

March 16, 2020

The Honorable Muriel Bowser  
Executive Office of the Mayor  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington DC 20004

Council of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Suite 410  
Washington DC 20004

CC: Mayor Muriel Bowser, Director Angie Gates, Chairman Phil Mendelson, Councilmember Kenyon McDuffie, Councilmember Charles Allen, Councilmember Brianne Nadeau, Councilmember David Grosso, Councilmember Anita Bonds, Councilmember Brandon Todd, Councilmember Robert White, Councilmember Mary Cheh, Councilmember Trayon White, Councilmember Elissa Silverman, Councilmember Vincent Gray, Director Shawn Townsend, Deputy Mayor John Falcicchio, Director Andrew Trueblood, Director Heran Sereke-Brhan, Director Maryann Lombardi

## **GIG WORKER & MUSICIAN RELIEF ADDENDUM TO THE EMERGENCY RELIEF BILL**

Dear Mayor Muriel Bowser and The Council of Washington DC:

We understand that this letter comes late in a rapidly-evolving process, but we hope that you will consider a Creative Inclusion Addendum to the city's planned emergency legislation. There are thousands of musicians in DC that are in need of public assistance, and we want to make sure the artists and musicians who make this city so special are not forgotten.

Listen Local First DC and members of the DC Music community are aware that the Mayor's office and the Council will be taking emergency measures to help local businesses and residents impacted by the shutdowns and quarantines associated with COVID-19. We urge you to give special consideration to the city's musicians and creatives, who are their own local businesses and will suffer greatly from an abrupt and severe loss of work due to venue closings and tour cancellations. We suggest that the Mayor and the Council consider a creative inclusion addendum to their emergency legislation. Below we have outlined some of the most pressing needs we have heard articulated by our fellow musicians and members of the DC music community. We hope these suggestions will be included in any emergency legislation.

### **Why is musicians/ artist inclusion important?**

Musicians rely on public gatherings more than almost any other creative discipline. A majority of DC-based musicians derive a significant amount of their personal income from live performance

and music industry employment. According to the DC Music Census<sup>1</sup> data, over 35% of the musicians living and working in Washington DC rely exclusively on live performance and regular gigs for all of their personal income. We have been hearing accounts of financial struggle from the music community over the last week. With zero gig income, some artists have been forced to leave town, abandoning leases and rent, to live with their families. Spring is the number one time for artist touring, and we have heard from dozens of bands whose national and even international tours have been cancelled. We have seen artists quit their alternate sources of income to prepare for a tour, only to have those tours cancelled — leaving the artists with no safety net. We know of artists who have purchased merchandise for tours that are no longer happening, accruing losses and debt that they will no longer be able to make up. But the most common stories come from artists who regularly perform around town and gig 3-5 times a week to pay for rent, food, and living expenses — and who now have zero income to rely on, and almost no safety net.

Spring is festival season, and musicians from this area derive a significant amount of revenue from performing events and festivals throughout the springtime. With the new public gathering advisories from the CDC<sup>2</sup>, all of those events are now being cancelled and artists are finding themselves with zero future income. Cancellations and public gathering restrictions are beginning to extend up to 12 weeks from now, and thousands of musicians and creatives will find themselves in even greater economic hardship in the weeks to come.

These considerations do not even account for local music venues, who mostly fall under the same restrictions being imposed on restaurants and bars throughout the city. These venues, many of which cannot subsist on carry out and food delivery revenue, are closing their doors, not knowing if they will be able to open again. For these small locally-owned venues that are not a part of larger restaurant and business management groups, we hope the city is considering everything from rent and mortgage abatement to compensation for staff, paid leave, and even mitigation funding from loss of revenue from cancelled events.

Below we have listed the primary needs of musicians, creatives, and even some of the businesses that regularly serve gig workers and musicians.

## **FOR GIG WORKERS & MUSICIANS**

**Emergency Housing Rent & Mortgage Relief** - A monthly pre-established sum or payment equal to the median rent for Washington DC for the musicians left without any source of income and ability to cover rent or mortgage payments. Musicians can apply through a designated form

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://thehoya.com/dc-music-census-reveals-large-local-musician-community/>

<sup>2</sup>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/mass-gatherings-ready-for-covid-19.html>

where they show that the majority of their income comes from gig related activities that have now been cancelled.

**Food Relief** - At least \$200 a month per musician through Food Stamp programs or SNAP to allow for musicians with no more gig income to pay for food.

