

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2008

The Honorable David R. Obey
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
B-300 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James T. Walsh
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Walsh:

We urge you to support \$53 million for the Arts in Education program at the U.S. Department of Education in the Fiscal Year 2009 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill. The Arts in Education program at the U.S. Department of Education funds model arts education programs in schools in communities throughout the country, the professional development of arts educators, and the ongoing national arts education initiatives of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and *VSA arts*, a program which ensures that people with disabilities can participate in the arts. Years of research demonstrates that a significant link exists between arts education and students' academic performance, as well as their social development, motivations, attitudes, and disposition toward learning.

In the FY 2008 Omnibus spending bill increased funding for Arts in Education program by \$2 million to \$37.53 million. This included over \$2 million in long-awaited funding for the Fast Response Survey on the status of arts education in our schools. Last year the program resulted in approximately 160 awards to school districts in 180 Congressional Districts throughout the country. We are alarmed, however, that the President's FY 2009 budget request did not contain any funding for Arts in Education. At a time when model programs supported by the Department are showing impressive results and the need for arts in education could not be greater, it is imperative that we fully fund these programs.

Studies have consistently shown that students who take regular arts courses have better attendance at school, earn better grades, have lower drop-out rates, perform more community service, watch fewer hours of television, and have higher self-esteem. A 2006 study by the Arts Education Partnership, *Third Space: When Learning Matters*, finds that schools with large populations of students in economic poverty—often places of frustration and failure for students and teachers alike—can be transformed into vibrant and successful centers of learning and community life when the arts are infused into their culture and curriculum.

Arts education has a role to play in developing our nation's workforce as well. A report released in December of 2006 by *the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce*, said in its

executive summary, "The best employers the world over will be looking for the most competent, most creative, and most innovative people on the face of the earth and will be willing to pay them top dollar for their services." This report concludes that the arts are an essential skill for fostering the type of innovative thinker that will thrive in the future workforce.

As you know, No Child Left Behind recognizes the arts as a core subject of learning. This year, as the Congress continues consideration of reauthorization of NCLB and states continue to work to implement NCLB, we must provide funding to sustain the national development and dissemination of promising practices through the Arts in Education programs.

Our states, schools, and communities are poised to further strengthen arts education, but they need our help. We urge you to support the educational development of our schoolchildren and the professional development of our teachers by including \$53 million in funding for Arts in Education at the U.S. Department of Education.

Sincerely,

Louise M. Slaughter

Chris Shays

Jim Langevin

Stacy Spivey

Clark G. Gable

Pete Stark

Kathy Castor

John Lewis

Haley Barbey

Christy P. Comer

Tammy Duckworth

John P. Schauer

Jim Moran

L. M. G.

Jim Marshall

Jim Krustal

Stephen Pello

Jim McDermott

Harold Johnson

Jean Altuire

Raul M. Grijalva

John Mc...

Chris Van Hollen

Paul E...

Bill Nere

Jim Jefferson

Stephanie Peterson Sandlin

Steve Cohen

Luis Cappe

Tom Allen

J. Math...

Peter Welch

Earl Tanney

Susan D. Davis

Nancy Boyd

Mike & Michael

Rush Holt

Tom & wife

Colli C. Palmer

Delvin L. Watt

Levold Nadler

Dina Dettle

Mark Rahall

John Long

Dennis J. Kucinich

Bill Pasrell Jr

Howard L. Berman

Jim Moran

~~Gregory W. Meeks~~

Lynn Woolsey

John Dingell

Bob Filner

Ellen Tauscher

Green