



## NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

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### WNY DELEGATION ANNOUNCES OVER \$1.37 MILLION FOR LOCAL ARTS SECTOR

Investment Will Provide a Critical Boost to Arts Organizations in WNY

BUFFALO, NY – Members of the State Legislature's Western New York delegation stood alongside arts organizations to announce a \$1,357,700 investment in local art and theatre institutions and programming.

[Shea's Performing Arts Center](#) received a state investment this year of \$1,197,700 under the "Alive Downtowns!" initiative. Formed in response to the impact of COVID-19 on performing arts centers, Alive Downtowns! is a coalition of 13 celebrated theaters across New York with an average age of nearly 100 years who will receive a combined \$5 million investment in the New York State budget.

The New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) received a total grantmaking budget of \$162 million. Locally, NYSCA capital improvement grants were awarded to:

- [Alleyway Theatre](#): \$50,000
- [Buffalo Arts Studio](#): \$50,000

- [Torn Space Theatre](#): \$60,000

The New York State Council on the arts supports more than 1,600 organizations statewide within the visual, literary, media and performing arts and includes dedicated support for arts education and underserved communities.

**Assemblymember Jon D. Rivera said**, “The original vision of Michael Shea sought to create havens in which the entertainment on screen or stage had the power to transport the commoner from the travails of daily life. That vision was realized in Shea’s Buffalo Theatre, and since it was built in 1926, it has manifested a legacy far beyond its doors, becoming a local economic anchor and cultural icon. Today’s funding announcement showcases that the NYS Assembly Majority stands with the arts community and believes in their impact to educate and inspire.”

**Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes said**, “WNY is blessed to have such a robust and thriving cultural arts community. I’m very proud to work with my delegation colleagues to secure resources for Shea’s and many local theaters in this year’s state budget process.”

"In Buffalo, we are lucky to have a vibrant arts and cultural scene that distinguishes our city from many other cities of its size. Institutions like Shea's are not only beloved amenities for the city's residents – they are also integral to our local tourism economy,” **said Senator Sean Ryan**. “I am always happy to support State funding for the arts, which plays a vital role in ensuring Buffalo's historic theaters and other cultural assets can remain accessible to Western New York's residents and visitors alike for years to come.”

**Assemblymember Patrick Burke added**, "Buffalo is one of the most vibrant destinations for visual and performing arts in the country. This funding is vital to continuing the growth that we are seeing. Perhaps even more important than the economic benefit, is the opportunity it presents to local artists. There is talent in every corner of this region. These investments mean more opportunities for people in our community to participate in the arts; to express themselves, to share their creativity, and hopefully, inspire others."

"It's a quintessential Buffalo experience, taking in a performance at Shea's. The connections created here, between audiences and entertainers, between visitors and our city, and between the theater and its neighboring businesses - these are the ties that build community,” **said Assemblymember Bill Conrad**. And these are the bonds

that enhance Buffalo's identity and economy. I am proud of New York State and my fellow legislators for consistently acknowledging the value of the arts, and for once again including this critical funding in the budget."

"Theater and the arts enrich our lives, spark creativity, and allow self-expression to flourish. They connect us to diverse stories, cultures, and perspectives, making our world a more vibrant place," **added Assemblymember Karen McMahon.** "My Legislature colleagues and I made sure to continue our support of that mission by providing significant funding for the arts through the New York State Council on the Arts. Buffalo and Western New York's expansive and beloved theater community, from Shea's to Alleyway and beyond, will continue to be supported, and we look forward to these institutions continuing to delight audiences for years to come."

**Assemblymember Monica Wallace said,** "Our theatres and arts organizations are critical not only to our culture but also to our economy. They foster creative expression, provide unique entertainment for residents, and draw countless visitors who support local small businesses like restaurants and hotels. I'm thrilled that the Legislature secured this funding to support a rich, vibrant arts scene across Western New York."

The funding announced today provides a critical lifeline for arts organizations, demonstrates New York State's continued commitment to the statewide arts community, and will reinforce a booming arts scene in Western New York.

