

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

year 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

**Rosemary Gill**  
Executive Director  
Zeiterion Performing Arts Center

**Keith Hovan**  
President & CEO  
Southcoast Health System

**Maureen Sylvia Armstrong, Co-Chair**  
Managing Partner  
Sylvia Group

**Nicholas Christ**  
President & CEO  
BayCoast Bank

**John Vasconcellos**  
President  
SouthCoast Community Foundation

**Rick Kidder**  
CO-CEO  
One SouthCoast Chamber of Commerce

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

**Joe Bahena**  
Senior Vice President  
Joseph Abboud

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

**Patrick Murray**  
President & CEO  
Bristol County Savings Bank

**Helena DaSilva Hughes**  
Executive Director  
Immigrants' Assistance Center

**Jeff Pontiff**  
Owner  
E J Pontiff Real Estate

**Maria Rosario**  
Executive Director  
Whaling City Seafood Display Auction

**Jeff Glassman**  
President  
Darnit! Inc.

**Paul Chasse**  
CEO  
Realtor Association of Southeastern MA

**David Wechsler**  
President & CEO

**Dr. Laura Douglas**  
President  
Bristol Community College

**Dr. LaSella Hall**  
President  
NAACP New Bedford

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

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

**Sarah Athanas**  
Co-Founder  
Groundwork

**Christopher Rezendes**  
Founder & President  
INEX Advisors

**Anne Broholm**  
CEO  
AHEAD, LLC

**Amanda McMullen**  
President & CEO  
New Bedford Whaling Museum

**Quentin Ricciardi**  
CEO  
Acorn Management

**Adam Cove**  
CEO  
Edson International

**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