



State Senator Sheila Harsdorf

Date: February 19, 2014
To: Assembly Committee on Tourism
From: Senator Sheila Harsdorf
Re: Assembly Bill 760- Creative Economy

Dear Chair Kaufert and Committee Members:

Thank you for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 760 (AB 760) which seeks to create a grant program through the Wisconsin Arts Board to boost creative industries and job creation in our state. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of AB 760.

According to Arts Wisconsin, the nonprofit arts and cultural sector in Wisconsin generates \$535 million in economic activity resulting in \$65 million in local and state revenues and employs nearly 50,000 full-time jobs among over 12,000 businesses. Creative development is happening all over the state. An example in my district is the City of St. Croix Falls' restoration of the civic auditorium as an integral part to the revitalization of the downtown. Later, you will hear from Arts Wisconsin who will highlight projects and developments occurring around the state that are creating jobs and adding to our quality of life.

AB 760 is designed to promote the creative economy where business or local arts agencies provide products or services which have an origin in artistic, cultural, creative, or aesthetic content. This bill would create a creative economy development initiative grant through the Wisconsin Arts Board under the Department of Tourism. The biennial appropriation of \$500,000 would allow the Arts Board to award grants on a competitive basis to businesses, arts organizations, local arts agencies, and business development organizations that promote creative industries, job creation, and economic development. Applicants applying for the grants are eligible to receive up to \$40,000 and must have secured at least a two-to-one match of non-state funds for the project. The appropriation is one-time funding and requires the Arts Board to develop a process to score the effectiveness of the grants and report back to the Joint Committee on Finance.

Arts and cultural experiences account for a significant number of small businesses that help stimulate the economy through tourism and neighborhood development, as well as creating community assets that improve quality of life measures that businesses and their employees value. This in turn helps to incubate and grow additional businesses, broadens the tax base, and attracts tourists. I am encouraged by the bipartisan support of this bill and urge timely passage of this job creating legislation.

Feb 19, 2014 Testimony
Jay Salinas- Co-Founder & Director of Special Projects
Wormfarm Institute

I am here today to ask you to support the Creative Economy Development Initiative as a modest yet profoundly necessary boost to the states portfolio of strategies for increasing support for the arts and culture, key elements in a vibrant and prosperous communities. This is a strategy I know can be effective as I have seen it 1st hand in my work and in my community.

The Wormfarm Institute is a small non profit located in Reedsburg in Sauk County with the mission to integrate culture and agriculture to build thriving rural communities. Incorporated in 2000, the Wormfarm partners across disciplines implementing wide-ranging community-based cultural events that are built upon existing assets, and use the arts to highlight these assets. Over the years we have created history-based murals, hosted speakers and resident artists, mounted exhibits and developed community festivals.

Our latest project is Fermentation Fest- a Live Culture Convergence- a 10 celebration of food and farming with an emphasis on fermentation. This of course refers to beer wine, cheese, products for which WI is already well-known. But fermentation is also a metaphor for transformation- the ongoing transformation and evolution within a community and this is in no small part what we intend by these efforts.

In 2013, our 3rd year, over 12,000 people came through Reedsburg for some part of the Fest. The centerpiece is the Farm/ Art Dtour where we use the vision of artists to explore the timeless connection between land & people. It's a 50 mile self guided tour through the beautiful working lands of N Sauk County, thru LaValle, Ironton and Lime Ridge. Visitors pass by a diverse range of working farms from a family operated 1000 cow dairy to small Amish farm both of whom support, contribute to and benefit from its success They view high quality commissioned artwork, as well as the work of self-taught artists, buy locally produced food from small scale producers and processors. Some are world famous cheese makers some are locally famous picklers. There are educational opportunities that help these visitors- over half who come from Chicago, Milwaukee and the Twin Cities- gain a deeper appreciation of the vital business of farming that feeds us all and they support dozens of small businesses along the way. Using a recent study on Agritourism by the the UW Extension we calculate they pumped over one million dollars into our economy in this 10 day period. We're planning now for the 4th year of Fermentation Fest and expect to host at least 16,000 visitors in 2014.

