



**Am. Sub. House Bill 96 (Brian Stewart): FY 2026-2027 Biennial Operating Budget
Ohio Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina D. Roegner, Chair
Tuesday, April 29, 2025**

**Testimony
Jarrod Hartzler
Ohio Alliance for Arts Education
Request to Increase the Budget for the Ohio Arts Council**

Good morning, Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Timken, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee. My name is Jarrod Hartzler, and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Alliance for Arts Education (Alliance). The Alliance is a statewide organization that works to ensure 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 statewide arts education partners, including OhioDance, the Ohio Thespians/Ohio Educational Theatre Association, the Ohio Music Education Association, the Ohio Art Education Association, and with the over eight thousand arts educators in Ohio. This year we are celebrating our 50th Anniversary.

On behalf of the Alliance's President Cameron Dedrick, a high school arts educator from Ashland City Schools, and our board members, I would like to thank Governor Mike 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 an arts educator I 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 Alliance is requesting that the Senate Higher Education Committee increase funding for the Ohio Arts Council's State Program Subsidies Fund (GRF 370502) by \$4 million in each fiscal year.



H.B. No. 96

April 29, 2025

The proposed increase in GRF 370502 Fund 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 an additional 193 nonprofit arts organizations have become eligible to apply for grants. The Alliance's proposed increase in the OAC's budget will be used to accommodate newly eligible applicants and hold existing grantees harmless.

The proposed increase will support arts education organizations, such as the Ohio Alliance for Arts Education, to continue their work promoting Ohio's academic content standards and curriculum in partnership with the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce; support arts educators and teaching artists; support the Ohio Arts Education Data Project; support the Governor's Youth Art Exhibition; and more.

The arts also stimulate a curiosity and excitement in students for learning, which is critical as schools, parents, and communities work to engage 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 communication, 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.

Investing in the Ohio Arts Council also has great fiscal returns that benefit Ohio residents wherever they live. According to a 2024 study conducted by Dr. Michael C. Carroll, while state GRF investment in the OAC comprises 0.06 percent of the state's total GRF appropriations, Ohio's arts sector supports more than 292,000 jobs, contributes more than \$63.3 billion to the state's economy, and generates about \$6.5 billion in annual tax revenue at the local, state, and federal levels.

Ohio's creative nonprofit 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.



H.B. No. 96

April 29, 2025

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.

The Alliance and other statewide arts education organizations greatly appreciate the continued support for Ohio's creative and dynamic arts sector through Governor DeWine's budget recommendations and the additional support from the Ohio House. The Alliance respectfully requests increasing the GRF budget for the Ohio Arts Council by \$4 million each fiscal year to ensure that OAC's great work to invest, engage, innovate, and lead reaches even more Ohio communities, citizens, and students.

Thank you for considering this request.

Jarrold Hartzler
Executive Director