

**Amy Sangiolo**  
**Supporting Arts and Culture**

Arts and culture strengthen our community, connect us to each other, create a welcoming sense of place, and improve our quality of life. In our economy, arts and culture promote tourism, stimulate significant economic activity, and encourage innovation and a creative workforce. The arts are also essential to education, as they aid in the development of critical thinking, communication, and innovation skills. Overall, the arts help create a welcoming, vibrant community, enhancing the quality of life of the residents and attracting tourists and businesses.

**What specific policies would you advocate for to support the arts and cultural sector in our state?**

I will advocate incorporating the arts into economic revitalization projects and programs, ensure art programs remain an essential part of K-12 curricula and receive adequate funding in education, and create more opportunities for technical assistance, professional development, and other forms of workforce development for creative workers. I will also encourage the expansion of tourism and support arts in healthcare.

**How do you plan to ensure sustainable funding for nonprofit organizations for arts programs and initiatives?**

Nonprofit organizations for art programs and initiatives cannot simply rely on the revenue they generate from ticket sales or subscriptions. They need continued support through public and private funding. I support the following to ensure sustainable funding for our nonprofit art organizations:

- Renewing our commitment to funding the Mass Cultural Council within the State Budget. The Mass Cultural Council was allocated \$26.9 million in the FY2025 budget.
- Establishing a percent-for-the-art program: levying a percentage against capital construction or renovation budgets for the purchase, commissioning, and installation of artworks; allocating a fixed amount of the municipality's capital budget for public art; partnering with other government departments to include art into public infrastructure improvements; and partnering with regional institutions such as business chambers and academic institutions to secure matching funds and integrate public art into projects in public spaces.
- Using fees and taxes to generate revenue for the arts, such as a portion of hotel/motel fees, room or sales taxes, corporate filing or recordation fees, or gaming revenues.

**How do you view the role of the arts in the state's economic development?**

The arts are a key economic driver for the state's economy. The National Endowment for the Arts, utilizing data from the Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Accounts (ACSPA) and the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, reports that in 2021, the arts and culture sector accounted for

4.2% of the state's economy, comprising 133,773 jobs and \$28.6 billion of economic impact. The arts and culture sector not only brings in direct revenue, but also generates indirect economic benefits: specifically, when people working in the arts and culture sector buy goods and services from other businesses, when people who visit arts and cultural events spend money on other things in the community, and when tourism increases and as a result brings in millions of dollars to Commonwealth.

**What strategies would you implement to use the cultural sector as a driver of economic growth?**

I support establishing pathways to creative jobs; growing small creative businesses; strengthening cultural non-profits; protecting and expanding spaces for the creation, presentation, and enjoyment of arts and culture throughout the commonwealth; and ensuring that artists have the creative spaces needed to do their work by protecting and creating new art spaces.

**What are your views on arts education in schools? How would you ensure that arts education remains a priority in the state's education system?**

Arts have a critical role in our schools. In addition to teaching students to appreciate and make art, arts education fosters critical thinking, communication, and innovation skills. It provides kids with an opportunity to both explore their inner selves and find a new way to express themselves. It also guides students in learning to not only enrich themselves, but to share their talents with the community at large. Too often, art and music classes are subject to school budget or programmatic cuts, or are subject to fees which discourage participation. During my tenure on the City Council, I fought to save art and music programs and argued against the imposition of fees for music instruction and extracurricular activities such as band, orchestra, and theater in order to ensure every child had access. As your state representative, I will advance policies and support investments to ensure that all students have access to arts education from Pre-K - 12th grade.

**How do you plan to involve local communities in arts and cultural activities? What do you think could be done to better support local artists? And local nonprofits?**

Arts and cultural events build community. A tremendous amount of work, effort, and funding is required to put these events together - whether they are art and music festivals, or shows. Performance and gallery spaces are needed to host these events. Planning and event staff are needed to coordinate logistics, find local artists, and promote the events. Funding is needed, not only to pay for these spaces and coordinating and marketing services, but also to compensate artists for their work.