This is a project that links tourism, agriculture, the arts and economic development in what is called "creative placemaking" and Fermentation Fest is acknowledged as a nationwide model of how it can tangibly benefit a community. This work that has been supported on the national level through the National Endowment for the Arts and Art Place- a consortium of

13 private foundations in partnership with federal agencies including the USDA.

But before we had this kind of attention and support we had it on the local and state level. We are incredibly fortunate to live in Sauk County- the only rural county in the state that has an arts & cultural funding program. We have regularly been supported by this program and have leveraged these small grants for funding from the WI Humanities Council and WI Arts Board which in turn has given us the capacity to receive national funding. We have used these small grants to leverage private dollars and have in turn invested several hundred thousand dollars directly into local businesses, like accountants, graphic designers, farmers, sign-makers. And notably we are preparing to hire more staff for our own organization.

Economic activity is the natural byproduct resulting from our efforts. Economic development is the responsibility of those whose livelihood depends upon capturing and sustaining this activity. We have created a fertile environment in which entrepreneurs have successfully launched new businesses, where existing businesses in out-of-the-way places now have customers drive long distances to patronize them, and long-time merchants have had their best sales in 30 years of business.

Investment in culture and creativity helps grow the new economy. When thoughtfully deployed, financial support for the arts and humanities not only helps artists and scholars but helps communities. If we are serious about job growth and economic development we should be imaginative in our approaches to it. Chasing smokestacks and offering tax incentives is an old and increasingly obsolete method of job creation. Today, job growth and economic stability is achieved by using creativity and imagination to spark innovation. Innovation does not have to mean new smartphone apps and can instead refer to sustainable agritourism that builds upon our history, culture and existing infrastructure.

I am here today to ask you to support Senate Bill SB568 Creative Economy Development Initiative. WI currently spends 15 cents per capita on the arts, placing us 47th in the nation. Support for the arts is a vital element of a comprehensive strategy to re-invigorate communities and spur economic development.

I finish by saying how gratifying it was to see my representatives have signed on as sponsors of this bill. Assemblyman Brooks actually sent us the initial announcement for the 1st NEA Our Town grant that really got this thing rolling. And Senator Schultz has been a supporter of this work years.

Wormfarm Institute - Economic Impact in Sauk County

State and Federal funding (private and government) Wormfarm has brought to Sauk County since 2010

8,000	WI Humanities Council 2010 (Key Ingredients)
23,000	WI Dept. of Tourism
10,000	WI Arts Board
2,000	WI Humanities Council mini grant
21,000	WI Dept. of Tourism 2011
5,600	WI Arts Board
2,000	Alliant Energy Foundation
3,000	WI Farmers Union
50,000	National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), Our Town grant
6,800	WI Dept. of Tourism 2012
100,000	ArtPlace America grant
10,000	Brico Fund
2,000	Alliant Energy Foundation
6,000	WI Arts Board
35,000	NEA, Presenting grant, 2013
75,000	ArtPlace America grant
2,000	Alliant Energy
6,000	WI Arts Board
<u>100,000</u>	NEA, Our Town grant 2014
\$467,400	

Attendance

Key Ingredients , Traveling Smithsonian 2010 (6 weeks)	4000
Fermentation Fest, the pilot	4000
Fermentation Fest year two	8500
Fermentation Fest, year three, conservative estimate	12,000
Fermentation Fest year four, projected	16,000-20,000

Economic impact

- A recent UW Extension study on Agritourism reports median spending during respondents' last trip involving agritourism was \$137. Based on these figures in 2014 Fermentation Fest could contribute up to \$2,740,000.00 – in direct spending in Sauk County. This will be over and above any grant funds .
- In 2013 over 30 business or attractions in five towns (LaValle, Lime Ridge Ironton, Valton and Reedsburg) saw direct benefit with increases in business compared to non-fest weekends up 25%- 800%.
- Entrepreneurial efforts also were very successful from pop restaurants, to farmers selling straw to church ladies selling soup and baked goods, to hay rides and more

INFORMATION ABOUT THE NEA GRANT

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) OUR TOWN Grant

This is a new grant program established in 2011 to help fund Creative Placemaking efforts across the country (see below for definition). Wormfarm received a grant for \$50,000 in its first year of funding to launch The Farm/Art DTour and has since been featured as an exemplary project. The grant application is listed on the NEA website Arts.gov as an example of innovative arts programming. In 2011 Wormfarm was one of 51 recipients nationally and the only one in Wisconsin.

