WHAT’S THE POLICY?

- In 2015, the Cultural Access Program (CAP) was created by the Washington Legislature. Counties and cities are authorized to establish a CAP that allocates funds to cultural activities provided by non-profit science, heritage, and arts organizations. Funding for the CAP is raised through a sales tax or property tax, if authorized by a majority of voters in a general or special election. Tacoma Creates established Washington’s first CAP in 2018 and Olympia passed Inspire Olympia in April 2022. King County also aspires to establish a program.
- HB 1575 and SB 5612 will allow cultural access programs to be adopted by a councilmanic or commission vote; the majority vote of the jurisdiction’s elected officials. This option may streamline the process and make it easier to adopt and implement these programs.
- This legislation still allows a vote of the people to establish the CAP program if that is the direction of the local governing body.
- Unless a county declines to exercise its authority to adopt a cultural access program, counties are given until December 31, 2025 to exercise this new councilmanic or commission authority.
- Beginning January 1, 2024, any city or town may also exercise councilmanic authority in adopting a cultural access program.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- The cultural sector has been devastated by the mandated closures and slow return to business related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Cultural businesses are struggling to survive and many within our workforce remain unemployed. Local governments need options to sustain their cultural programming and drive sector resiliency.
- WA’s cultural sector drives significant economic activity, representing 10.3% of the state’s GDP. The loss of cultural businesses will reverberate through the state’s economy causing further loss of jobs and commerce, particularly in hospitality, tourism, and other main street activity.
- General objective of the legislation is to establish another process for local governments to use when adopting a cultural access program, mainly a councilmanic or commission vote; it is another tool in the toolbox.

WHY CAN YOU DO?

- These bills will be reviewed by Local Government and Finance Committees (House) and Local Government Committee (Senate). We must show broad support of the bill. If your representatives serve on these committees, please urge them to move to Executive Action with their full support.
- When the bill has left Committee and is voted within the House or Senate chambers, please urge your representatives to vote in favor of HB 1575 & SB 5612.

QUESTIONS?

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