To better support local community involvement in the arts and artists, I will support the following:

- Increasing funding for the Cultural Facilities Fund (CFF), which provides support for the planning and development of cultural facilities. More than half of CFF grants go to nonprofit cultural organizations with budgets of less than \$1 million. CFF grants have also been used to create and restore studios and rehearsal and performance space.
- Increasing funding for the Mass Cultural Council so they in turn can increase the amount of grant funding they provide applicants to host their festivals and projects. These grants are provided to support those activities that “contribute to the cultural vitality of the community” as opposed to any private individual or group.

### **What measures would you take to make arts and culture more accessible to underserved communities?**

The most important way to make arts and culture more accessible to underserved communities is to provide resources to organizations committed to serving these communities. Whether it is for providing more materials and tools for arts education or for making exhibits/performances more accessible, funding will be key. I support the following:

- Increasing funding for arts programs that help buy materials and improve facilities. For example, I support ensuring that schools have access to musical instruments, art materials and equipment, and facilities to allow for creative spaces within schools or within the community for students to access (e.g. NewTV’s partnership with Newton Public Schools for studio space).
- Increasing funding to arts organizations to allow free or reduced entrance/ticket fees to museums, concerts, and exhibits.
- Increasing partnerships with our business community so they can provide necessary financial and technical support to increase community access to arts and culture.

### **What initiatives would you support to provide direct assistance to individual artists? How do you plan to address the challenges faced by artists, such as affordable housing and workspace?**

I believe housing is a human right. Unfortunately, our government has not been intentional about creating and funding more affordable housing opportunities for everyone including our artist community. Instead, we are relying too much on the market to create the housing that we need. I believe our state and federal government needs to be more intentional to create more deeply affordable, affordable, and middle-income housing.

Artists need affordable places to live and affordable places to create art. Like many, artists are being priced out and displaced as our area undergoes redevelopment and gentrification. I support efforts to increase equitable access to existing cultural infrastructure and to reduce

barriers preventing the creation of new arts spaces. By strengthening partnerships with government and private developers, I believe we can preserve and protect existing housing and workspace, and create new ones. One such partnership is the Humphrey Street Studios in Dorchester, where the City of Boston leveraged city and federal ARPA funds, worked with non-profit organizations, and consulted a private real estate developer, to create a workspace for a diverse group of artists and creative businesses. This development is expected to also create live/work condominiums for homeownership with a majority preference for Boston-certified artists.

**What is your stance on public art projects and funding? How would you encourage the integration of public art into urban development projects?**

I support levying a percentage against capital construction or renovation budgets for the purchase, commissioning, and installation of artworks in public spaces, sometimes referred to as a Percentage of the Arts program. I also support allocating a fixed amount of a municipality's capital budget for public art, and partnering with other government departments to include art into public infrastructure improvements when designing their projects.

**How do you plan to foster partnerships between the arts community and other sectors (e.g., business, education, tourism)? Can you provide examples of successful collaborations you've been involved in or supported?**

I intend to strengthen my relationship with the arts, education, and business communities, and encourage collaboration between them. I will work with regional institutions such as the Chamber of Commerce, our colleges and universities, and other institutions (like medical facilities) to support art through space sharing, exhibits and event hosting, and allowing greater public accessibility in both their public and private spaces to participate in their art and cultural events. Newton Wellesley Hospital is a great example of displaying art throughout its facilities. Lasell University has also shared its space to host concerts and events.

I also support working in collaboration with local property owners: empty storefronts could be used to support pop-up markets, host studio and other creative spaces, and/or showcase art until the property owner has secured a tenant. Parking lots when not utilized by businesses could host craft fairs, farmers markets, or musical/movie events (like Northland did during the COVID-19 pandemic). Developers could enhance projects both under construction or on hold by hosting fence art created by local artists.

Examples of successful collaborations I've been involved with or supported:

- Business collaborations: I supported many of the small/local business events hosted at the Allen House and am a regular supporter of our local arts and culture events held throughout the city - open studios, craft and harvest fairs, farmers markets, Friday

evening concerts at the Hyde, and Sunday concerts in Newton Centre (my mother LOVED going to these concerts with me!).

- Cultural collaborations: I worked with several AAPI organizations to organize, plan, and participate in heritage festivals and other cultural events with the City of Newton. I also volunteered with the Greater Boston Chinese Cultural Association with their program teaching 2nd and 3rd graders about Chinese culture and history.
- Music collaborations: I worked with a private music school to help fund the acquisition of property. I have supported and hosted PorchFest, and supported and attended the Piano Summit.

