



#### Media Contact

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## **COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS JOINING NEW PARTNERSHIP TO STRENGTHEN ARTS AND CREATIVITY ACROSS MASSACHUSETTS**

### **Grants totaling \$2.5 million from the Barr Foundation aim to catalyze new, more equitable and sustainable philanthropy for artists and arts organizations**

[SPRINGFIELD] January 30, 2018 -- Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts (CFWM) and The Barr Foundation, a private foundation based in Boston, today announced the launch of Creative Commonwealth, a partnership between Barr, Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts and four other Massachusetts community foundations. This new initiative is rooted in the belief that investments in arts and creativity build thriving communities, and it aims to promote the vital leadership role community foundations can play to advance the arts.

Creative Commonwealth will pave the way for community foundations to deepen and grow support for artists and cultural organizations. Along with CFWM, the community foundations partnering with Barr on this effort are: Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts, Essex County Community Foundation and Greater Worcester Community Foundation.

Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts has been awarded \$500,000 over 24 months to pilot ideas that emerged from a planning process the Foundation undertook in 2017, with funding from Barr to identify opportunities, needs, and priorities. CFWM efforts will focus on testing innovative ideas to connect arts to other sectors, providing training to build the capacity of small organizations and assessing the need for a regional arts hub to advance collaborative opportunities.

“The arts and cultural sector in our three counties is fundamental to our economy and identity. We are excited to be a part of the Creative Commonwealth initiative through which we can more effectively connect that sector to others and encourage innovation. The initiative will allow us to continue to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in our community,” said Katie Allan Zobel, President and CEO of the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts.

“In 2016, Barr expanded the scope of its Arts & Creativity program to a statewide focus”, said Jim Canales, president and trustee of the Barr Foundation. “This shift necessitates our identifying many partners across the Commonwealth with deep knowledge and relationships in various communities. Through Creative Commonwealth, we aim to deepen our partnership with community foundations in Massachusetts, who each bring that knowledge, along with the trust of their donors and communities, to expand support for arts and creativity.”

Although Massachusetts has thousands of artists and cultural organizations, philanthropic support is unevenly distributed. Creative Commonwealth aims to address this challenge by increasing local arts and culture funding networks across the state, making the entire sector more sustainable, equitable and accessible.

“Massachusetts is full of creative talent and cultural assets that have the power to bring communities together. Yet, access to funding can be uneven based on geography,” said San San Wong, director of arts & creativity at the Barr Foundation. “Community foundations are important civic leadership institutions,



with the potential to bridge that gap, connecting donors who want to make meaningful investments in the places they care about, and strengthening the capacity of artists and organizations whose work enlivens communities.”

In addition to supporting activities within each community, Barr will also invest additional resources to help Creative Commonwealth partners learn from each other’s work, deepen knowledge about best practices, and share relevant lessons with the broader field. Partners will also be posting updates (and encouraging others in their communities to do so as well) on social media using #CreativeCommonwealth.

### **About Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts**

Founded in 1991, the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts administers a charitable endowment consisting of nearly 600 separately identified funds (\$131 million) serving the three counties bordering the Connecticut River in western Massachusetts (Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin Counties). For more information about the reach and impact of Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, visit <http://communityfoundation.org/about-us/>.

### **About The Barr Foundation**

The Barr Foundation’s mission is to invest in human, natural, and creative potential, serving as thoughtful stewards and catalysts. Based in Boston, Barr focuses regionally, and selectively engages nationally, working in partnership with nonprofits, foundations, the public sector, and civic and business leaders to elevate the arts, advance solutions for climate change, and connect all students to success in high school and beyond. Founded in 1997, Barr now has assets of \$1.7 billion, and has contributed more than \$837 million to charitable causes. For more information, visit [www.barrfoundation.org](http://www.barrfoundation.org).

### **About the Creative Commonwealth Partners and Projects**

- The Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation will increase participation by year-round residents, particularly lower-income populations, immigrants, youth, and communities of color through research, development of a grants program, and strengthening the field through capacity and networking building.
- The Essex County Community Foundation will sponsor two grant programs, lead regional and local cultural planning processes, and convene arts, social, business and municipal leaders in annual summits to strengthen networks to more fully integrate arts and culture into its communities.
- The Greater Worcester Community Foundation looks to support the creative sector in developing deeper engagement with our changing and diverse community by sponsoring two grant programs and playing an advocacy role in the City’s cultural planning efforts.
- The Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts will develop scalable models in the cities of Fall River and New Bedford to increase access to opportunities for artistic expression among youth and culturally diverse communities through cross-sector program collaborations, building capacity for small organizations to fundraise and develop, and growing and diversifying philanthropic investments in the arts.

<http://communityfoundation.org/nonprofits/creative-commonwealth/>

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