



Rt Hon Nadine Dorries MP
Secretary of State
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

21st December 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to you regarding the urgent government support needed for freelancers and self-employed workers in the creative industries, following the tightening of current Covid restrictions.

As a result of the Omicron variant, theatres and live events have been placed in a lockdown by stealth with more shutting down each day and many of our members being laid off or having work cancelled. The creative industries have been subject to crippling uncertainty throughout the pandemic, with job losses, a loss of skillsets, and regular closures of the sector. Emergency measures need to be put in place that can be easily implemented and reinstated when conditions make it necessary.

We have previously written to your predecessor, MP Oliver Dowden, asking DCMS to consider provisions that will ensure the creative industries remain protected under restrictions, and ensure a safe and successful reopening. We believe that sector specific support that can be reinstated when necessary is the best way to ensure that freelancers and the self-employed and the wider creative sector are protected through the peaks and troughs of the pandemic.

Although the Culture Recovery Fund provided some relief, it does not offer the rapid and substantial protection that is necessary to safeguard the industry in the current climate. With Covid-19 cases rising rapidly and theatres closing in the run up to Christmas, we need an emergency package that ensures no freelancers and self-employed staff are left out of government support.

I am asking you to consider an emergency package consisting of the following measures:

- **A flexible sector specific scheme:** In the face of further closures and time off work, the theatre industry needs financial support. The SEISS and furlough schemes must be reinstated for the Sector, and when production resumes, a tapered withdrawal of support will be necessary to avoid further redundancies. The threat of new variants and changing Covid restrictions is ongoing for theatres, who were the first to close at the start of the pandemic and the last to reopen. Therefore, support for the sector needs to be able to be turned on and off depending on the prevailing Covid restrictions.
- **Government backed insurances for theatres and live events:** The Film and TV Production Restart Scheme has been a great success. Theatres require this same backing to minimise the risks of restarting after closures and get back to entertaining millions. The Live Events Reinsurance Scheme does not benefit theatres and does not account for closures due to Covid illness. We need a

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reinsurance scheme that is fit for purpose across the whole creative industry. The last few weeks have seen the unexpected closure of theatres right before the busy Christmas period, and government backed insurance will provide a safety net for productions and reassure workers uncertainty.

In the midst of a new theatre crisis, employees, self-employed staff and freelancers need to be able to count on government support. The SEISS left many freelancers falling through the gaps of support earlier in the pandemic, and we are concerned that they will once again be the last to receive assistance and economic protections.

We urge you to consider our requests and provide the emergency support that is necessary to ensure that creative workers are not left behind in the face of a new Covid crisis.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philippa Childs". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Philippa Childs

Head of Bectu, a sector of Prospect Union