And, for historic theatres like Shea's Buffalo, this funding will preserve their history for future generations and will enable educational programs that are crucial for cementing their legacy.

"The impact of the arts is vast and undeniable, supporting jobs, catalyzing economic growth, enriching lives, encouraging creative collaboration, healing hearts, and building community," **said Brian Higgins, President & CEO of Shea's Performing Arts Center.** "We are grateful for the sustained, substantial commitment to the arts from Western New York state leaders."

**Dan Shanahan, Artistic Director, Torn Space Theater said,** "New York State Council on the Arts and the State Legislature's Western New York delegation continually invest in the local arts and cultural sector contributing to a more vibrant and artistically rich community. Torn Space Theater has been fortunate to receive funding and this has allowed our organization to produce high quality contemporary

performance and bring positive change to our Broadway/Fillmore neighborhood. Our community is stronger and more dynamic due to the cultural sector and support such as this makes that possible.”

“We are proud of our Western New York state leaders' arts funding advocacy. NYSCA support allows Buffalo Arts Studio to use the transformative power of the arts to inspire and affect positive change, and to be an accessible and welcoming place to experiment, learn, explore, and be part of a community,” **added Alma M. Carrillo, Executive Director, Buffalo Arts Studio.**

In February, Assemblymember Rivera joined local arts organizations in Western New York to call for a state budget that would fully fund NYSCA and discard proposals that would have seen NYSCA’s capital funding slashed by nearly 50 percent.

Over the past year, NYSCA has provided funding to over 3,000 non-profit organizations, supporting work in every corner and community of the state, from theatres and opera houses to small workshops and alternative art spaces. Over 67% of these organizations have operating budgets below \$1 million.

Without NYSCA’s support, many small and emerging organizations across the state would disappear, greatly diminishing the existing arts and cultural footprint of the state and impeding the emergence of new groups.

Recently, [Arts Services Inc.](#) (ASI) released an impact report detailing how much the arts contribute to Western New York’s vibrant landscape. The study, “[Arts and Economic Prosperity 6](#)” (AEP6), was launched by Americans for the Arts and is the sixth economic impact study of the nonprofit arts and culture industry in the U.S. The report is conducted approximately every five years to gauge the economic impact (on employment, government revenue, and household income) of spending by nonprofit arts and culture organizations and the event-related spending by their audiences.

According to the findings of the report, the nonprofit arts and culture sector is a significant industry in Western New York—generating \$381.4 million in total economic activity during 2022, supporting 8,221 jobs, and delivering \$121 million in tax revenues to local, state, and federal governments.

**Jen Swan-Kilpatrick, Executive Director, Arts Services, said** "The Western New York arts sector is unique and powerful in its own right. We are a critical part of the

ecosystem of this region, often partnering with various neighborhood and community efforts. ASI's Arts & Economic Prosperity Report really shines a light on the economic impact of this region. The arts and culture sector is a major piece of the puzzle when it comes to WNY being an attractive and prosperous community to live, work, and play in."

But New York's investment in the arts announced today doesn't only bolster the mission statement of arts organizations across the state — it directly supports the original vision of Michael Shea, founder of Shea's Buffalo, in realizing a dream in which entertainment and theater be accessible and enjoyed by the entirety of the city and surrounding region.

Today, Shea's Performing Arts Center stands as a vibrant cultural hub in Western New York. It continues to bring world-class entertainment to the region, attracting acclaimed Broadway productions and touring acts, and the theatre's impact extends far beyond the stage.

Shea's has become an integral facet of the Buffalo tourism economy and is an anchor institution for the city's downtown corridor. Its presence has contributed to the economic growth of the area, attracting visitors, stimulating neighboring businesses, and fostering a vibrant arts and culture scene.

The nearly \$1.2 million in funding that Shea's will receive as part of the 2024-25 state budget will ensure that the institution and other remarkable theaters across the state benefiting from the Alive Downtown! Funding will be maintained and preserved for new generations of theatergoers.

For more information on the Alive Downtowns! Coalition, visit <https://afairgame.net/alive-downtowns/>.

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