



JOEL KITCHENS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 1ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony for the Assembly Committee on Community Development Assembly Bill 66 Tuesday, March 12, 2019

Thank you Chairman Allen and fellow committee members for holding a public hearing on AB 66, which establishes a creative economy development initiative grant program.

It goes without saying, but the performing and visual arts have a beneficial and lasting impact on all our lives. The arts entertain us while giving us a deeper understanding of ourselves and they shape the culture and identity of our communities.

Numerous studies conclusively show that children who are exposed to the arts in school experience better pupil attendance and achievements in other subjects. Those same studies also confirm the arts inspire creativity and self-confidence in young people, which again translates over to many other fields of endeavor.

I am proud to represent a district that has one of the most active arts communities in the state. Because of that, I have been able to see firsthand how the arts positively contribute toward tourism and how large of a role they play in people determining where they want to live.

While the points I just shared are important, I want to shift my focus to a more tangible aspect of the arts industry. While many people may not realize it, one of the best economic development tools we have in the nation is the arts, which provide a return on investment for taxpayers that is seldom seen in other industries.

According to the Americans for the Arts' Economic Prosperity 5 Study, the state's nonprofit arts and cultural sector generates close to \$555 million annually in resident household income and \$40.5 million in state government revenue. The nonprofit arts and culture industry spends close to \$657 million a year in Wisconsin and supports 27,000 full-time jobs.

Specifically in Door County, the total yearly spending by the nonprofit arts and culture industry is nearly \$25 million. The arts support 632 full-time jobs in Door County and generate \$1.24 million in local government revenue and \$12.25 million in resident household income.

With that in mind, I have worked with Sen. Feyen on AB 66 to help Wisconsin continue to make great strides toward cultivating job growth and improving our economy.



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This legislation will provide \$500,000 over the next two-year budget cycle to the Department of Tourism's Arts Board to administer as creative economy grants to non-profits, businesses, local governments and business development associations.

To be considered eligible, organizations must focus on promoting at least one of the following: workforce training; arts education; economic development; job creation; or people or groups whose products or services have an origin in artistic, cultural, creative or aesthetic content. Applicants can apply for up to \$40,000 through the grant program and must have secured at least a two-to-one match of non-state funds for their respective projects.

Furthermore, the Arts Board will be required to develop a matrix to evaluate the effectiveness of the grants and report those findings to the Joint Finance Committee by May 1, 2021.

Since this legislation was put out for co-sponsorship, I have heard from many artists in my district, some of whom are here today, and they are excited about the potential of growing their businesses and helping Wisconsin move forward.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony, and I hope you support this bipartisan bill. I would also like to thank my Senate lead, Senator Feyen, for all the work that he and his office put into this legislation. I'll be happy to answer any questions if you have them.



DAN FEYEN

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To: The Assembly Committee on Community Development
From: Sen. Dan Feyen
Re: Assembly Bill 66

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing today.

Millennials highly value their quality of life. They decide what type of community they want to live in and then find a job in a location that fits the bill. Wisconsin has a workforce shortage and has spent considerable resources attempting to target millennials and sway them to move to our great state. This legislation builds on current talent attraction initiatives by supporting Wisconsin's communities in their endeavors to make themselves attractive places to live.

Assembly Bill 66 provides \$500,000 in GPR to the Arts Board to administer as competitive grants to non-profits, local governments, business development organizations, and businesses themselves. In order to receive a state grant, the organization must have secured matching non-state funds equal to twice the amount of the grant. Organizations could request a maximum of \$40,000 in grant funds.

Wisconsin has had considerable success fostering vibrant communities and this legislation seeks to further these community development efforts. As an example of efforts that these grants could support, I look to the communities I represent. Fond du Lac's Thelma Sadoff Center for the Arts has been critical in revitalizing our downtown. In Oshkosh organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce have invested in WaterFest, a summer concert series aimed at bettering the quality of life for city residents. I'm sure if you take a minute to consider your own districts you can also identify an arts-based initiative that has positively impacted the quality of life in your community.

In short, I see this bill as a workforce development tool that can be adapted for any community. Whether it's revitalizing a small, rural community that's trying to combat a shrinking, aging population or a neighborhood of an urban area that needs a facelift in order to bring in more businesses, the flexibility of this grant program is ideal to help all of Wisconsin attract and retain residents.

Thank you for your time today. I welcome any questions you may have.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
Katrina Shankland

71ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony on Assembly Bill 66

Chair Allen, Vice Chair Brandtjen, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on AB 66, the creative economy development bill. I appreciate that this committee is hearing the bill so early on in the session, and I'm testifying to give you all a better understanding about how this could impact more rural areas of the state.

As you know, the Creative Economy Development Initiative would be run by the Wisconsin Arts Board and serve as a public-private partnership. They would provide matching grants to invest in projects related to local and regional creative economic development, arts and creativity in education, and growing capacity in entrepreneurship. Local government and economic development agencies, businesses, and for profit and nonprofit arts organizations would be eligible for this funding.

Why is this important? Grant funding meant specifically to grow the creative economy would be a game changer for many organizations already doing this important work, and the competitive matching grant program would encourage more collaboration, innovation, and more players in the game.

