February 25, 2021

Secretary Michael Kennealy  
Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development State House  
1 Ashburton Place  
Room 2101  
Boston, MA 02108  

Dear Secretary Kennealy,

**RE: Zeiterion Theatre Capital Improvement Project in Downtown New Bedford**

We are writing on behalf of the Regeneration Project of the New Bedford Economic Development Council in support of the non-profit Zeiterion Theatre, Inc. (The Z) as they embark on a capital improvement project to renovate and restore the historic Zeiterion Theater in downtown New Bedford. The Regeneration Project Committee is a collaborative platform that represents nearly 40 community, institutional, and business leaders who are committed to shaping, advocating for, and tangibly advancing strategies for sustainable and shared growth for the City of New Bedford and the region.

The Z’s $20 million capital improvement project will be one of the most significant public/private funding partnerships in our city in recent history. The Z has assembled a funding stack that leverages state bonds, federal and state historic tax credits, new market tax credits, other grants and private philanthropy. The Z has already raised $3 million from private philanthropy and recently submitted its application for historic tax credits. The project will also allow for expanded capacity and uses of the building, grow programming targeted to underserved communities, create new educational spaces, and restore the beauty of the historic auditorium. Taken together, this project will be a significant investment in the region’s social and cultural well-being and will give our community a vibrant home for the arts that our citizens so richly deserve.

It is our understanding that Senator Mark Montigny and Representative Antonio Cabral successfully secured two authorized bonds earmarked for this project, totaling $5.5 million. **We respectfully ask that these bonds be appropriated into the CIP budget for FY22 as a means to help launch our local economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.**

The Z is a 30,000 square foot performing arts venue on the National Register of Historic Places, and a cultural treasure for our community. Through its rich programming, it is has become an inspirational gathering place in the heart of downtown New Bedford, connecting both residents and tourists with the best in live music, theater, dance, comedy, film, education and more. Each
The Z hosts more than 250 events and performances, including several from resident companies New Bedford Symphony Orchestra and New Bedford Festival Theatre.

As the sole non-profit year-round professional performing arts center in Southeastern Massachusetts, The Z energizes our City by infusing momentum into our community, making this a vibrant place to live, work, and play. Each year, more than 100,000 Z patrons fill the city’s restaurants, hotels, and attractions. The Z supports 250 jobs, with an $8 million economic impact on the local economy.

In our 2018 report, Realizing the Potential, we outline four “big ideas” to drive local, sustainable, and equitable economic growth in New Bedford. One of those big ideas is to build a vibrant, diverse, and uniquely New Bedford downtown and waterfront experience for all. A specific action for our advocacy under this idea is the pursuit of institutional investments with able partners that integrate placemaking as a tool to attract people to a more vibrant downtown, directly connected to the waterfront. This project proposed by the Z does just that and advancing this project as a means to help us emerge with a downtown that is stronger in a post COVID-19 pandemic world, also cannot be overstated.

Specifically, we wish to underscore the economic value of not only the Z’s place in our community, but the value this project will have on New Bedford’s economic recovery. One that will improve the quality of life in our region, help us attract new developers and businesses and thus help businesses attract top candidates and make New Bedford a special place to live and work. The timing of the completion of this project (2023) is also fortuitous, as it aligns with other important and transformative initiatives: the completion of Southcoast Rail to Boston as well as the deployment of the nation’s first industrial scale offshore wind projects from just blocks away from the Z’s stage.

We thank you for your time and consideration for this critical project and your continued commitment to make Massachusetts a great place to live and work.

Sincerely,

Anthony Sapienza, Co-Chair
President
New Bedford Economic Development Council

Maureen Sylvia Armstrong, Co-Chair
Managing Partner
Sylvia Group

Rosemary Gill
Executive Director
Zeiterion Performing Arts Center

Nicholas Christ
President & CEO
BayCoast Bank

Keith Hovan
President & CEO
Southcoast Health System

John Vasconcellos
President
SouthCoast Community Foundation
Rick Kidder
CO-CEO
One SouthCoast Chamber of Commerce

Dr. Laura Douglas
President
Bristol Community College

David Slutz
Managing Director, President
Potentia Manufacturing Group
Moby Dick Brewing Company & Airport Grille

Dr. LaSella Hall
President
NAACP New Bedford

Joe Bahena
Senior Vice President
Joseph Abboud

Peter Muise
Retired, President and CEO
First Citizens’ Federal Credit Union

Elizabeth Isherwood
Chairman, President
Greater New Bedford Industrial Foundation, Moore & Isherwood Communications, Inc.

Bob Unger
Chairman, Co-Owner, Principal
Leadership SouthCoast, Moby Dick Brewing Company, Unger LeBlanc Strategic Communications

Patrick Murray
President & CEO
Bristol County Savings Bank

Sarah Athanas
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Groundwork

Helena DaSilva Hughes
Executive Director
Immigrants’ Assistance Center

Christopher Rezendes
Founder & President
INEX Advisors

Jeff Pontiff
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E J Pontiff Real Estate

Anne Broholm
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AHEAD, LLC

Maria Rosario
Executive Director
Whaling City Seafood Display Auction

Amanda McMullen
President & CEO
New Bedford Whaling Museum

Jeff Glassman
President
Darnit! Inc.

Quentin Ricciardi
CEO
Acorn Management

Paul Chasse
CEO
Realtor Association of Southeastern MA

Adam Cove
CEO
Edson International

David Wechsler
President & CEO

Keith Decker
CEO & President
Maritime International

**Gail Fortes**  
Executive Director  
YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts

**Rontell Grant**  
Owner & CEO, Agent/Manager  
Lite Weights Fitness, Kerry Horan Real Estate

**Joseph Nauman**  
Retired, Executive Vice President, Corporate and Legal  
Acushnet Company

Blue Harvest Fisheries

**Liz Wiley**  
Executive Director  
Marion Institute

**Stephen Silverstein**  
Founder & CEO  
Servedwell Hospitality

CC:  
Senator Mark C. Montigny  
Representative Antonio F. D. Cabral