**Temporary Health/Dental Insurance** - Temporary coverage for healthcare premiums or free basic health care coverage for the next couple of months for uninsured artists or those in need of emergency or ongoing medical assistance.

**Bill Payment Support** - We understand that the city is in communication with PEPCO to defer payment of bills for the next couple of months, though without any income and if the public gathering restrictions continue this may become a deferred debt that becomes insurmountable for many.

**Remit All Delayed DCCAH Artist Grant Funding** - A couple of artists have written to us and said that some of their DCCAH grant funding has not been received yet. We know that this process can take a while, but we ask that any 2019 grant funding that has not yet been remitted to event organizers or individual artists be delivered on an accelerated timeline.

**Childcare Support** - A number of musicians, especially those with younger children, have reached out about childcare concerns. Due to school closures, many of these children are now home from daycare yet parents must continue to pay daycare. These parents are seeking some form of temporary financial relief to continue to pay for daycare while they are no longer receiving any income.

**Institute a Disaster Unemployment Initiative** - A Disaster Unemployment Benefit would be an excellent way to disseminate funding to all freelance employees and contractors as well as musicians and creatives. Disaster Unemployment Assistance is an initiative that already exists and has worked in other jurisdictions. It is a program that can be accounted for, administered fairly easily and serve an extremely vulnerable population during this time.

### **FOR LOCAL VENUES AND EVENT ORGANIZERS**

We have communicated with a number of local venues and business owners and some of the primary needs are.

- Assistance with Paid Leave and Unemployment Insurance
- Assistance with Rent & Mortgage payments
- Deferral of Bills
- Get the Performance Promotion Amendment Legislation Form Up on the OTR Website - It has been months and this form is still not available.
- Grants to cover lost business expenses

- Deferral of Business Taxes
- Tax credit to support the staff ( tipped workers)

We understand that the Mayor's Office and the city council have already created a plan to address many of these needs. But many music-related local businesses being most deeply affected by our current crisis are the nonprofits and other organizations hosting events and festivals. The Wammies, Made in the DMV Conference, TLF's Creative Entrepreneurs Summit, Damaged City Fest and hundreds of other events have been cancelled or postponed. Some of the city's signature art and culture events happen in the Spring; cancelling these events will not only be devastating for local businesses and the musicians who make these events so special, but also for the organizers and nonprofits behind them.

**Mitigation Funding** - We ask that the city devise a structure of mitigation funding to help these businesses, nonprofits, and events organizers who have lost significant amounts of revenue from event cancellation. Most event insurance policies do not provide compensation for these types of Force Majeure cancellations. Many event organizers, producers, and local businesses have already incurred an incredible amount of debt prior to the cancellation of their events and now have no way to recoup their losses.

Thank you for your time,

Christopher Naoum - Listen Local First DC  
 Raj Aggarwal - Think Local First DC  
 Dior Ashley Brown- Musician & Founder, DC Music Summit  
 Aaron Myers - Capitol Hill Jazz Foundation, Chair Board of Directors  
 Jason Herman, Will Urquhart - DC Music Review  
 Herb Scott - Capitol Hill Jazz Foundation Founder & Executive Director  
 Jackson Sinnenberg - CapitalBop  
 Isabelle De Leon - Musician & Music Instructor  
 Peter Lillis - Union Stage Presents  
 Jeff Tribble - The MusicianShip  
 Jamal Gray - Meow Wolf  
 Amy Lokoff - Independent Curator  
 Bill Spieler - DC9 Nightclub  
 Jamie Sandel - CapitalBop  
 Sheldon Scott-Eaton DC  
 Paige Muller - Curious Caravan  
 Jenna Camille- Musician, Educator  
 Jess Eliot Myhre - manager and co-founder Bumper Jacksons LLC, musician, educator  
 Chris Ousley - co-founder, Bumper Jacksons, musician  
 Holly Bass- The Kennedy Center  
 Diana Ezerins - The Kennedy Center  
 Sara Curtin - musician (DCCA FY20 Artist Fellow)

