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**House Bill 96 (Brian Stewart): FY 2026-2027 Biennial Operating Budget
House Finance Committee
Representative Brian Stewart, Chair**

**Request to Increase the General Revenue Budget for the Ohio Arts Council
Jarrod Hartzler, Executive Director
Ohio Alliance for Arts Education**

OhioDance

Ohio Thespians/Ohio Educational Theatre Association

Ohio Music Education Association

Ohio Art Education Association

April 3, 2025

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee. My name is Jarrod Hartzler, and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Alliance for Arts Education (OAAE). The OAAE is a statewide organization that ensures that Ohio students receive quality, standards-based instruction in the arts, and are prepared with the knowledge and skills to pursue careers in the arts, higher education in the arts, and participate in the arts throughout their lifetimes. We do this by working with Ohio's State Arts Education Organizations, including OhioDance, the Ohio Thespians/Ohio Educational Theatre Association, the Ohio Music Education Association, the Ohio Art Education Association, and with over eight thousand arts educators in Ohio. This year the OAAE is celebrating our 50th Anniversary!

On behalf of the Ohio's State Arts Education Organizations, I would like to thank Governor DeWine and the members of this and previous General Assemblies for your consistent and strategic investments in Ohio's arts ecosystem for 60 years! I say strategic because the additional support that artists, educators, and arts organizations received from the General Assembly during and after the COVID pandemic was lifesaving in many cases. Thank you.

As arts educators we appreciate the work that the Ohio Arts Council does in all 88 counties in Ohio to expand student access to standard-based arts instruction; to provide teachers with opportunities to develop their artistic talents and teaching skills; and to bring people together through the arts to strengthen communities.

To continue this extraordinary level of commitment and work, the Ohio State Arts Education Organizations are requesting that the House Finance Committee increase General Revenue funding for the Ohio Arts Council by \$8.5 million, including \$6 million for State Program Subsidies (grants) and Sustainability; \$2 million for TeachArtsOhio; and \$500,000 for State Operating Expenses.

The proposed increase in GRF funding will enable the Ohio Arts Council to advance its mission to strengthen Ohio's communities culturally, educationally, and economically in every county. Two years ago the Ohio Arts Council awarded Sustainability grants to 446 nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and since that time 193 nonprofit arts organizations have become eligible to apply for grants. The proposed increase in the budget will be used to accommodate newly eligible potential applicants and hold existing grantees harmless.

In addition, the demand for professional teaching artists to teach their skills to Ohio's preK-12 students through TeachArtsOhio has increased. The increase requested would support up to twenty additional TeachArtsOhio education grants. Currently the program serves more than 100,000 students and educators in nearly 120 schools, but the demand is high for this school and community-based program, and applications continue to outpace available funds.

The TeachArtsOhio program is unique to Ohio and connects Ohio students with professional teaching artists to experience in-depth instruction aligned to academic content standards in the arts. Teaching artists supplement arts instruction through collaboration with teachers, artists, and school administrators.

Investing in the Ohio Arts Council has great fiscal returns that benefit Ohio residents wherever they live, because the arts sector supports more than 292,000 jobs, contributes more than \$63.3 billion to the state's economy, and generates about \$2.3 billion in annual tax revenue at the local, state, and federal levels.

Ohio's creative sector significantly contributes to Ohio's economy, and ranks 11th in the nation for economic impact and second among bordering states in total value added to the economy. The economic impact of Ohio's arts and culture sector accounts for three percent of Ohio's GDP — a larger economic contribution than education or agriculture.

In addition, the arts are an essential component of a child's complete education and are as relevant as ever. Standards-based instruction in the arts prepares students with the knowledge and skills to pursue careers in the arts, higher education in the arts, and participate in the arts throughout their lifetimes.

The arts also stimulate a curiosity and excitement in students for learning, which is critical as schools, parents, and communities work to re-engaged students in the learning process. Ongoing research confirms a positive relationship between arts education and improved outcomes for students, including academics, engagement in school, civic engagement, and the development of valuable life and career skills, including collaboration, critical thinking, and problem solving.

Student experiences in the arts and arts processes can also boost student engagement and skills in [reading and writing](#) as Ohio schools implement the Science of Reading. Students who are taught to

observe, discuss and reflect on their own art develop skills that support developing readers and help them connect the symbolic language (i.e. words and images) to sounds and understanding.

And Ohioans support the arts! According to the National Endowment for the Arts, [Arts Participation Index](#), 68 percent of Ohioans have taken arts lessons over a lifetime; 48 percent have taken music lessons; and 62 percent of Ohioans have engaged in artmaking over the past year.

Ohio's State Arts Education Organizations greatly appreciate the continued support for Ohio's creative and dynamic arts sector through Governor DeWine's budget recommendation. But, as the Ohio Arts Council celebrates 60 years of public funding for the arts this year, we see this moment as a unique opportunity to invest even more in Ohio's future.

Thank you for considering this request.

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