**APPENDIX G: Support for Illinois Creative Workforce**

*This Appendix includes experts from a report from the Illinois’ Art’s Alliance regarding the Impact of COVID-19 on the State’s Creative Sector*

Before the pandemic, Illinois was among the states with the highest employment of performing artists, including actors, musicians, and singers. While the unemployment numbers for these occupations are not available on the state level, Illinois is one of the states hardest hit by COVID-19 when it comes to job losses in the creative occupations. According to Brookings, the state had an estimated 86,671 job losses in the creative occupations between April and July 2020 (the fifth highest in the nation), marking a loss of $2,783 million in average monthly earnings.

COVID-19’s disproportionate impact on Illinois’ creative occupations is also revealed by the sharp rise in unemployment insurance claims in Illinois’ arts, entertainment, sport and media occupations, which have increased by 371% since December 2019, as shown in Table 8.32This is far higher than the percentage increase in unemployment insurance claims across all occupations and industries in Illinois, which is 238% and is substantially higher than construction (44%), transportation (238%) and sales and related occupations (265%).



Again, the food service and retail occupations that comprise major alternative sources of income for many artists and performers also showed sharp increases in unemployment insurance claimants in Illinois from last December 2019 (food preparation and serving occupations rose by 832% and sales and related occupations rose by 265%). As shown in Table 1, accommodation and food service businesses are also reporting the highest negative impacts as a result of COVID-19 according to the Census Bureau’s Quarterly Services Survey.

Long term solutions are needed to ensure that creative workers are able to survive the pandemic and thrive in its aftermath. Given that 13% of surveyed Illinois arts and cultural organizations reported that they are “not confident” that they will be able to recover from the pandemic and taking into consideration the record losses of creative jobs that may never return, it is vitally important that we expand the employment opportunities and career paths open to creative workers. This NOFO represents an opportunity to invest in the retention of its highly skilled creative workers in programs that will enable them to adapt their skills to other industries and environments. Broadening the opportunities available to artists does not involve abandoning the art and culture sector. Indeed, it may help to buoy up this sector, speeding up its recovery and further strengthening the interdependence between the general state economy and the creative economy. Diversifying the creative workforce will contribute to its resilience in the face of current and future uncertainties and ensure that the creative workers and the arts and culture industry continue to positively impact other sectors and society as a whole.