

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

KNOWLEDGE ★ REPRESENTATION ★ COMMUNITY

Prepared Testimony
To the Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
February 26, 2019

Chairwoman McCollum, Ranking Member Joyce and members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to deliver this testimony regarding federal appropriations for the National Endowment for the Arts in FY2020. My name is Pam Breaux, and I serve as President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA), the organization that represents and serves the nation's 56 state and jurisdictional arts agencies. Today, I am here to thank the members for their tremendous support for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and urge the Committee to consider funding it at \$167.5 million in FY2020.

In the funding bill passed by Congress earlier this month, this Subcommittee supported an increase of \$2 million in funding for the agency. The states and NASAA are extremely grateful for this, particularly given the Administration's proposal to eliminate the agency. We recognize that Committee members worked together in a bipartisan manner to support the NEA and its important contributions to our nation.

As you look to the next budget, NASAA hopes you will once again consider increasing funding for the NEA, which continues to make a substantial impact in communities throughout the United States. Through its highly effective federal-state partnership, the NEA distributes 40% of its programmatic funds to state and regional arts agencies each year. The resulting \$49.4 million in FY2018 helped to empower states and regions to address their unique priorities, and served far more constituents than federal funds alone could reach. The report accompanying last year's Consolidated Appropriations Act affirmed Congress's support for this important partnership and the 40% allocation. We sincerely thank the Committee for this acknowledgement.

State arts agencies use their share of NEA funds (\$49.4 million last year), combined with funds from state legislatures, to support approximately 22,000 grants to arts organizations, civic organizations and schools in more than 4,500 communities across the United States. Twenty-one percent of state arts agency grant awards go to nonmetropolitan areas, supporting programs that strengthen the civic and economic sustainability of rural America. Twenty-nine percent of state arts agency grant dollars go to arts education, fostering student success in and out of school and building the critical thinking, creativity and communications skills needed to meet the demands of today's competitive work force.

Congress's continued support of the 40% formula is essential to state arts agencies, boosting their ability to ensure that the arts benefit all communities, regardless of wealth or geography. Should Congress support an increase for the NEA, state arts agencies will be in a position to expand their meaningful work to help communities thrive as fulfilling and productive places to live, conduct business, visit and raise families. They will also maintain their commitment to engaging the public in decision making about their programs, a hallmark of state arts agency service.

NASAA and states also applaud the NEA's many services to the country, including its leadership in developing noteworthy programs for military personnel and veterans. In partnership with the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, the NEA established *Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network*, which now has eleven clinical sites in nine states for creative arts therapies. Proudly, state arts agencies now work with federal, state and local partners to expand the reach of the program to benefit veteran and military family populations in community settings. Partners also continue to work in solidarity to help military personnel and veterans return to their homes, their missions and their families whole, mentally fit and emotionally ready for whatever comes next.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. NASAA sincerely appreciates Congress's strong bipartisan support for the National Endowment for the Arts and federal funding for the arts. We look forward to continuing to work productively with this Committee, and we stand ready to serve as a resource to you.

Sincerely,

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

Pam Breaux
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Assembly of State Arts Agencies