



**BEFORE THE HOUSE FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION  
ROSS MCGREGOR, OCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**FEBRUARY 28, 2017**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

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, along with our Executive Director Bill Behrendt and Legislative Counsel Bill Blair, 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 \$34 million to support arts and culture through the Ohio Arts Council in the upcoming biennium, which represents a \$4 million increase over what the Governor has proposed in his Executive Budget.

Over the years, including my years of service in the Ohio Legislature, I have had the opportunity to meet and work with the dedicated and loyal individuals and organizations who support the arts in Ohio. 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 insures 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 nearly 231,000 jobs, contribute almost \$32 billion to the state's economy, and generate approximately \$3.4 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, even in a tight budget year, makes fiscal and prudent sense. We appreciate that Gov. Kasich and Ohio lawmakers have increased funding for arts and culture in previous budgets. The current proposal, however, keeps art funding stagnant, allocating the same amount of money from the last two years. This figure is still below the \$32 million budgeted almost 20 years ago in 2000-2001, which represents \$44 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 of Ohio.

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