



## CITY OF NEW BEDFORD

JONATHAN F. MITCHELL, MAYOR

May 5, 2016

City Council President Linda Morad and  
Honorable Members of the New Bedford City Council  
133 William Street  
New Bedford, MA 02740

Dear Council President Morad and Honorable Members of the City Council,

Enclosed for your consideration is a Proposed Home Rule Petition to establish an Arts, Culture, and Tourism Promotion Fund for the City of New Bedford from a portion of the proceeds of the City's hotel and lodging tax.

As I have discussed with many of you recently, I believe additional investment in arts, culture, and tourism is both warranted and necessary. We celebrate our city as a place where creative pursuit can take root and flourish. This has been part of our identity since our founding. Given the various arts-related accolades we've received in recent years—Seventh Most Artistic City by *Atlantic Monthly*, Ninth on Matador Network's list of Most Creative Towns, and sixth on *Bustle's* Best Cities for Young Artists—the outside world is beginning to see us the same way. Among the many benefits of creating a dedicated fund for arts, culture, and tourism is to capitalize on such recognition to attract more creativity and investment to the city, and to attract more tourists here on the strength of our cultural landscape.

It is a matter of economic development orthodoxy that arts and culture are critical catalysts in cities' revitalization and growth. We're fortunate in New Bedford that we don't have to create an arts and culture 'scene' here out of whole cloth. We're already far ahead of many cities of our size in the quantity, richness, and maturity of our cultural assets, but we need additional resources and capacity to maximize their impact on the city's growth and development.

The fund would allow the City to establish a paid Cultural Coordinator position like those in cities where arts have flourished. The Cultural Coordinator would set the course for our cultural development, help to enhance and strengthen existing cultural institutions and programs, and bring in private resources to leverage public investment in the arts. The Coordinator would also promote New Bedford as a desirable place for cultural tourists to visit and for working artists to settle, expand cultural programming, and coordinate public art projects. The remaining funds would be used to promote cultural marketing, (in collaboration with the Office of Tourism and Marketing), arts programming, and public art.

To balance the need for greater investment in arts, culture, and tourism with understandable concerns about the health of our general fund, the amount allocated to the proposed Arts, Culture, and Tourism Fund would never exceed fifty percent of the total amount of revenue collected from our hotel and lodging tax. In real terms, we project that once the new hotel is on line, this would translate to about \$120,000 per year allocated to each fund—general and Arts, Culture, and Tourism. We believe this is a reasonable but impactful level of investment in our city's cultural development.

We should all live in a place that sparks and nurtures creativity, fosters beauty, and offers meaningful opportunities for everybody in every neighborhood to experience the power and possibility of art. I believe establishing this fund would bring New Bedford closer to this ideal, and I look forward to working with you to make it happen.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jon Mitchell  
JFM/crc



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND SIXTEEN

## AN ACT TO ESTABLISH AN ARTS, CULTURE AND TOURISM PROMOTION FUND IN THE CITY OF NEW BEDFORD.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

**SECTION 1.** Notwithstanding Section 53 of Chapter 44 of the General Laws or any other general or special law to the contrary, the City of New Bedford shall establish in the city treasury a special account to be known as the Arts, Culture and Tourism Promotion Fund of the City of New Bedford, into which account shall be deposited certain receipts comprising a portion of the total local room occupancy tax received annually by the City under section 3A of chapter 64G of the General Laws, as set forth in Section 2, as well as any grants, gifts, or donations made to the City in furtherance of the purposes of this Act.

**SECTION 2.** The City shall deposit fifty percent of all local room occupancy tax revenue into the Fund. All interest earned from the Fund shall be treated as general fund revenue.

**SECTION 3.** Upon the recommendation of the Mayor of New Bedford and upon the majority vote of the City Council, the City may appropriate such funds as may be available into the Fund for the purposes of promoting the City's artistic and cultural assets, and to attract tourists to the City. All funds appropriated to the Fund shall be utilized only for these purposes. The City may not use proceeds of the Fund to pay personnel costs in the City's Tourism and Marketing Department. The City's chief financial officer shall forward to the Mayor and City Council a report of the Fund on the cash basis within ninety days after the end of the fiscal year.

**SECTION 4.** This Act shall take effect immediately upon passage.