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Dear Mayor and Councillors,

My name is **<YOUR NAME HERE>**, and I am writing as one of your constituents here in Halifax, living in **<PUT YOUR DISTRICT OR NEIGHBOURHOOD/AREA HERE>**. I am deeply concerned that council has asked city staff to model a 10% cut to professional arts funding grants. The arts are an important part of what makes Halifax a liveable, attractive city, and such a cut, while proportionally quite small in the scope of the city's whole budget, would have very detrimental impacts on the vitality and accessibility of professional arts and culture organizations and their programming.

If applied to the Grants to Professional Arts Organizations, a 10% cut would translate to approximately \$81,000 in budget reduction for project grants. Hardly worth writing home about in terms of savings in the overall budget. But for the arts organizations that rely on that funding, these cuts are monumental. And as a resident of Halifax, I want you to understand that a vibrant, healthy, appropriately supported arts sector is essential to a good quality of life in this city. Professional arts organizations provide programming that is beneficial to health and wellness, creating a sense of wonder and belonging for all who partake. These programs are not luxuries: they are what makes HRM an exciting, healthy, and vibrant place to live in.

The arts are not a luxury good. They are a fundamental asset to any city or community. Halifax punches well above its weight, with world-class artists and arts organizations working year round to make excellent experiences for residents and visitors alike, from small theatre companies presenting at The Bus Stop Theatre to Symphony Nova Scotia, from Nocturne to Upstream Music, from Neptune Theatre to the Jazz Festival, from AfterWords Literary Festival to Mocean Dance.

In the most recent Arts Vibrancy Index, Halifax ranked #4 out of 22 metropolitan areas in the census, indicating the impact of the arts sector on a place's economic growth, yet Halifax is trailing behind with respect to per capita investment in arts funding and HRM Council has yet to achieve its own funding goals set in 2017.

Please do not consider a cut to the arts. Instead, please work with your colleagues on council to appropriately support the professional arts organizations that do so much to bring people together into public spaces; foster social engagement; train our capacity to reflect on meaning (asking “what does this mean?”). The arts exercise our capacity to understand others, ourselves and our relationships between each other and the world at large. In a world of deepening division and the entrenchment of ideologies - both fuelled by social isolation - the arts are an essential antidote. The arts create social cohesion by allowing us to recognize what makes us, us. The Halifax I want to live in includes a rich, diverse, publicly supported thriving arts sector.

Sincerely,

<INSERT YOUR NAME, CITY, AND POSTAL CODE HERE>