### **How do you think the state legislature can better support the arts?**

The state legislature can better support the arts by allocating more funding to arts and culture. This includes:

- Increasing funding to the Mass Cultural Council so they can increase their grant giving capacity.
- Increasing funding for the Cultural Facilities Fund to enable continued investment for the acquisition, renovation, expansion, and construction of nonprofit and municipal cultural facilities throughout the state.
- Establishing a grant program for towns and cities to support the vitality of downtowns and main streets for technical assistance, community planning, and expanding entrepreneurship, with a focus on supporting geographic and demographic diversity and social and economic equity.
- Considering tax credits (such as for film and live theater) and other financial incentives to help grow the arts community.
- Making permitting easier.
- Ensuring equitable access to art and culture for all residents.
- Including arts and culture when considering other sectors of the economy, such as adding public art to infrastructure projects.

### **What is your vision for the future of arts and culture in our community? How do you think we can achieve that vision together?**

Newton is extremely fortunate to have many cultural organizations, as well as numerous music and art schools and institutions. Each works to provide a range of artistic and cultural opportunities and programs to enrich and enhance the quality of life here in Newton. However, much of their time is spent in search of funding for their programs and services. I support the establishment of a local community foundation to provide much needed financial, technical, and other related assistance to our non-profit institutions.

I also support efforts to create a cultural district along Washington Street. Cultural districts enable cities and towns to expand their tax base and support the growth of their cultural sector. Communities can apply to the Mass Cultural Council for designation and if approved, these cultural districts would be eligible for grant funding.

### **Personal Commitment to the Arts**

I am a lifelong participant and supporter of the arts. As a child, I studied dance at age 4 at a local dancing school because my mother believed I needed to become more socially integrated with other children. While at my dancing school, a local talent agent suggested I audition for commercials and other acting opportunities. I ended up doing commercials for Zest Soap and Eastern Airlines and became a member of the Screen Actors Guild. I got a bit part as a Chinese student playing ping pong with the actor playing Richard Nixon on the Alan King Show. I then went on to portray Jade Snow Wong as an adolescent for this [PBS](#) show.

In 4th grade, I was able to take up violin lessons that were offered as part of my public school's music program. My teacher asked me to also take up the viola and flute. I was a member of my school's orchestra, band, and chorus. When my parents learned that I had musical abilities, they purchased a spinet piano and encouraged me to take piano lessons. I was also studying ballet at the New York School of Ballet and studying with Richard Thomas. By middle school, I had to choose between ballet and piano studies. I ended up choosing piano and eventually auditioned and was accepted to the Juilliard School of Music's Pre-College Division - where I studied classical piano with Miyoko Lotto, Herbert Stessin, Jane Carlson, Michael Lewin, and Katherine Parker. After graduating from Juilliard, I attended Barnard College and pursued a degree in Political Science.

Since then, I have continued to support the arts. All three of my children studied music and participated in choral groups, orchestra, band, and school and camp performances. My family and I have also been active participants with the Greater Boston Chinese Cultural Association, studying Chinese language as well as Chinese culture.

I have served on the Community Advisory Board of WGBH, the Community Advisory Board of UMASS Institute for Asian American Studies, the John M. Barry Newton Boys and Girls Club, and the All Newton Music School.

As a founder and trustee of the Charles River Neighborhood Foundation, my husband and I have supported numerous art and cultural organizations throughout Newton and the greater Boston area including the Suzuki School of Music, the New Art Center, and the Piano Summit. We are also regular attendees of many Newton arts and cultural events.

My husband's family is also very active in the arts. My mother-in-law, Anita Sangiolo, was a co-founder of the Playhouse at Piccadilly Square with Frank and Muriel Dolan, was lead actor in the Belle of Amherst, was part of the original cast of Shear Madness, performed in numerous plays including opposite Al Pacino, was Mrs. Baxter in the WCVB original version of "The Baxters", was the voice in the original NOVA production of the Miracle of Life, and served as a spokesperson for Stop and Shop. Her brother, Robert Ridolfi, was an accomplished violist and played with the Glenn Miller Orchestra. ¶