

I write today on behalf of the Arts Council of Hillsborough County to voice our support of the small venues and theaters in Hillsborough County and the National Independent Venue Association (NIVA) and ask you to please support and cosponsor S. 4258, the Save Our Stages Act, and S. 3814/H.R. 7481, the RESTART Act, both of which would ensure the survival of independent venues, theatres, and event promoters across the nation.

The live event industry is experiencing upwards of 90% revenue loss and may be closed well into 2021 due to the safety concerns posed by large gatherings in light of COVID-19. The PPP and other programs have not been working for venues and community theatres, which have been completely shuttered since the start of the pandemic. These are small businesses in need of long-term support that would provide flexibility for the use of funds due to high overhead costs. Without support from Congress, many independent venues in Hillsborough County and across America say they will be forced to close their doors forever.

If these small businesses close, this could devastate our entire music and cultural arts economy and ecosystem— artists, talent agents, stagehands, security, the catering industry and caterers, artist managers, the tour bus industry, production, radio/social media/tv/print advertising, record companies, and many others. This would also take a toll on our local economy. Independent venues are economic multipliers, community builders, and beloved institutions. A Chicago study estimated that \$1 spent at a small venue resulted in \$12 of economic activities for neighboring restaurants, hotels, and retail shops. Venues drive revenue to other businesses in cities and towns across America. What would our communities look like without them?

The closure of these venues would be detrimental for music and entertainment lovers. The cultural impact of our venues on our local communities is priceless. Small independent stages act as incubators and launch pads for the most popular talent in the world.

Many Senators and Representatives have already committed to #SaveOurStages, and the Arts Council of Hillsborough County asks you to support and cosponsor S. 4258, the Save Our Stages Act and S. 3814/H.R. 7481, the RESTART Act. Doing so would ensure that independent venues – arguably the industry hardest hit by the pandemic – receive the financial assistance needed to be able to reopen their doors when it is safe to do so.

Respectfully,

*Martine Meredith Collier*  
Martine Collier, Executive Director