

Viva Crupi  
Portland

My name is Viva, I lead a jazz organization (VIVA & The Reinforcements) in the Portland area. Annually, our organization provides work for about 20 highly skilled professional musicians, with one full-time administrative employee. We have performed at such events as Maine Initiative's 25th Anniversary, the Maine Women's Lobby's 40th Anniversary, United Way of Greater Portland's 90th Anniversary, Pride! Portland, and the Inaugural Celebration of Maine's 75th Governor, Janet Mills.

Because of the COVID-19 shutdown, we have closed our operations almost entirely, laying off all workers including our administrator. Without venues, we essentially have no option to work, and even with outdoor music venues we have not been able to safely gather indoors to conduct rehearsals. Not only have I been unable to provide work for my team, but my personal income from music and entertainment has been all but entirely eliminated. We are all private contractors - therefore our work volume can be radically different from year to year, making applying for PPE unfeasible.

As artists and musicians are forced to abandon their livelihoods, the expertise we've carefully earned begins to deteriorate. Culture is an economic ecosystem, as well as a social one, and consequently impacts the quality of life in our communities, the appeal of restaurants and venues to tourists, and the ability to pass our skills on to future generations. Frankly, the only reason I've remained in the state of Maine is due to the professional opportunities I've found here. If our venues and individual musicians do not receive assistance recovering lost ground, I will be forced to seek opportunities elsewhere. I am someone who provides work to many other musicians throughout the year, so the closure of my business would also remove options for people in my field who depend on my leadership. (Additionally, my business is one of the fragile minority of Black-owned music organizations in the entire state. Maine cannot afford to lose more Black-owned businesses than it currently has.)

Our work requires financial support to recover our losses from the past fourteen months. Without the arts, we don't have much culture to speak of. Without a culture, or trust in our government to care for its civilians, our society will continue to suffer from the collapse of 2020 in ways that will harm our immediate financial future as a state, and the prosperity and development of future generations of musical Mainers.