In 2013 Wormfarm's proposal was one of 56 projects nationwide selected to receive an Our Town Grant for 2014 for \$100,000. It was one of only three projects to receive this award a second time and the only rural one. This was due to a strong proposal, innovative project, demonstrated success and strong proposed local (County) support

OUR TOWN Goals:

Our Town will invest in creative and innovative projects in which communities, together with arts and/or design organizations seek to:

- Improve their quality of life;
- Encourage greater creative activity;
- Foster stronger community identity and a sense of place; and
- Revitalize economic development.

Creative Placemaking is defined as:

"In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, nonprofit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, tribe, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired." -

Grant eligibility

To be eligible for an Our Town grant application must include a nonprofit arts organization (Wormfarm Institute) and a government partner (Sauk County)

The grant must be matched dollar for dollar (at minimum) Strong proposals demonstrate strong local support

IMPORTANT FACTS TO NOTE ABOUT 2014 and BEYOND

- Fermentation Fest is recognized nationally as "...the poster child for rural Creative Placemaking" Rocco Landesman former Chair of National Endowment for the Arts. This is an asset based interdisciplinary economic development strategy that has national momentum and attention.
- As the project matures we will reach further into and across the county ensuring this becomes a key part of a larger effort to grow the region both culturally and economically. We will work in partnership with Chambers of Commerce, tourism, SCDC, UW Baraboo
- WI Dept. of Tourism has declared 2014 to be the year of AgriTourism – summit held at Wollersheim Winery Nov 12, 2013
- Wisconsin Foodie television show filmed during 2013 Fermentation Fest. Three will be an upcoming episode featuring this event show on Public television stations across the state
- USDA Rural Development has championed this project throughout the country as a prime example of an innovative rural development strategy

Wormfarm Institute

Recent publicity on Fermentation Fest- regional, national, international

Articles 2011-14

1.	Grow magazine, Agriculture/ Life Science, UW Madison	12
2.	Forecast Public Art magazine, national	12
3.	Mary Jane's Farm, national	12
4.	Ensia magazine, MN/ national	13
5.	Realtor magazine, national real estate	13
6.	Electric Cooperative News	2011, 13
7.	Art of the Rural interview, national	13
8.	Howl Round article, national	12
9.	WI People and Ideas magazine, WI	12
10.	Midwest Living	13
11.	Brava Magazine (women's health style) Madison	13
12.	Growler Magazine, craft beer industry – Midwest	13
13.	WI State Journal article	13
14.	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article	13
15.	New York Times Travel section, article	13
16.	WI Foodie TV show WPR `(upcoming)	14
17.	WPR Best of Our Knowledge, feature story	14
18.	ArtPlace book on creative placemaking, international	14

See other side

Speaking Engagements as a result of Fermentation Fest

1.	Midwest Bioneers - panel	2013
2.	ArtPlace summit, Creative Placemaking - Miami	13
3.	NEA on line storybook , national Selected as "exemplary project" for in-depth analysis	14
4.	NEA profiles – interview Jay Salinas Online interview, national	11
5.	Rural Arts conference, Mass	12
6.	Rural Arts Summit MN	13
7.	Smart Growth conference KC, Kansas	13
8.	Federal Reserve Bank, ST Louis- Arts and Economic Development	13
9.	One State for Arts conference, Moline IL Arts & Community, John Deere headquarters	13
10.	WI Academy, Academy Evenings	12
11.	USDA – meeting presentation, Wash DC	13
12.	NEA grant review panel, Wash DC	13
13.	Alliance for Artists Communities, San Jose CA	13
14.	Rural Sociological Society Award – Distinguished Service to Rural Life NY, NY	13
15.	Michigan Arts Summit, Grand Rapids MI "Rural Initiatives: Empowering Creativity in Rural Regions"	13
16.	ArtPlace Summit on Creative Placemaking, LA CA	14
17.	Building Communities Conference, Lansing MI	14
18.	Community Building Through Art- Earth Day, Madison	14
19.	Creative Placemaking Symposium, Milwaukee	14

