

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

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Prepared Testimony

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies
To the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives

April 10, 2014

Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member Moran, members of the Committee, thank you for providing me the opportunity to submit testimony related to the fiscal year 2015 budget for the National Endowment for the Arts.

My name is Jonathan Katz, and I serve as the chief executive officer of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, or NASAA. NASAA represents the state and special jurisdictional government arts agencies of the United States. I am pleased to submit testimony in support of funding the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) at \$155 million in fiscal year 2015.

For FY2014, the NEA received funding of \$146 million. Given the current economic constraints and sequestration, NASAA appreciates this level of funding—particularly since some budget proposals offered the agency significantly less money. However, as Congress considers a new budget, NASAA strongly urges the Committee to increase funding for the NEA. Current levels amount to just 45 cents per capita. To put that figure into context, the NEA was funded at 70 cents per capita in 1992.

Even with limited resources, I am pleased to note that the Endowment excels in its mission to support "excellence in the arts, both new and established; bringing the arts to all Americans; and providing leadership in arts education." However, I know that increasing funding for the NEA to \$155 million would allow the agency not only to continue to support the nonprofit arts sector, but also to enhance critical programs that benefit communities all across the nation.

Federal-State Partnership

In addition to the overall NEA funding level, NASAA appreciates the ongoing support state arts agencies have received from Congress. In a wonderful example of federal-state partnership, the NEA distributes 40% of its programmatic funds to state arts agencies each year. Congress, and this Committee in particular, has been a staunch advocate of this funding formula.

Providing 40% of all NEA program funds to state arts agencies has a tremendous impact. It allows funding from the agencies to be spread throughout the country, expanding access to the arts for everyone. Last year, the NEA issued 2,100 grants. State arts agencies complemented those with more than 22,000 grants to organizations, schools and artists in more than 5,000 communities throughout the United States.

In addition to facilitating the equitable distribution of federal funds, state arts agencies help government to achieve broad public policy goals. These goals include promoting education excellence, stimulating economic growth and strengthening communities. With the level of increase we propose in NEA funding, the state arts agencies, and indeed all arts organizations, can expand on the possibilities to bring to Americans in every congressional district full opportunities to experience the benefits of the arts.

Policy Objectives

Beyond NEA funding, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies will continue to work with this Committee and others in Congress to advance support for the arts at the federal level. First, we are particularly excited about the growing bipartisan movement to add art and design to the national agenda of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education and research. NASAA believes that incorporating the skills of artists and designers with those of scientists and engineers can foster tremendous innovation in America.

Second, NASAA urges the Committee to reject the Obama administration's proposal to consolidate the U.S. Department of Education's Arts in Education program into a broader funding pool entitled "Effective Teaching & Learning for a Well-Rounded Education." It is our conviction that ensuring that some funds *directly* support innovative teaching and learning in the arts is critical to guaranteeing all students a well-rounded education.

To date, the Arts in Education program is making great strides to improve arts learning in high-poverty schools. The Arts in Education program includes:

- **Model Development and Dissemination grants.** These grants strengthen student learning through standards-based arts education and integration of arts instruction into other subject areas. The program has funded a total of 166 projects, identifying excellent models of arts education that impact schools and communities nationwide. *Promise and Progress*, the Department of Education's 10-year review of the program, found that grantees implemented valuable research-based strategies for improving student achievement.
- **Professional Development for Arts Educators grants.** These grants identify innovative models that improve instruction for arts specialists as well as classroom teachers. This grants program has supported 65 projects that serve as national examples of effective arts education professional development.

All state arts agencies, with assistance from the NEA, support arts education programs, aiming to incorporate the arts into learning through, for example, artist residencies, curriculum development, and teacher training. Communities demand that schools promote higher student achievement, reform the teaching process and improve the environment in which students learn. The arts can help address all these needs. Educational research shows that instruction in the arts improves student achievement, and that arts in education produces the kind of creative

problem solvers sought by employers. Because so much education decision making and resource allocation takes place at the state level, NASAA greatly values collaborating with the NEA on the development of arts education policies and programs.

Conclusion

As we anticipate the year ahead, NASAA looks forward to continuing to work productively with this Committee. We also look forward to the confirmation of the next chair of the National Endowment for the Arts. We stand ready to serve as a resource to her as she transitions into this new and exciting role.