An example of an organization embodying the work of developing the creative economy is Create Portage County. Create is based in downtown Stevens Point (population 26,000) and is housed in their IDEA center, a space for community members, entrepreneurs, and makers to create. Create has played an integral role in placemaking, convening important community conversations and education, and enhancing our quality of life in the region. From bringing in entrepreneurs from other cities and states to grow their business in Stevens Point, to hosting live music in the park every week over the summer, Create has added to the vibrancy and happiness of the community.

As we continue to discuss workforce development and hone in on talent attraction and retention, it is important to center the conversation on building communities that people want to live in. Research shows that young people want parks, outdoor activities, sports, transportation, shopping, and cultural amenities and that these quality of place measures matter more to them than other generations. According to a study in *Social Science and Medicine* by Michael Hogan, et al, local governments should focus on providing quality services while also focusing on enhancing access to these amenities, with special regard to parks and the arts, emphasizing place. This grant program can play a key role in helping communities innovate and enhance their character and placemaking. Consider this a workforce development issue, in addition to an economic one.

On the drive down today, I listened to a band I first heard at a house concert sponsored by Create Portage County. A community member had the idea for how to help us get through the long winter: inviting bands to come into each other's homes and play music for us. Since these concerts first started, I've met new people, purchased the bands' entire discographies, brought craft beverages from local businesses to the concerts, and eaten local food. In one action, I've supported artists, breweries, wineries, distilleries, local farmers, and even a local maple syrup maker. This is the impact Create has – by taking someone's idea and making it a reality, they have also supported our local musicians, farmers, and makers. They've created new programming that builds community. They've given us a way to get through the long winter, and that's perhaps what I appreciate most.

Create would be a natural fit for a create economy grant to continue their great work, and that's why I'm so supportive of this legislation. I love my community, and I especially love that it keeps getting better because of our strong creative economy. I urge you to support this legislation, and am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time. Thank you.

Assembly Committee on Community Development
March 12, 2019
Public Hearing on Assembly Bill 66, **Wisconsin Creates**

Good afternoon. I'm Kathy Kelsey Foley, director of Wausau's Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum. Thank you, Chairman Allen and Community Development Committee members, for the opportunity to comment on Assembly Bill 66 and the importance of our State's stepped-up investment in the arts, culture, and creativity.

For more than forty years, I have worked in art museums throughout the country and have seen the compelling evidence of the often-quoted slogan: the arts are good for business . . . and also proof that the arts are good – very good – for communities. Arts activities help to attract – and retain – skilled workers and their families, making communities vibrant, diverse, and compelling places to not “just” live, but also to become fully engaged in creative endeavors.

As statewide leaders – both in the public and private sectors – are increasingly concerned about attracting workers who have the required technical and soft skills, Wisconsin's arts-and-culture-forward communities can be part of the solution. Investments in creative pursuits, including local arts programs and artists, not only contribute to the overall well-being of a community, but also make the community a more desirable place to live and work.

A 2017 Conference Board and Americans for the Arts study, “Business Contributions to the Arts,” found that 54% of respondents said the arts improve the quality of life in a community. Further, there is strong evidence of the importance of exposing children to the arts. In the same study, 47% of respondents said the arts improve academic performance for students, a key statistic when recruiting employees with children.

In the twenty-first century, “creativity” is among the most desirable skills sought by employers. The public-private partnership to be established by **Wisconsin Creates** – Assembly Bill 66 – will leverage state assets and resources, positioning Wisconsin as a creativity hub. Investment in creative, cultural arts projects at the local level will translate into robust economic and community development.

Consider the community and economic impact of last summer's phenomenal 12- week Woodson Art Museum exhibition, *The World According to Federico Uribe*, which welcomed 27,891 visitors, 11% of whom voluntarily provided demographic information via the Museum's digital guestbook. From this feedback, we learned that 23% were local visitors, living within 30 miles; 41% were day-trip visitors; and 36% were overnight visitors. Using the Wisconsin Department of Tourism's Longwoods International established values for these statistically valid and impressive numbers, the economic impact of the 21,475 day-trip and overnight visitors exceeds \$2,177,000! That's huge . . . and this attendance figure and economic impact number represent just one quarter of the Woodson Art Museum's 2018 program.

Just think what might be made possible by the added incentive of financial partnerships created by Assembly Bill 66. The investment in **Wisconsin Creates** is an investment in creative community development that will move Wisconsin forward.

