



Ohio Arts Council  
House Bill 166: FY 2020-2021 Biennial Operating Budget

Senate Higher Education Committee  
Senator Stephanie Kunze, Chair

Tuesday, April 30, 10:30 a.m.

Testimony submitted by:  
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Good afternoon, Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the committee. My name is Donna Collins, and I am the executive director of the Ohio Arts Council (OAC).

On behalf of the OAC's Chair Ginger Warner, Vice-Chair Jim Dicke II, and our board members, staff, grantees, and partners—as well as artists living and working in every Ohio community—I want to express my deep appreciation for the General Assembly's past and present support for the arts.

Our agency's staff works hard—and with our board's support we are making grant awards, supporting arts education for children, elevating the profiles of Ohio's artists and arts organizations, and carefully stewarding your public investment in the arts. In doing so, the Ohio Arts Council leverages its unique position within state government to champion Ohio's creative cultural assets, bolster the economy, and inspire personal growth and learning for all ages.

Thanks to the support of our state's elected officials—across governors, political beliefs, and legislative chambers—our agency's budget has rebounded from the Great Recession, although it remains below its peak achieved 20 years ago in FY 2000. Nevertheless, through judicious fiscal management, since FY 2016 we have funded the arts in all 88 counties, served more students through arts education, and worked to ensure our state's cultural institutions serve all communities.

**The Arts: A Sound, Innovative Investment**

The legislature's investment in the arts through the Ohio Arts Council has great value with far-reaching economic, educational, and cultural benefits.

Quite simply, funding for the arts creates jobs directly, and it also supports jobs in other industries. Consider Ohio's numerous arts organizations contracting services—from accountants, engineers, highly skilled laborers and craftsmen, and others—to support their endeavors. Artists themselves are often entrepreneurs and business owners, whether running gallery spaces or partnering with other segments of the entertainment, tourism, and retail sectors.

Longitudinal research indicates the economic impact of the arts in Ohio is immense—and growing. A study released in 2018 from Bowling Green State University demonstrates that Ohio’s arts sector supports nearly 290,000 jobs, contributing nearly \$41 billion to the state’s economy and generating about \$4.6 billion in annual tax revenues at the local, state, and federal levels. This represents increases of approximately 60,000 jobs, \$9 billion in economic impact, and \$1.2 billion in tax revenue compared to the last study released in 2015.

Specifically, we know that the arts and cultural industries:

- are fast-growing, dynamic clusters of economic activity that aid the growth of other businesses;
- assist in the retention and development of an innovative and skilled workforce;
- transform local economies into innovation centers;
- spur strong public-private partnerships that catalyze community revitalization in urban and rural areas alike;
- produce resilient, entrepreneurial jobs suited to making mature industries become more competitive; and
- comprise an export sector closely connected to tourism.

Creativity and creative expression promote educational success. It is intrinsically linked to social and emotional learning. Experience in the arts helps students achieve. Findings from the National Endowment for the Arts indicate that low-income students who earn few or no arts credits in high school are five times less likely to graduate than students who earned arts credits. Thus, an education that includes the arts helps to train our workforce and produce critical thinkers and problem-solvers. In an economy increasingly driven by innovation and creativity, arts education produces workers that are attractive to the employers of today and tomorrow.

Ohio’s citizens appreciate, understand, and prioritize ongoing investment in the arts as a critical role of the public sector. A recent statewide survey that reached every county revealed that 91 percent of Ohioans believe public funds should go toward the arts, with 83 percent already aware that public funds support the arts in Ohio. In short, Ohioans know their tax dollars are invested in the arts—and strongly support their continued investment. In an era of increasing accountability and transparency in government spending, our agency is humbled that Ohioans continue to authorize and support its public mission and purpose.

### **Advancing Our Mission: Invest, Engage, Innovate, and Lead**

Our mission is to strengthen Ohio’s communities culturally, educationally, and economically. Our vision is to provide leadership and voice for the arts through funding and supporting quality arts experiences. Developed with input from the arts sector, the agency has organized its current strategic plan—*State Arts Plan 2020*—around four actions: to **invest, innovate, engage, and lead**. This allows us to be mission-driven, people-focused, and forward-looking.

#### *Invest and Innovate*

At the core of the OAC’s work is our investment in Ohio’s creative economy. Through our grant-making activities, we serve artists, arts organizations, schools, and nonprofits. Each of our grant

programs have been through a top-to-bottom review initiated four years ago to reset and redetermine agency priorities, which have subsequently been carried through our strategic plan. Our grant programs accommodate a range of needs as identified by past and current grantees, as well as the general public, who frequently inform us about their priorities for public funding for the arts.