APRIL 19 | SATURDAY | 7:30 P.M.
PAUL BARERRE & FRED TACKETT



From the first time they played "Dixie Chicken" nearly 35 years ago, these Little Feat guitarists have been making legendary music! These two virtuosos are together again bringing a rare opportunity for audiences to savor songs from the Little Feat catalog. **Tickets \$35**

MAY 2 & 3 | FRIDAY & SATURDAY | 7:30 P.M.
THE PAUL THORN BAND



This critically acclaimed singer/songwriter has been pleasing crowds for years with his muscular brand of roots music – bluesy, rocking and thoroughly Southern – producing eleven highly-praised CDs along the way. **Tickets \$25**

MAY 17 | SATURDAY | 7:30 P.M.
CHRIS HILLMAN & HERB PEDERSEN



Hillman (The Byrds, Souther-Hillman-Furay, The Flying Burrito Brothers, Desert Rose Band) is touring with Pedersen (Laurel Canyon Ramblers, Desert Rose Band) in support of several acclaimed albums of

Bluegrass, Acoustic & Country selections. **Tickets \$30**

We still have many other surprises in store for the season. Join our email family of friends and be the first to hear about them. Visit our website and click "Join E-List" to receive monthly updates.

For tickets or more info, visit www.thrasheroperahouse.com, or call the TOH office at 920.294.4279. Ticket Outlets: Thrasher office (next to opera house), Knowledge Emporium and Green Lake Bank (Green Lake); Pick 'n' Save and Ripon Drug (Ripon); Twister (Princeton).

Gift Certificates: Whether it be an anniversary, birthday, a gesture of appreciation, or just for fun, gift certificates are always welcome. Available in any denomination. Call 920.294.4279 to purchase.



Built in 1909, and opened in 1910, the Thrasher Opera House, located in downtown Green Lake, Wisconsin, was restored and reopened in 1997. It is an outstanding musical, cultural, and educa-

tional venue drawing rave reviews from audiences and artists alike for its marvelous sound quality and welcoming interior. Thrasher hosts an extensive array of world-class comedians, musicians, dramatists, and other artists from around the world. In addition, the intimate atmosphere along with moveable seating for 200 allows main floor versatility for many other uses: weddings, business meetings, school proms, plays, memorial services, lectures, and uses limited only by the imagination of the public.

Become a member!

The Thrasher Opera House Corporation is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Donations in any amount are much appreciated and are vital to the long-term existence of the Thrasher. All donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Please also consider making a gift to the Thrasher Opera House through a will, trust, or estate planning.



This project was supported in part by funds from the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts.



Thrasher Opera House
506 Mill Street
Green Lake, WI 54941

Business Office Location
510 Mill Street • P.O. Box 4
Green Lake, WI 54941
920.294.4279

info@thrasheroperahouse.com
www.thrasheroperahouse.com

Follow us on

Calendar of Events

WINTER/SPRING 2013-14

**THRASHER
OPERA HOUSE**
GREEN LAKE, WISCONSIN

*Experience the magic of live performance
in a cool little historic venue*



A season of Folk, Irish, Blues, Jazz, Pop, Rock, Bluegrass, Doo-Wop, Children's Theatre, and so much more...

NOVEMBER 15 | FRIDAY | 7:30 P.M.
JIMMY WEBB



Known for the classics he provided for such artists as Glen Campbell (*By The Time I Get To Phoenix*, *Wichita Lineman*, *Galveston*), Richard Harris (*MacArthur Park*), the Fifth Dimension (*Up, Up and Away*), Linda Ronstadt (*Easy For You To Say*) and more, Jimmy continues to write and sing songs as carefully crafted and magical as ever. **Tickets \$26**

NOVEMBER 29 | FRIDAY | 7:30 P.M.
GENE BERTONCINI
Annual Thanksgiving Jazz Series



One of the pre-eminent jazz guitarists active today. His fluid technique and lyricism have won him international praise and accolades. An eloquent and versatile improviser, he has been heard with an extraordinary range of jazz greats. Joined by maestro John Harmon and hosted by Janet Planet. **Tickets \$20**

DECEMBER 7 | SATURDAY | 3 P.M. & 7:30 P.M.
THE ALLEY CATS' JINGLE BELL ROCK
A Harmoniously Hysterical Holiday Hit!



