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STATEWIDE GRASSROOTS CULTURAL INITIATIVE ANNOUNCES FUNDING AND DIRECTOR FOR YEAR-LONG PILOT PROJECT

Next Statewide Event Announced for April 16

PORTLAND, MAINE -- The groundbreaking, grassroots, statewide initiative known as the Cultural Alliance of Maine (CAM) has officially launched a year-long pilot project and free public events to bring together Maine’s diverse cultural communities in a thriving, collaborative, unified ecosystem designed to increase the sector’s visibility, impact, and resources. The pilot will be directed by Carla Pugliese of Waterford.

CAM will kick off a year-long calendar of events with the next in a series of free virtual community gatherings started last year in response to the pandemic. On April 16 from 9 - 10:00 AM cultural organizations and workers will have the opportunity to again gather to discuss the sector's opportunities and challenges as we head into reopening and Maine's busy tourism season. We have invited Heather Johnson, the Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development, to join us to share insight and guidance around current protocols.

The COVID-19 pandemic has starkly illuminated that Maine lacks structures to enable the cultural sector to learn, organize, and act as a unified statewide community. In response, a group of leaders from across the state, representing diverse nonprofit cultural organizations, came together, mobilized, and secured funding for this pilot project to create a statewide alliance now known as the Cultural Alliance of Maine (CAM). Many other states across the country have such alliances, offering models from which to learn and innovate.

With generous support from The Onion Foundation, Morton-Kelly Charitable Trust, Virginia Hodgkins Somers Foundation, Libra Foundation, and administrative support from Maine Association of Nonprofits (MANP), the CAM initiative will explore models to address this infrastructure gap long-term, advocate for solutions to the unique challenges facing the sector
now and create pathways for ongoing peer-to-peer learning and information exchange.

CAM is proud to introduce Carla Pugliese of Waterford, Maine as the Pilot Project Director. In this role, Carla will work with the CAM Steering Committee to convene stakeholders, assess needs, research comparable sector-wide alliances, build bridges with state government and other sectors, and help to inform next steps following the pilot project period.

“The first charge of CAM is to respond to the immediate needs of the arts and culture sector as we navigate the ongoing pandemic,” said Pugliese. “But our work is also to dream, together, of what a fully flourishing cultural community looks like in the future and to build a coalition that moves us toward that dream. To allow our response to the pandemic to catalyze daring, expansive, proactive visions of what the future can be.”

Maine’s cultural communities are vital contributors to the state’s economy and quality of life. In 2017, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reported that arts and cultural industries in Maine added $1.6 billion to the state economy and employed over 16,000 Mainers. A survey conducted by the Maine Arts Commission in 2015 found that 98% of residents polled – a sample that included residents from every Maine ZIP code – indicated an interest in the arts. In 2017, according to data from the National Endowment for the Arts, 57.9% of Mainers attended an arts or cultural event and 81% consumed art via electronic media. The following year, 38.6% of adults in Maine reported personally performing or creating art.

“Maine's cultural sector is a unique and diverse place. The needs of rural and all-volunteer organizations vary greatly from the needs of long established, well known cultural organizations. An artist in a border town has different needs than an artist on the coast. Traditional and contemporary arts both find homes and audiences here,” said Chris Newell, Executive Director & Senior Partner to Wabanaki Nations at the Abbe Museum and CAM Steering Committee member. “Creating an organization that advocates for the wide ranging diversity of Maine's unique demographics and geography is a significant challenge, but a necessary and timely one. Developing our cultural sector is more valuable than just the economics. It's an investment in our humanity and in future generations of exceptional Mainers.”

CAM invites all members of the broad and diverse cultural communities of Maine to join in this work. Those looking to connect are encouraged to:

- **Register** for the April Community Convening, to be held on April 16, 2021 – [registration is available here](#)
- **Join** a weekly open office hours session to seek support and share ideas with peers and the Pilot Project Director – [sign-ups available at this link](#)
- **Read more** about Carla and CAM’s work – [find all the details here](#)
- **Subscribe** to the weekly CAM newsletter – [join the mailing list here](#)