

From: [Jonathan Serret](#)
To: [ClerkoftheBoard](#)
Subject: Full Comments to Board of Supervisors
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Good morning,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning. With limitation to 90 seconds, I was not able to deliver my full remarks to the Board. Please share my full sentiments below.

We are grateful for your leadership in the creation of the Arts and Culture Investment Fund. In recognition of the incredible work of our Arts and Culture communities, I ask that you consider additional funding to bolster this program and provide equitable, meaningful support to this critical sector across the County.

Many Thanks,

Jonathan Serret

Good morning Chair Long, Supervisors, and County staff.

My name is Jonathan Serret, I am a resident of the City of Moorpark. I serve as Executive Director of TOArts and as the Cultural Affairs Director for the City of Thousand Oaks.

I come before you this morning to share my appreciation for the recently approved Arts and Culture Investment Fund. I am grateful for the work of the wonderful County staff, in particular Arts and Culture Manager David Yoshitomi. We recently had the privilege of working with David, alongside our partners at the Museum of Ventura County to recognize the 150th Anniversary of the County. My request is that you consider additional sources of funding to increase the amount available for grant applicants. The program designed by staff, would have more considerable impact across the County with the \$1M, as originally allocated.

Investment in the arts is not always the first choice, nor the easiest; especially when considered next to basic necessities, public safety, and infrastructure. However, the notion that the arts are a “nice to have,” rather than a “need to have” is one I hope you’ll reconsider today. The Arts are an integral part of society. The Arts build and strengthen our communities by reflecting values, culture, and critical thinking. The arts have the power to inspire and uplift. At this moment in time, this is absolutely necessary. With so much going on in the world, we need positive community programs which uplift and inspire. Arts and Culture programs can provide hope, lead to greater compassion, and increased civic engagement.

The economic impact of investment in arts and culture makes sense. Artists need supplies and services; they can spend those resources locally. Arts organizations present events and activities; the patrons and supporters of those events may travel locally or may visit our communities. This leads to increased patronage of cafés, restaurants, bars, gas stations, and hotels. The creative economy is a vehicle to support other industries of our region. In the most recent Arts Vibrancy index,

published annually by SMU Data Arts, Ventura County ranks in the 95th percentile, meaning we outperform 95% of other counties. That doesn't happen by accident, it takes artists and arts organizations to be forward thinking, to grow; and it requires support from our communities and leaders. Although still impressive, since the pandemic, our numbers have slipped. In 2020, Ventura County was listed in the top 40 Arts Vibrant communities in the nation, #8 in mid-size communities.

As staff noted in their program proposal to the Board on November 7th, there are a significant number of artists and arts organizations across our great County. The pandemic was devastating to our sector. For many the recovery has been slow and they have faced compounding challenges, including staffing shortages and increased costs. In East County, there are many organizations which are still struggling.

My role as the Cultural Affairs Director includes advocating for a vibrant, thriving Arts and Culture community in the Conejo Valley. Our department is primarily tasked with operating the Bank of America Performing Arts Center. Although we would not apply for funding, so as to not diminish the amount of funds available, we would benefit. Grants to the many arts groups which utilize our venues would lead to their improved sustainability. This leads to increased use of our facilities and deeper engagement with our local audiences.

I ask that you consider increasing your investment in Arts and Culture, to restore the full value of the grant program back to \$1 Million, as was designed and presented by County staff. This support for the arts can have a significant and far-reaching impact across Ventura County, the region, and can help us become a nation-wide leader in Arts Vibrancy once again.

We are grateful for your support of the Arts and Culture community.
Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

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