America's premier Doo-Wop group performs holiday songs such as Let It Snow, Jingle Bell Rock, White Christmas, Blue Christmas, O Come All Ye Faithful, Sleigh Ride, Feliz Navidad, Rudolph & Silent

Night. "Hilarious!" –Jay Leno. **Tickets \$25**

DECEMBER 14 | SATURDAY | 7:30 P.M.
GEORGE WINSTON



One of our most-requested artists for the holiday, performing songs from seasonal favorites Autumn, December, Winter Into Spring, Summer and more.
Tickets: \$26

At the artist's request, please bring a donation of a non-perishable food item for the Green Lake County Food Pantry.

DECEMBER 21 | SATURDAY | 7:30 P.M.
SWITCHBACK: A MIDWESTERN CHRISTMAS



Christmas songs interspersed with lively reels, jigs and originals. A true down-home evening of favorites such as Oh, Holy Night, Jingle Bells & Away in the Manger from their holiday CD, "A Very Switchback Christmas" (2005). Superb songwriting and harmonies. **Tickets \$13**

JANUARY 18 | SATURDAY | 7:30 P.M.
THE DUHKS



Grammy nominees and Juno award winners. "Canada's premier neo-tradsters romp from world-beat to blues, urban-pop to old-timey, with wild-eyed invention, haunting traditionalism, and spine-rattling groove." – Scott Alarik, *The Boston Globe*
Tickets \$20

JANUARY 20-25 | MONDAY - SATURDAY
MISSOULA CHILDREN'S THEATRE PRESENTS
PINOCCHIO



Open Audition: Monday, 4 to 6 p.m.
Rehearsals: Tuesday through Friday, 4 to 6 p.m. and 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Performances: Saturday, January 25, 3 p.m. & 7 p.m. Join us as over 50 local students, grades K-12, present this original musical based on the classic tale.
Tickets: Adults \$12, Children \$8

FEBRUARY 15 | SATURDAY | 7:30 P.M.
WILLY PORTER



Porter, perhaps best known as a down tuned six-string wonder, is a master at free-form jam playing. His work has garnered widely positive reviews. The *Boston Globe* reported that Porter is a guitarist who possesses "the Olympian speed of Leo Kottke bolstered by rootsy vocals and twisting, offbeat lyrics." **Tickets \$20**

FEBRUARY 21 | FRIDAY | 7:30 P.M.
LÚNASA



Lúnasa's inventive arrangements and bass-driven grooves have steered Irish acoustic music into surprising new territory. Their blend of intelligence, innovation, virtuosity, and passion has brought them to the forefront of Celtic music. **Tickets \$23**

FEBRUARY 22 | SATURDAY | 7:30 P.M.
HARRY MANX



Manx has spent years fusing eastern musical traditions with the blues, switching effortlessly between guitars, harmonica, and banjo and the decidedly different 20-stringed Mohan Veena. Winner of seven Maple Blues Awards, six Juno nominations, a Canadian Folk Award, and the Great Canadian Blues Award. **Tickets: \$25**

MARCH 29 | SATURDAY | 7:30 P.M.
DAVID WILCOX



Wilcox's lyrical insight is matched by a smooth baritone voice, virtuosic guitar chops, and creative open tunings, giving him a range and tenderness rare in folk music. In addition to his writing prowess, his skills as a performer and storyteller are unmatched. **Tickets \$20**

APRIL 12 | SATURDAY | 7:30 P.M.
RED MOLLY



Since 2004, this trio has been bringing audiences to their feet with gorgeous three-part harmonies, crisp musicianship, and warm, engaging stage presence. "Make room, Roches and Wailin' Jennys, Red Molly has earned a place among the elite female trios." –John Platt, *WFUV*. **Tickets \$20**

ArtStart and the Rhinelander Community

My name is Ken Juon, I am the President of ArtStart Inc., a 501(c)3 Non-Profit Art and Culture Center located in downtown Rhinelander.

