

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

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Prepared Testimony
Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. Senate

May 26, 2017

Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony regarding federal appropriations for the National Endowment for the Arts in fiscal year 2018. My name is Pam Breaux, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA), the organization representing the state and jurisdictional arts agencies of the United States. Today, I urge your committee to support funding the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) at \$155 million in FY2018.

Last year, while considering funding for FY2017, this Committee voted unanimously to increase funding for the agency by \$500,000. The states and NASAA are extremely grateful to the Committee for this, particularly given the limitations Congress faces because of sequestration. As you look to the next budget, NASAA hopes you will consider increasing funding for the NEA, which makes a substantial impact in communities throughout the United States.

In asking for an increase in funding for the NEA, it is important to acknowledge the continued bipartisan support that this Committee and Congress have demonstrated for state arts agencies. Through a highly effective federal-state partnership, the NEA distributes 40% of its programmatic funds to state and regional arts agencies each year, amounting to \$41 million in FY2016; these dollars help to leverage additional public and private investments in the arts, empower states and regions to address their unique priorities, and serve far more constituents than federal funds alone could reach.

State arts agencies use their share of NEA funds, combined with funds from state legislatures, to support 21,000 grants to arts organizations, civic organizations, schools and artists in more than 4,400 communities across the United States. Twenty-six percent of state arts agencies' grant awards go to nonmetropolitan areas, supporting programs that strengthen the civic and economic sustainability of rural America. Thirty-nine percent of state arts agencies' grant awards go to arts education, fostering student success in and out of school and providing the critical thinking, creativity and communications skills needed to meet the demands of today's competitive work force. Congress's ongoing endorsement of the 40% formula is essential to state arts agencies, boosting their ability to drive innovation in their states.

Throughout the country, state arts agencies play significant roles in shaping education policy, stimulating economic growth and helping communities thrive as rewarding and productive places to live, conduct business, visit and raise families. Should Congress support an increase for the NEA, state arts agencies will be able to expand their meaningful role in helping every congressional district have full opportunities to experience the economic, civic and cultural benefits that the arts offer. An example area of focus for NASAA and state arts agencies is the NEA's work with the Department of Defense (to support arts therapy in healing programs for veterans at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and the National Intrepid Center of Excellence). Federal leadership has enabled state arts agencies to replicate this successful partnership at the state level. In a recent poll NASAA conducted of state arts agencies, more than 90 percent of respondents said that they are either currently undertaking or interested in pursuing arts therapy programs for veterans.

Thank you for your consideration. NASAA looks forward to continuing to work productively with this Committee, and we stand ready to serve as a resource to you. Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pam Breaux" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Pam Breaux
Chief Executive Officer