To give you a few examples, the OAC:

- provides reliable support for arts organizations through grant awards in its flagship Sustainability program;
- funds opportunities for artists to impart their skills to Ohio's preK-12 students;
- rewards excellence in artistic disciplines and innovative program delivery;
- offers career development funding for artists with disabilities, helping them maintain their independence and pursue a livelihood; and
- develops and trains the workforce through apprenticeships in the traditional arts, preserving the heritage of Ohio.

Among our newer priorities, I want to particularly highlight the Fund Every County program. For the last two biennia, the OAC has made grants in all 88 counties, expanding our impact and presence across Ohio. There are dozens of examples of how this effort is impacting communities. I'll share one:



*Third and fourth-grade students at Archbold Elementary School participated in a live bluegrass music program that incorporated visiting artist performances, workshops, and concerts. The program is set to expand to other area elementary schools next spring.*

In rural Northwest Ohio, the community of Archbold serves as a great example, where one grant has led to several, deepening our engagement. We funded a concert series that has brought award winning songwriters from Nashville, Austin, and other American music capitals. Meanwhile, Archbold Elementary School students have received free lessons and access to bluegrass instruments through the Tri-State Youth Bluegrass Initiative, now ready to expand to additional area schools. The synergy present in Archbold has emboldened the village's sense of identity and pride of place as it becomes a local music hub. Doug Gilliland, a founding member of the Archbold Music Commission and member of the Black Swamp Arts Council board, said it well:

*“It was really helpful for us to know about Fund Every County because that, to me, showed a commitment from the legislature and the Ohio Arts Council to make their presence known in underserved areas....And it showed me, ‘Hey, you guys are committed to helping those of us in rural areas every bit as much as you are in the cities.’ That opened my eyes and gave me encouragement and felt like, ‘Hey, this is something that we can get together and do as a small community.’”*

The agency also continues to focus on continually assessing and improving its processes to achieve new efficiencies. I am proud to say that it has never been easier to apply for OAC funding. That has become evident through dramatic increases in grant applications. Over the last three years, applications have jumped anywhere from 50% to 75% in our project-based grant programs and 50% in our main arts education grant program.

We believe applications have increased for several reasons:

- We remain a national leader in online arts grantmaking thanks to our cutting-edge platform, ARTIE (Arts Resources Through Innovation and Engagement), which several other states have modeled. In conjunction with ARTIE's launch, we reduced red tape by cutting the length of our grant *Guidelines*.
- New this cycle, we have made our *Guidelines* effective on a biennial basis, rather than annual, reducing internal administrative burdens and making procedures more predictable and consistent for our applicants.
- Our project-based funding remains nimble and aligned to the agency's intended strategic outcomes.
- And, we have prioritized meeting constituents and applicants in the field—in the communities where they reside, to hear their stories and encourage them to explore public funding.

Next biennium, our agency plans to continue to make bold, smart investments in the arts while maintaining its reputation as a prudent steward of public resources.

If investment is the core of our work at the OAC, then innovation is our heart—whether we're encouraging it in our grantees or embodying it ourselves. In line with Governor Mike DeWine's emphasis on children's initiatives, much of our work in this area has concentrated on arts education for Ohio's children, both this biennium and next.

Most notably, the agency has changed its approach to funding teaching artist residencies in Ohio schools through the creation of TeachArtsOhio (TAO). Begun in 2015, TAO provides Ohio students with in-depth and impactful in-school arts learning experiences, placing high-quality teaching artists in schools for a grading period, semester, or full academic year. During the pilot period, 36 schools in 15 underserved districts were involved—spread across each of the six JobsOhio districts. Positive results inspired the agency to conduct a full-scale review of its suite of teaching artist programming this biennium. An external program evaluation examined all aspects of the program's structure, management, promotion, and scalability.