“The mission of ArtStart is to provide locally curated and traveling exhibitions in a museum quality environment to promote the arts, enhance our community, increase tourism and positively impact our economy.”

A little background. When the General Services Administration decided to abandon the Federal Building at 68 South Stevens Street in Rhinelander, they offered to sell the building to the City for \$1. The City wasn't sure they wanted the building. With maintenance and utility costs and no use for the building in sight, it was viewed as an additional expense to an already stretched municipal budget.

Seeing the potential for a downtown art and culture center in the building, a group of individuals formed a visioning committee to study the feasibility of leasing the building from the city should they agree to acquire it.

The visioning committee put together a proposal and at the City Council Meeting on December 13, 2010, the City of Rhinelander agreed to purchase the Federal Building for \$1 and lease the building back to ArtStart, with the understanding that ArtStart would have total financial responsibility for the maintenance, utilities and operation of the facility.

Today, ArtStart has an “Evergreen Lease” with the City. We've raised nearly \$250,000 in local contributions, all of which has been used for building renovations or programming. We've presented six major exhibitions, bringing Miro and Picasso to Rhinelander and “The Art of Hunting and Fishing”, among others. We've organized numerous community events and children's art projects. We have collaborated with regional arts institutions to bring the works of internationally known artists to Rhinelander. We have had visitors from 27 States and 5 foreign countries. We continue to be, as we started, an all-volunteer organization. A building that would otherwise be abandoned is now a thriving community center.

From the beginning of this project, my interest in establishing an art center in downtown Rhinelander came from the perspective of community development. Even though I have an arts background, spending 18 years in New York City a sculptor and an arts administrator, by 2010 I was working as the Purchasing Manager at the Wausau Paper mill in Rhinelander. As a paper mill executive I recognized the important role that a community rich in cultural opportunities plays in recruiting and retaining professional talent. You don't just recruit an individual, you recruit their families as

well. The availability of cultural and art education opportunities offers an additional incentive for the family to join a community.

The availability of cultural opportunities also serves as an indicator of the overall health of a community. These benefits are well documented. The arts help to establish a competitive advantage for the community by generating, retaining and attracting talent and innovation. They are a key contributor to the job opportunities and quality of place that are crucial for attracting high quality workers and their families, as well as retirees.

Furthermore, we see a growing number of travelers who want to experience arts activities. This type of educated, savvy tourist spends significantly more money in a community than the tourist of old.

Arts organizations and activities are able to attract investment to an area by creating a "ripple effect." As people are attracted to an area, entertainment venues, retailers, restaurants, residential spaces and business offices often follow, attracted by the increased traffic.

ArtStart has been successful to date by leveraging local resources. We are a 100 per cent volunteer organization. We have no paid staff but our efforts have generated an outpouring of requests for expanded arts and cultural events and programs requiring additional resources. We are also committed to keeping ArtStart exhibitions open to all residents and visitors free of charge.

Organizations like ArtStart need to be nourished and supported. They are an important element in the development, growth and maintenance of a healthy community. A low population density area like Rhinelanders especially needs additional resources. State recognition and support would not only provide needed financial assistance but also serve as validation and recognition that we are a viable organization as we seek funding from other sources.

Thank you for the opportunity to present before this committee. I ask for your support of Assembly Bill 760.

For more information you may visit our website at www.ArtStartRhinelanders.org or contact me at one of the options listed below.

Ken Juon, President
ArtStart Inc.
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Rhinelanders, WI 54501

715 360-3507
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Thrasher Opera House, Green Lake – Testimony re Creative Economy 2/19/14

The Thrasher Opera House was built in 1910 and flourished as a vaudeville and movie house until it was forced to close its doors during WWII. Over the next 40 years it was used for a manufacturing plant, then a warehouse, and eventually fell into disrepair. A local realtor purchased it in the mid-1990s and saw to its restoration, which led to the formation of the nonprofit Thrasher Opera House Corporation in 1998. Its mission is to promote the arts and the power of live performance, provide a community gathering place, and preserve the historic Thrasher Opera House.