Julianne Brienza, Capital Fringe  
Seshat Y Walker, Creative Strategist, The General Store Inc., DCCAH FY20 Artist Fellow  
Torrey Sanders, Union Stage Presents  
Karen Baker, President, Social Art an Culture  
Maureen Andary - musician, educator (DCCAH FY20 Artist Fellow)  
Sandra Basanti- Dangerously Delicious DC  
Stephen McKeever- Dangerously Delicious DC  
Christine Lilyea- Slash Run  
Daniel Brindley - Union Stage, Union Stage Presents  
Bryant Brown- Independent Producer/Host  
Graham Smith White - The Infinite Goodness  
Jonathan Brindley - Union Stage, Union Stage Presents  
Ron Brown [DJ RBI] - Capitol ILL Radio/ILL Street Grooves (WPFW 89.3FM); WBL, Inc; Hip Hop Pop Up Museum  
Angela Byrd - MadInTheDMV  
Tone P - District Funk Records / Universal Music Publishing Group  
Brendan Schnabel - Musician, educator  
Caroline Phillips - National Cannabis Festival  
Mylie Durham IV - Growroom Productions/ musician & booking  
Cameron Poles - Black Alley Band; Chocolate City Farmers Market; 202 Creates Resident  
John Liipfert, All Things Go Music/National Cannabis Festival/Frontrunner Productions  
Angel Bethea - Musician, Music Instructor (Washington Jazz Arts Institute)  
Stephen Arnold - Musician, Educator (Sitar Arts Center)  
Miles Ryan - 7DrumCity, Flashband, The Pocket  
Kymone Freeman - We Act Radio  
Paul Bailey - Trumpeter, Composer, and educator  
Artis Moon Amarché - the Boundless Eclectic; musician, interdisciplinary arts & healing  
Lee Reber- Live Sound Technician at Songbyrd Cafe, 7DrumCity, and freelance engineer  
Kokayi - Artist/ Producer/ Performer Less Talk More Walk LLC  
Graham Robertson - AZTEC SUN, Tuff Lover, 7DrumCity  
Stanley Spottswood - Musician/Educator at 7DrumCity and PGCP  
Ray Lamb AZTEC SUN, 7DrumCity  
John Heinze 7 drum city Aztec Sun tuff lover, hindsight - sound engineer 2020  
Ryan Banning, AZTEC SUN  
Alex Braden - Halcyon Arts Lab, DCCAH Arts and Humanities Fellow FY16–FY20  
Adrian Rowland - The Pocket, DJ  
Garrett Mader-Guitarist, composer, educator  
Margot Pien, Ashley Donald, Jaleelah Thompson - Sofar Sounds D.C.  
Adam Ashforth - Oh He Dead, 7DrumCity  
Landon Paddock - Musician  
Julian Berkowitz - Musician, Educator  
Andrew Musselman - Musician  
Chris Hon - Musician

Nicholas Fontana - Pearl Street Warehouse  
Munch Joseph - Cultural Curator, Hedrush  
Chris Barrick - freelance drummer / percussionist  
Abram Mamet - Musician, Jazz at the Marx Café  
Keith Butler - Musician, Educator  
Colin Kelly - Musician, Composer, Educator at 7DrumCity  
Joe Herrera - Musician, Curator, Promoter, Booker, Full time Musician  
Emma Pivetta - Musician, Educator  
Kelton Norris  
Andrew Toy - Musician, Educator at 7DrumCity  
Cody Valentine - Allthebestkids  
Buddy Speir- Partner at 38 North Studio  
Zee Wright - Musician, Studio Manager at 7DrumCity  
Nelson Jacobsen - Altavoz Distribution & Entertainment  
Nicole Saphos - Musician, Educator  
Ele Rubenstein - Musician, Educator  
Simone Baron- Musician, Educator, Founder (Arco Belo) Curation director, (Boulangier Initiative)  
(DCCAH FY20 artist fellow)  
Beth Cannon- Educator at 7DrumCity, Musician, Elizabeth II, Bottled Up  
Sterling Anderson (SteeloSoul) Musician  
Brent Gossett - Educator, DuPont Brass, All Inclusive Entertainment  
Lee Anderson - Vocalist, AZTEC SUN. Producer and Recording Engineer  
Joe Lapan - Songbyrd Music House  
Noah Nipp- Musician, Educator  
Maya Fisher- Arts Manager, Musician  
Gabriel Wallace-Musician, Educator  
Aidan Furlong - Musician, Educator  
Brenna Muller - Musician, Educator at 7DrumCity  
Nikhil Rao - Musician at Bottled Up, Poppy Patuca, and Tuff Lover; Educator at 7DrumCity  
Mark G. Meadows - Musician, Music Director, Educator  
Juliet Main - Manager - The Miracle Theatre, Capital Turnaround  
Amy K Bormet- Musician, Washington Women in Jazz Festival, Strange Woman Records