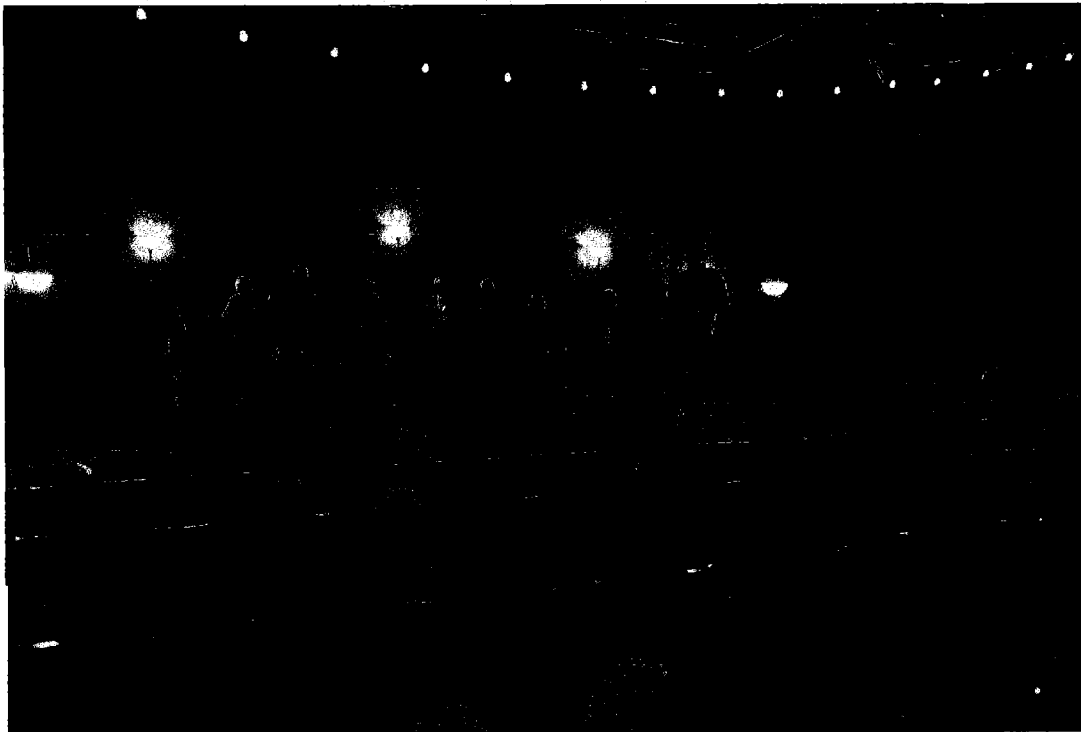
I urge you to support Assembly Bill 66.

Thank you.

Kathy Kelsey Foley, Director
Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum
Wausau, Wisconsin

Testimony of Alan Kopischke, Fish Creek (District 1)

Thank you Chairman Allen and all the committee members. Thank you Representative Kitchens, my Representative and a co-sponsor of the bill. I'm Alan Kopischke from Fish Creek and I have spent my life deeply involved in the arts. I currently teach and direct theatre at UW Green Bay, work as Production Manager at Door Community Auditorium, produce the Door Kinetic Arts Festival and serve on the boards of three small theatre companies. Over and over throughout my life I have seen the arts help kids and adults understand themselves and others better. I have seen the arts bring communities together to heal, and bond and commit to forging ahead together. And I have seen arts projects and arts organizations ignite economic opportunity in business districts that just needed the extra vitality the arts inject into the commercial climate.



Every Brilliant Thing at Third Avenue Playhouse, Sturgeon Bay

I could tell you stories of the at-risk kid who completely turned his life around in 5th grade because he learned through music and theatre how he could be a valued member of a group. I could tell you about the kid on the autism spectrum who made the most significant developmental strides of his young life when he connected with his classmates through the arts. However, in addition to the personal benefits of the arts, we are here to talk about Wisconsin's changing economy and 21st century workforce.

Why, in addition to all the wonderful intrinsic benefits of the arts to the people in our communities, do we want to give money to arts organizations to enhance the economic development and employment environment in communities across Wisconsin? Because it works. Small to medium sized grants to local arts organizations are some of the most effectively and efficiently leveraged dollars you can invest. These businesses are typically run by passionate, community-oriented folks who don't have nearly the

resources to produce the programming they envision. They squeeze every penny for the most they can get out of it. And when they can wrangle a little more, those dollars typically stay in the community, supporting local businesses and local workers to create and expand programs for the community that inspire additional spending at neighboring businesses.

Third Avenue Playhouse in Sturgeon Bay has, for the last six years, presented the only live theatre in Door County in, what we in our tourism-based economy call, the off season. People from all over northeast Wisconsin have come to value the quality productions of relevant entertainment, and have helped ignite a revitalization of the image and commercial vitality of Third Avenue and its restaurants, bars, shops and other businesses. The theatre has recently added staff and attracted potential partners in possible entrepreneurial business ventures. Seed money from a grant such as what's being proposed could have, and might still help accelerate and grow the potential impact they are already having.

As an acting teacher, my beginning acting classes typically fill with about half non-arts majors. They recognize that a deeper understanding of the arts gives an enormous boost to their ability to communicate effectively, to collaborate with team members, to understand the behavior of others and find tactics for dealing with them, and to find unique solutions to complex, real-life problems. These students leave the classroom so much better prepared to engage the challenges the real world will offer them, and the demands of our continually evolving economy.



The Beach Boys, Door Community Auditorium, Fish Creek

I have worked for and with dozens and dozens of arts groups all across Wisconsin. These grants, especially with the condition of two for one matching, will seed growth and vitality and work and commerce in communities all over the state. This is some of the best money you will invest all year.