-19-safe equipment,
5 marketing and re-engaging audiences, and covering operating costs;

6 (2) to support statewide promotion and marketing of Vermont's creative
7 economy;

8 (3) to provide funding for the Vermont Arts Council to implement the
9 CreateVT Action Plan; and

10 (4) to support both creative sector businesses and downtown growth and
11 revitalization by providing affordable studio, housing, performance, and
12 exhibition space and opportunities for artists and other creative sector
13 businesses.

14 Sec. 2. CREATIVE ECONOMY RECOVERY PROGRAM

15 In fiscal year 2023, of the amounts available to the State from federal
16 coronavirus relief funds, the amount of \$17,500,000.00 is appropriated to the
17 Agency of Commerce and Community Development, which the Agency shall
18 subgrant to the Vermont Arts Council to administer consistent with the
19 provisions of this section.

1 (1) Creative economy grants. The Council shall allocate funding for
2 creative economy grants to theaters, community arts centers, galleries,
3 museums, dance studios, and similarly situated entities, as follows:

4 (A) \$10,000,000.00 to cover a portion of monthly operating costs for
5 businesses and organizations that have sustained substantial losses due to the
6 pandemic, including rent, mortgage, utilities, and insurance;

7 (B) \$2,000,000.00 for public health-related business and
8 programming adaptations, including to purchase and implement touchless
9 ticketing, online sales platforms, and COVID-19-related health and safety
10 protocols; and

11 (C) \$4,000,000.00 for public health-related facility adaptations,
12 including the purchase of air purification systems, hand-sanitizer dispensers,
13 expanded outdoor seating, and HVAC assessments and upgrades.

14 (2) Statewide promotion and marketing of Vermont's creative sector.
15 The Council shall allocate \$500,000.00 to support statewide and regional
16 marketing of arts and cultural events, venues, and creative sector businesses
17 that are essential to revive consumer confidence and spending.

18 (3) Vermont Creative Network Coordinator and network support. The
19 Council shall allocate \$250,000.00 to hire the Vermont Creative Network
20 Coordinator and Zone Leader positions for two years to implement the
21 CreateVT Action Plan.

1 (4) Art space and housing in vacant downtown storefronts. The Council
2 shall allocate \$750,000.00 for creative spaces grants to restore vitality to
3 vacant downtown buildings and other retail spaces and provide affordable
4 housing, studio, exhibition, and performance space to Vermont artists.

5 (A) A creative sector business may apply for a three-year grant to
6 lease vacant downtown retail space.

7 (B) A grantee may also use funds to lease residential space in the
8 same building and to enable a landlord to make necessary improvements to the
9 building to enable residential use.

10 (C) The Council shall pay grant funds directly to a landlord after the
11 execution of a lease agreement.

12 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

13 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2022.