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NEW PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN FIVE COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS AND BARR FOUNDATION TO STRENGTHEN ARTS AND CREATIVITY ACROSS MASSACHUSETTS

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

[BOSTON] January 30, 2018 -- [The Barr Foundation](#), a private foundation based in Boston with a long-term commitment to supporting arts & creativity, [today announced](#) the launch of Creative Commonwealth, a partnership between Barr and five community foundations in Massachusetts. 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. The five community foundations partnering with Barr on this effort are: [Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation](#), [Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts](#), [Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts](#), [Essex County Community Foundation](#) and [Greater Worcester Community Foundation](#).

Each of the community foundations has been awarded \$500,000 over 24 months to pilot ideas customized to each community. These grants follow a year-long planning process funded by Barr in 2017, during which each foundation worked with community leaders to identify opportunities, needs, and priorities.

“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 more 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 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.

About the Creative Commonwealth Initiative Partners and Projects



About Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation

Now in its 30th year, Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation builds stronger communities through philanthropy and leadership in northwest Litchfield County, Conn.; Berkshire County, Mass.; and Columbia County and northeast Dutchess County, N.Y. A nonprofit public charity with over \$150 million in assets, the foundation distributed a total of \$6.5 million through grants and scholarships in 2017 to nonprofits and individuals in the arts and education, health and human services, and environmental protection. You can make a difference. We can help. www.berkshiretaconic.org

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.

“Strengthening community engagement is a strategic priority for Berkshire Taconic, along with increasing educational attainment and economic opportunity among residents,” said Peter Taylor, president of Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation. “Being a part of the Creative Commonwealth initiative will allow us to partner with cultural organizations and year-round residents to test new approaches to community engagement that use the proven power of the arts to build trust, cooperation and unity, while strengthening the arts as a sector.”



About Essex County Community Foundation

The mission of the Essex County Community Foundation is to strengthen the communities of Essex County. We do this by promoting philanthropy and managing charitable assets, making grants and engaging in strategic community leadership. Since 1998, ECCF and its family of over 180 charitable funds have granted over \$53 million to nonprofits, schools and students in Essex County and beyond. Our ultimate goal is to have 34 thriving cities and towns in Essex County and to improve the quality of life for the region’s 750,000+ residents. Visit ECCF online at eccf.org or impactessexcounty.org, the Foundation's new data website for Impact Essex County, ECCF's community leadership project aimed at tackling Essex County's greatest challenges.

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.

“We are excited to be a part of the first cohort of Creative Commonwealth community foundations, and to connect artists, business leaders, arts organizations and citizens to a shared vision for arts and culture in Essex County,” Dave Edwards, President and CEO of Essex County Community Foundation.



About Greater Worcester Community Foundation

Greater Worcester Community Foundation unites people from diverse sectors to create positive change within our region. Created and built by local individuals, this permanent endowment is used to create personal and lasting legacies that improve lives and conditions within the community. Established in 1975, the Foundation has awarded more than \$110 million to cultural educational, human service and civic organizations. Today, the Foundation stewards a charitable endowment exceeding \$150 million in over 600 named funds, all created by local citizens. In 2015, the Foundation adopted the Early Childhood Initiative which creates conditions that prepares local young children for success in school and life. For more information, visit www.greaterworcester.org.

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.

"With our creative arts initiative, we asked ourselves the question: what can the arts do for Worcester? The city has a flourishing arts population, full of talent and cultural assets, and ultimately, we want to make this community more accessible to the rest of Worcester," said Ann T. Lisi, GWCF president and CEO. "With the gracious support from The Barr Foundation, we can better connect donors with local artists and cultural organizations and in turn, grow the Worcester community."



About the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts

Our Community. Your Foundation. Since 1995, area residents have been turning to the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts to make their philanthropic giving as effective as possible. The Community Foundation is a public charity serving thousands of people who share a common concern – improving the quality of life in Southeastern Massachusetts. To date, the Community Foundation has distributed over \$25 million from 200 funds to humanitarian, educational and cultural organizations in the region. More information about the Foundation can be found at www.cfsema.org.

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.

"Arts and culture have the power to tell our stories, to enhance the quality of our lives--as we live them and as we want to live them. Our region will benefit from participating in the Creative Commonwealth as we seek to elevate new voices and expand opportunities for inclusive and innovative ideas," said John Vasconcellos, president of the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts.



About the 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/>.

The Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts will support the development and testing of innovative ideas to connect the arts to other sectors, while also building 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.