

## MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

TO: Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs  
Sen. Michael Sirotkin, Chair; Sen. Alison Clarkson, Vice Chair; Sen. Becca Balint; Sen. Randy Brock;  
Sen. Kesha Ram Hinsdale

FROM: Tom Bodett, Founder and President, HatchSpace

CC: Amy Cunningham, Vermont Arts Council

DATE: February 4, 2022

RE: Vermont Creative Futures Act (S.202, H.624)

HatchSpace is a member-supported community woodworking workshop founded in Brattleboro, Vermont in 2019. A unique asset to cultural and economic life in southern Vermont and the region, our mission is to sharpen an appreciation for the work of human hands through the learning, practice, and teaching of woodworking. We support the art and craft of woodworking, provide workforce training, advocate sustainable wood practices, and provide affordable workspaces to local artists and makers. Here's why S.202 and H.624 is so important to us:

- The pandemic hit just as HatchSpace had reached capacity in its original location and launched a major expansion and relocation effort. Funds totaling over \$100,000 needed for expansion and growth activities were reallocated to organization life support instead. **The Creative Futures Act addresses this financial impact by making available urgently needed relief funds to arts organizations.**
- The social and economic uncertainty generated over the last 24 months caused HatchSpace to lose *all* of its membership revenue between March 2020 and August 2021, and to date have recovered only 25% of that activity. HatchSpace also had to cancel 80 percent of income generating activities such as classes and public events, our chief source of earned revenue.. **The Creative Futures Act addresses the financial losses sustained by arts organizations like HatchSpace by providing relief grants that offset lost income.**
- Covid has forced many arts and culture organizations like HatchSpace to rethink both what "membership" means to our community along with our in-person service offerings; we have made a frequent pivot to online activities, many of which will become lasting sources of business value. To do this well, HatchSpace has absorbed the costs of fiber optic broadband, multiple computer work stations, and ongoing staff training. **The Creative Futures Act incentivizes further investments by organizations like HatchSpace by making additional support available for necessary and ongoing adaptation.**
- As a landlord, the HatchSpace and its patron organization High Street & Green have sustained income losses due to vacant storefront and studio space our High Street location, at a total value of \$32,000. This amount is equal to the annual costs of maintenance and repairs for the building, which had to be taken from other priorities. **The Creative Futures Act recognized these acute losses by providing rental support to property owners who provide direct support to the arts.**
- HatchSpace is a new organization, only recently reopened after the devastating Covid closures and necessary relocation to a larger, better ventilated space. Our goal is to be fully back on pace with staff and programming by June 2022. For all of the reasons listed above, we're doing this work behind the eight ball. Even while we recognize that we're an ecosystem player, we are painfully aware that if we have to choose between a focus on our business

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survival or a focus on ecosystem development, we must focus on our business survival. **The Creative Futures Act helps us to avoid this false choice by providing marketing support to Vermont's creative sector and nurturing a state-wide creative network, both of which we support wholeheartedly.**

Thank you for hearing a bit about our story, and thank you in advance for your support of the Vermont Creative Futures Act - a truly remarkable collective recovery effort on the part of the State of Vermont.