

May 13, 2005

The Hon. Ralph Regula, Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2358 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. David R. Obey, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Regula and Ranking Member Obey:

We urge you to support \$53 million for the Arts in Education program at the U.S. Department of Education in the Fiscal Year 2006 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill.

Time and again, parents, educators, employers, and community leaders tell us that arts education is critical for preparing our nation's children to succeed in school, work, and life. Years of rigorous 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.

We know the arts have the capacity to improve student achievement. Now, we need to continue to identify the most effective ways to deliver arts education in today's complex educational environment. The Arts in Education programs at the U.S. Department of Education currently support model programs that bring arts education to whole schools, school districts, and regions. The Arts in Education programs also support 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*. Model programs supported by the Department are already showing impressive results. For example:

- Mississippi's Whole Schools Initiative, which integrates the arts into all the subjects, found that participating schools with a high degree of implementation far surpassed other schools in their ability to meet No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reading targets.
- The Art Smart project in Warren County, Pennsylvania has shown that in rural school districts arts education can be developed through strong partnerships. Survey research results, through interviews with parents, students and educators, indicated overwhelming support of how arts education transformed the culture of learning in Warren County.
- In Miami-Dade County, the Artful Citizenship project enhances social studies education for at-risk students and has achieved a 67% increase in visual literacy scores in just two years.

Buoyed by results such as these, Congress has appropriated increases each year since 2001, though the Department of Education has not requested specific funding for the program.

As you know, NCLB recognizes the arts as a core subject of learning. This commitment to quality arts education is reinforced at the state level, where all fifty states have adopted standards in the arts or require their school districts to do so. Former Education Secretary Rod Paige and Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee echoed this point earlier this year when they wrote in *Education Week*, "The academic benefits of arts education also go beyond math and reading. An analysis of U.S. Department of Education data on 25,000 middle and high school students found that students who were highly involved in the arts performed better on a variety of academic measures than other students. They earned better grades, did better on exams, performed more community service, and watched fewer hours of television."

As the states work to implement NCLB, we must provide funding to sustain the national development and dissemination of promising practices through the Arts in Education program. We must also show that a strong commitment to arts education reinforces student achievement in reading and math.

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 the Arts in Education at the U.S. Department of Education.

Sincerely,

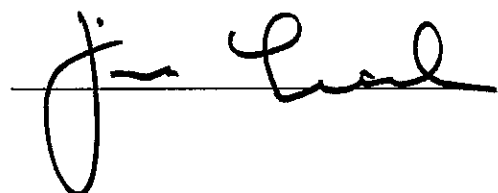
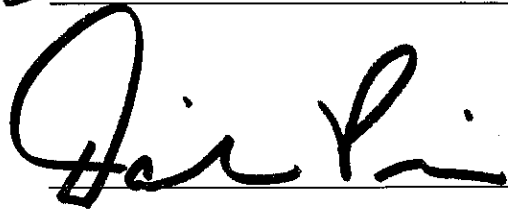


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