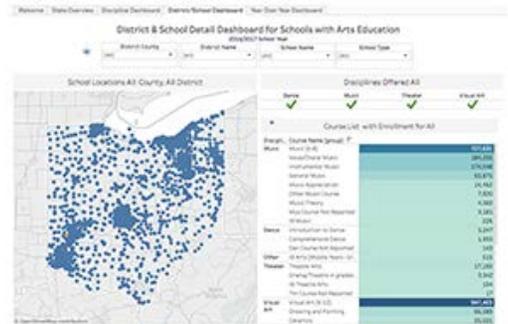


*An OAC grantee, the Artful Living and Learning (ALL) program in Northeast Ohio has demonstrated that its participating preschool students test higher in reading, math, and writing compared to their peers, while ALL's fourth grade students test better in language arts, math, social studies, and science.*

The result of the review recast all residency activities to come under the TAO umbrella beginning in FY 2019. For its first year as a full-fledged program of the OAC, TAO is supporting nearly 12,000 students in 41 schools in communities throughout Ohio with engaging, personal, high-quality arts learning experiences through collaboration with 35 of Ohio's professional artists. Approximately two-thirds of these students reside in districts with higher than average child poverty rates. Teachers and administrators have welcomed the TeachArtsOhio program into their schools and districts. Administrators, including superintendents, have commended our agency for providing

supplemental support through the inclusion of professional teaching artists in classrooms—support that supplements, and does not supplant, the important role Ohio’s teachers play in our educational system. It should also be noted that these teaching artists know and understand the state’s academic content standards and can support both teaching and learning while in the classroom.

In addition, the OAC has partnered with the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Alliance for Arts Education to build an Arts Education Dashboard that enables parents, educators, school administrators, and policymakers to view schools’ arts education offerings at the building, district, county, and state levels. The dashboard gives educators the ability to track trends and address student needs. Using data from the state’s Education Management Information System, the dashboard is updated annually to provide a snapshot of what is happening in every Ohio school in regard to music, visual art, dance, and theatre. All of this comes with an eye towards the goal that every Ohio student deserves a high-quality arts education to compete in today’s workforce.



*Ohio was among the first five states to participate in the National Arts Education Data Project. Twenty states are expected online by 2020.*

### *Engage and Lead*

Last biennium we executed an overhaul of much of the agency’s external-facing communications. We completely redesigned and modernized our website—the first structural update since the mid-2000s. Accompanying our website redesign was the introduction of a new agency logo and brand identity, again, for the first time in nearly three decades. As with our grantmaking, this biennium we garnered national recognition for our efforts, for instance, presenting at the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies on best practices for rebranding.

With this work behind us, our communications team has been able to sharpen our focus in two ways. First, we have enhanced our online presence through creating more engaging and strategic social media content. The results have been immediate and evident in the significant increases in our grant applications. This growth is not growth for our agency’s own sake—rather, it broadens our ability to advance and promote the fantastic work achieved within Ohio’s creative communities, and to call attention to the availability of state resources for the arts.

Second, in response to numerous constituent requests, we have brought together leaders in the arts and cultural sector more frequently. By encouraging arts organizations to share best practices and successes, we are empowering Ohio’s arts sector to make connections and produce fruitful partnerships. This biennium, we reinstated a multiday conference for Ohio’s creative professionals. Titled Arts Impact Ohio, the conference focused on the ways the arts intersect with various social issues—arts and health care; veterans’ services; addiction and mental health; disability; incarceration and re-entry; education; the economy; and so on.

### **State and Federal Appropriations**

The executive version of the FY 2020-2021 budget recommends GRF appropriations at \$29.5 million to support and strengthen the arts in Ohio. I want to express my enduring gratitude to lawmakers

and to Governor DeWine for your continued faith and investment in the arts in Ohio—in the past, now, and in the future.

This public investment totals less than 0.04% of the state's total GRF appropriations, but produces a big return on investment. In the last grant cycle, every OAC dollar was matched with local and private funds at a tremendous ratio of 42:1.

In addition to the state's investment, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has awarded the OAC the second-largest state arts agency grant in the nation for nine consecutive years, recognizing the excellence of our programming and building on Ohio's appropriation. No NEA funds are used on the agency's administrative expenses. NEA funding traditionally totals around \$2 million biennially.

As in the past, the OAC staff continues to adopt cost-saving measures to operate efficiently and effectively. Since FY 2008, the agency's staff has been reduced by about 50%, despite an increase in applications and constituent needs. As a result, the OAC has lengthened its grant cycles and streamlined procedures, reducing administrative burdens on both grantees and the agency. Even with staff levels stabilized, since FY 2013 the OAC has reduced the payroll portion of its budget by 3%.

In short, the Ohio Arts Council is making a positive impact in the lives of children, families, artists, and their communities. In 1965, when Governor James Rhodes and Senator Stanley Aronoff worked to enact legislation to create our agency, they equipped our state with the tools to make Ohio a more vibrant place to live. Now, more than 50 years later, we are proud to continue to innovate and serve the citizens of the State of Ohio.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you. I would be happy to answer questions.