



**Senator Andrew O. Brenner – 19<sup>th</sup> District**  
**Senate Finance Committee**  
**September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021**  
**Senate Bill 208 – Sponsor Testimony**

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for affording me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 208. This bill would ensure that art organizations have access to grants and funding from state and federal sources.

Currently, it is the policy of the Ohio Arts Council to prohibit awarding grants to “Applications for operating or project support from organizations receiving funding from the Ohio legislature - either directly or via any third-party or pass-through entity - via a line item or earmark in the state budget during the same fiscal year in which the organization applies to receive support from the OAC.” In other words, the OAC will not provide funding of any kind to entire organizations that receive funding from the state.

Before this change was made, OAC policy only prohibited supplying operating funds to organizations that received operating funds from other sources. This is a standard practice to prevent double-dipping. However, the much more restrictive guideline against providing even project-based funding to organizations that receive any funds from the state has impacted art museums, performance venues, and other cultural institutions.

To provide a real-world example of the impact this policy has had, a public performing arts venue in the state was successful in securing funding in a previous operating budget that would have allowed them to provide musical instruction to children in the community. While this would normally be a very good thing, given that fostering and encouraging the arts is the whole reason the state established the Ohio Arts Council, the venue was notified that if they were to accept state funding for that music education program, they would be disqualified from receiving any grants from the OAC. As you can imagine, the funding they received from the Arts Council was significantly more than the funds allotted for a single educational program and that venue was forced to return to the legislature and ask that the appropriation be removed from the budget.

This is just one example of a publicly-funded cultural organization being forced to decline state funding for things like transporting students and educational programs simply because of a regulation imposed by the OAC. By making this change we are ensuring that the legislature is able to exercise local representation in the budget-making process. We are ensuring that a university art museum can accept funds from their institution to sponsor education programs in their community. A theater in a county-owned building could get a grant to transport students from rural areas to a play. Municipal performance venues could find funding for senior music night. Ultimately, this bill would help the legislature promote access to the arts in their districts, which I believe benefits everyone.

Lastly, I would like to note that this is something I and some other members of the Senate submitted as an amendment to House Bill 110, but it was not included in the final version of the budget. I would welcome any input from the members of this body on improving the bill. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 208. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.