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Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer

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Dear Chancellor,

I am writing to you regarding the Government's support for the creative sector, arts industries and individuals that are struggling across Scotland and the UK because of the pandemic.

I welcome that some people across the sector have been able to take advantage of financial support packages such as the Job Retention Scheme, Self Employed Income Support Scheme, Self Employed Hardship Fund, and the Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

However, many creative outlets – be it venues, individuals, festivals or industry bodies – remain concerned that they cannot access these schemes or they will not be enough to see them through the coming weeks and months if their sectors must remain closed.

These concerns have been raised in my own constituency by the Southside Fringe festival and its participants. They have called on the UK Government to provide the following, which I support:

1. Government backed COVID-19 Insurance Scheme: To ensure if local lockdowns happen event organisers will recover costs and attendees will receive a refund.
2. Government support for widespread proactive COVID-19 testing for event attendees: To give confidence to attendees and organisers that the event is safe and COVID-19 Compliant.
3. A three-year extension to the reduced cultural vat rate on tickets in line with DCMS recommendations: To stimulate the return of a viable live entertainment sector.
4. Grants made available to businesses in the events supply chain: To give companies the flexibility to allocate financial resources where they need it most, to keep their business afloat.
5. A specific job support scheme for live events supply chain until the government guidelines change on social distancing to allow a commercially viable return to work: To allow employers, the freelance community, including single director companies from the previously economically successful live events sectors to retain highly skilled people.

I have already written to ask you if you could provide an overview of the steps the Government is taking, or planning to take, to ensure our creative sector is protected from financial hardship and ensure gaps are filled so that even more people are not left out of pocket through no fault of their own.

Those who work in the creative sector spend years training and work other jobs to support themselves when work is scarce, to then provide us with wonderful cultural experiences. To suggest creatives should retrain into other fields after years of dedication to give us so much in return is downright insulting to them.

People across the creative sector are in a worrying situation, and to lose such a fantastic venues, festivals and artists across these isles would be a devastating blow for us all, and that cannot be allowed to happen.

I would be grateful if you could follow up on the asks of the creative sector and provide the support that they have outlined that they need – fast.

Kind regards,