



## BEFORE THE SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

May 14, 2019

Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chairwoman Gavarone, and members of the Committee, my name is Bill Behrendt and I serve as Executive Director of Ohio Citizens for the Arts.

Ohio Citizens for the Arts is a statewide grassroots organization that was founded in 1976 for the purpose of advocating on issues of importance to the arts in Ohio. It is our mission to increase public support and funding for the arts through advocacy, engagement, and education. I am here today representing hundreds of thousands of Ohioans who participate in the arts in every county in our state.

My job is to share with you the goal set by the Ohio Citizens for the Arts' Board of Directors as we contemplated the needs of arts and culture in Ohio. We set a goal to secure \$40 million to support arts and culture through the Ohio Arts Council in the upcoming biennium, which represents a \$4 million increase per year over what the House has passed in their budget.

Ohio Citizens for the Arts truly is the collective voice of the arts in the state, and through our representation of organizations large and small, non-profits, educators, artists, and individuals we have a unique insight on the needs of the statewide arts community. These people are like you and me; they want to live in vibrant communities, they want their children to have a complete education that includes the arts, they want a thriving cultural scene that preserves our cultural heritage, and they want to retain and bring new businesses and revenue sources to support the communities in which they live and work. The arts are deeply embedded in all of these things and our research proves it.

Recent research from a study conducted by the Center for Regional Development at Bowling Green State University has shown that the creative industries support over 289,000 jobs, contribute \$41 billion to the state's economy, and generate approximately \$4.5 billion in tax revenues annually. These numbers reinforce what we've always known: The arts sector plays a central role in economic development and job creation in Ohio.

But the arts are not just an economic engine, they also play a crucial role in the education of young Ohioans. There is overwhelming evidence from generations of research that proves conclusively that students who participate in the arts consistently outperform non-arts peers in math, science, creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration, flexibility and adaptability, and social and cross cultural skills. The knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors students acquire from studying the arts has been identified as the skills needed to be successful in a global economy.



When you put into perspective the role the arts play as both an economic driver and as an educational investment in our students, asking for increased public funds for the arts makes fiscal and prudent sense. We appreciate that lawmakers have been supportive of funding for arts and culture in previous budgets; yet in twenty years we still have not restored arts funding to the level it once was. Current funding for arts is still below the \$32 million budgeted in 2000-01-- which actually represents \$48 million in today's dollars when adjusted for the Consumer Price Index.

When the arts play such a vital role in economic development and strengthening education, not increasing public funding for the arts would be a missed opportunity to realize the full potential of Ohio's creative industries and make a critical investment in the people, and the future, of Ohio.

Thank you for your time, and thank you for your continued support of the arts in our great state.