No longer a downtown eyesore, the beautifully restored Thrasher Opera House is now a source of pride for the community of Green Lake. It is listed on the state and National Register of Historic Places. Since 1998, the Thrasher has hosted performers from Australia, Asia, Europe, the UK, Russia, Canada, and all over the U.S. World-renowned songwriter Jimmy Webb said of the Thrasher, "This may be the sweetest little place I've ever played."

In 2001 the Thrasher Opera House Corporation purchased the opera house building, and in 2008 the adjacent office building, a portion of which is rented to other businesses. In the Thrasher half, we created an art gallery, added a bar and remodeled two bathrooms, enhancing the concert experience for our audiences and creating a more attractive and adaptable space for event rentals. The Thrasher is used for weddings, business meetings, fundraisers, movies, parties, memorial services, and other events.

Each year the Thrasher provides 50-60 nights of diverse programming that includes music and theater performances, comedy, educational workshops for youth and adults, school plays, community forums and debates, with an estimated 10,000 people walking through its doors every year.

Thrasher ticket sales indicate that people are willing to travel to see their favorite performers. Many travel 100 miles or more and then stay overnight in Green Lake. The Thrasher staff is in close contact with area innkeepers and restaurant managers; they see a major uptick in business when the Thrasher has an event. They have collaborated with us in putting together special packages in conjunction with some of our concerts, which we've then cross-promoted. In our small rural setting, we have to be scrappy and creative in order to make the most of our limited marketing budgets and bring as much economic activity to town as possible.

As I'm sure many of you know, it's a lot of work to keep a small business going, especially in the economic climate of recent years, but with an entrepreneurial spirit towards earned income and with support from many donors and volunteers, the Thrasher continues to serve Green Lake and the surrounding communities. The Wisconsin Arts Board has been valuable in helping us, even though it hasn't been able to extend the financial support it once did. The Thrasher organization has worked hard to use its limited funds wisely, and has managed to keep its doors open for 16 years and be a positive force in Green Lake. With additional help from Creative Economy grant funding, we'd be able to present more and bigger shows and make an even larger economic impact in our community.

I'd like to thank Representative Kaufert for allowing me to speak today, and I also want to acknowledge and thank Rep. Ballweg for her support of our organization and of Green Lake.

Maria Dietrich, Development Director

www.thrasheroperahouse.com

Testimony to the Assembly Committee on Tourism In support of AB #760 – *Creative Economy Development Initiative*

February 19, 2014

Anne Katz, Executive Director, Arts Wisconsin

608 255 8316 | akatz@artswisconsin.org | www.artswisconsin.org

The state of Wisconsin should establish the *Creative Economy Development Initiative* as a public/private partnership to leverage and grow assets and resources based in the creative industries. The Initiative will:

- **provide local and regional economic development** through the state's creative industries;
- **support arts and creativity in education** as a deliberate, pro-active strategy for workforce development and skills training
- **strengthen capacity and entrepreneurship** for and in the state's diverse arts businesses.

"Creative industries" are for-profit and non-profit locally-owned and directed businesses, economic development organizations, and agencies of local government whose products or services have an origin in artistic, cultural, creative, or aesthetic content.

The Wisconsin Arts Board, a state agency with a 40-year history of service, excellence, and transparency, will administer the program.

Here are some economic impact numbers that demonstrate the potential for arts and creative industry investment in Wisconsin:

- According to Americans for the Arts and the Wisconsin Arts Board, Wisconsin's nonprofit arts and cultural sector is a \$535 million industry, resulting in \$65 million in local and state tax revenues, 22,872 full-time equivalent jobs, \$479 million in resident income.
- According to Dun & Bradstreet, Wisconsin's creative sector encompasses over 12,000 businesses and employs nearly 50,000 people in full-time jobs – mostly with small, entrepreneurial companies.
- The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)'s new Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account is the first federal effort to provide in-depth analysis of the arts and cultural sector's contributions to current-dollar gross domestic product (GDP), a measure of the final dollar value of all goods and services produced in the United States. According to these new estimates, 3.2 percent — or \$504 billion — of current-dollar GDP in 2011 was attributable to arts and culture.

