



**House Bill 166
Course Access Amendment
Ty Sutton
Victoria Theatre Association
May 22, 2019**

Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I write to you today on behalf of the Victoria Theatre Association located in Dayton, serving the Miami Valley region and beyond.

This past season, our Education & Engagement programs reached more than 105,000 people in the Miami Valley. More than 27,000 students from 14 counties and 92 school districts attended the Discovery Series during our 2017-2018 Season.

Victoria Theatre Association's Education & Engagement programs enrich the lives, learning and leisure of Miami Valley student by providing free and low-cost creative experiences that are varied, diverse and accessible.

During the 2017-2018 season, VTA welcomed young people from **64 school districts in 13 counties** throughout southwestern Ohio to the Discovery Series. More than 27,000 students and teachers from 169 schools, home school groups and adult day care groups attended shows and workshops, including a total of 1406 students from 12 Catholic schools. One hundred percent of all students received scholarships through reduced ticket prices, and thanks to generous donors and more than 8,800 students received additional financial assistance to attend Discovery Series performances.

These programs have touched the lives of thousands of young people, keeping the arts an essential element of these students' academic journey

In an era where innovation and hands on experience in education is a paramount to providing a world class education, while preparing Ohio's students for jobs of the future, Ohio's education system is well primed to partner with local resources to deliver real time innovative coursework.

Strong data shows that students who have meaningful arts education have higher GPAs, higher graduation rates, higher test scores and stay in school. However, many Ohio districts are unable to provide this critical piece.

We strongly encourage your support of the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) Course Access pilot project amendment. This will allow us to expand our reach to more students while partnering with school districts to fill the gap in their arts education offerings. Many do not have the resources to hire full-time arts educators. This program will allow them to offer high quality arts education to students.

Course Access helps Ohio fill those gaps by creating a centralized delivery system for high-need courses from a range of high-quality providers. Schools can engage with students to provide the courses that best meet their needs and pathway goals, without being limited by geography or capacity.

Partnering with museums and professional arts organizations can bring a whole new perspective to fundamentally modernize Ohio's classrooms and the students we serve.

Students come to class each day from every background, with varying levels of attainment and engagement. STEAM and arts education, done properly, by artists and scientists, can re-engage students and better prepare them to enter school buildings each day.

A course access program, housed at the Ohio Department of Education and funded through state dollars allocated at the local level, not only provides flexibility for local school districts and students but can reignite students' interests in STEAM careers and invigorate student work ethic in all academic areas.

Course Access providers such as Victoria Theatre Association, with master artists, have the expertise to deliver both in person, blended and/or fully online content would fill a need for Ohio's students. By leveraging credentialed instructors, with unique and well developed full courses, Ohio students are bound to benefit from high quality coursework, aligned to Ohio's Learning Standards.

This public-private partnership will help bring the vast resources of arts associations to students in all areas of Ohio, including Ohio's most remote and rural areas through blended and digital coursework. This program can help defer the cost of K-12 arts and education in small districts or low enrollment classes at a district while providing high quality arts education. Local students and districts retain the authority over the program by reviewing each request for coursework by a student.

Again, we ask that you support the STEAM Course Access Pilot Project which will allow the Ohio Department of Education to retool the online course access program and fund a pilot project to create a scalable course access content to support blended STEAM education throughout Ohio.

Thank you for your strong consideration of this amendment for inclusion in HB 166 and for supporting the arts as a key component of Ohio students' education.