Wisconsin has always been a place where the arts spring from the grassroots, a place where people of all interests, backgrounds, and perspectives, in communities of all sizes, are involved in creative endeavors. "The arts" are not something that only some people are involved with or care about. Wisconsinites are creative, entrepreneurial, imaginative and innovative.

I have had the privilege of leading Arts Wisconsin, which works with a statewide view and a local focus throughout Wisconsin, for nearly twenty years. I can tell you that this is an incredibly exciting time for our state. In hundreds of Wisconsin communities, of all sizes, arts,

business, education, government, political and civic leaders are coming together to grow the creative economy at the local level. From the quality of life revitalization of Lake Michigan waterfronts, to arts entrepreneur cooperative businesses forming on the shores of Lake Superior and in Rhinelander, Three Lakes, Eagle River and Land o'Lakes in the north woods, to creative economy policy planning in Portage County, to new municipal arts committees in La Crosse and Kenosha, to big city arts centers and arts development in Milwaukee, Madison, the Fox Valley, Eau Claire and Wausau...there's a lot going on.

Where Wisconsin has fallen behind in recent years – dangerously so – is in public investment in the arts and creativity as essential components for economic growth, educational advancement, civic engagement, and vibrant communities. In our rapidly changing world, where creativity and innovation are key to economic, educational and civic growth and success, that's unacceptable. Wisconsin must seize the opportunity to grow its economy with a 21st century development strategy.

So it's time for Wisconsin to lead. The arts and creativity work for a vibrant, innovative, and successful Wisconsin. Strengthening Wisconsin's creative industries is a critical strategy for the state and all of its communities to compete in the global economy, educate our children, engage residents, and to develop, attract and retain entrepreneurs and a high skilled work force through healthy, vibrant communities where people want to live, work, learn, and play.

This is a small investment with a big, ongoing payoff. The *Creative Economy Development Initiative* will help Wisconsin identify, strengthen and expand its creative programs, workforce, and businesses on the local level, leading to sustainable job growth, a growing talent pool, and community vibrancy and vitality. Thank you.

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Testimony of George Tzougros
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For Reference Only
On behalf of Assembly Bill #760
Before the Assembly Committee on Tourism
February 19, 2014

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- The Wisconsin Arts Board was created in 1973. It has a 40 year record of careful stewardship of taxpayer support and smart, catalytic investments in arts-related projects that develop community and the economy.
- We successfully use a Peer Panel Process to review all applications. These panels are chaired by a non-voting member of the Arts Board. The panelists come from around the state and bring industry knowledge and expertise, geographic and cultural diversity, and a balance of women and men. The panels are staffed by our excellent, professional staff. These panels review grant narratives and budgets, support materials and works samples in order to make their recommendations to the members of the Wisconsin Arts Board. The Arts Board makes the final funding decisions.
- A criteria sheet is developed for each application the Arts Board offers. These criteria are published in advance so applicants know on what basis they will be judged. These sheets also help focus the panelists' review of the applications. Issues covered by these sheets include responsible management, community outreach, artistic quality, and project assessment and evaluation. The Peer Panel Process uses a criteria sheet that is developed by the Arts Board and its staff, with ongoing feedback from the industry.
- Our grants normally require a one-to-one match. They often generate far more than that match, in both cash and in-kind donations of goods and services. Both types of contributions are important indications of community support.
- The Arts Board has been engaged in the promotion of and education about the creative economy since the early 1990s. Goal #1 of our current agency plan is "Assist Wisconsin communities to engage the creative industries in sustainable community and economic development."

- In fact, the Arts Board is a state and national leader in discussions regarding the creative economy and the creative industries. For example the Arts Board's Executive Director is the Board Chair of the National Creativity Network, which believes a sustainable future depends upon imaginative, creative, and innovative solutions to profound and complex challenges facing education, culture, and commerce.
- The Arts Board thanks the Committee for considering Assembly Bill #760 and stands ready to answer any questions.

