

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

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Prepared Testimony
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U.S. House of Representatives
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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 FY 2021. 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 of the National Endowment for the Arts and urge the Committee to consider funding it at \$170 million in FY 2021.

In the recent funding bill passed by Congress, this Subcommittee supported an increase in funding for the agency. The states and NASAA are extremely grateful for this; we recognize that committee members worked together in a bipartisan manner to support the Arts Endowment 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 National Endowment for the Arts, which continues to make a substantial impact in communities throughout the United States. Through its highly effective federal-state partnership, the Arts Endowment distributes 40% of its programmatic funds to state, jurisdictional and regional arts agencies each year. The resulting \$49 million in FY 2019, helped to empower states and regions to address their unique priorities, and served far more constituents than federal funds alone could reach. Unique among federal agencies, the Endowment funds state plans; these plans are developed by state arts agencies in response to citizens, communities, arts organizations, legislatures and governors. This makes the federal-state arts investment incredibly responsive and relevant to citizens in every state and jurisdiction. The report accompanying last year's Consolidated Appropriations Act affirmed Congress's support for this important partnership and its corresponding 40% allocation. We sincerely thank the Committee for this acknowledgement.

State arts agencies use their share of NEA funds, 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-two percent of state arts agency grant awards go to non-metropolitan areas, supporting programs that strengthen the civic and economic sustainability of rural America. Twenty-six 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.

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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. In response to an increased demand for arts programming for older Americans, for example, the Minnesota State Arts Board recently provided training for teaching artists to learn about models and best practices to design and implement high-quality arts education programs for older adults. With the total number of older adults in Minnesota expected to double between 2010 and 2030, creative aging programming is a key strategy for fostering positive aging and healthier lives, and the state arts board's program will ensure that Minnesota artists are trained to provide these vital services. In an additional example, the Ohio Arts Council demonstrates its commitment to all the people of the state by successfully fulfilling its "Fund Every County" initiative; now, all eighty-eight counties in the state have received arts funding in response to their needs. Should Congress support an increase for the National Endowment for the Arts, 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.

NASAA and states also applaud the Arts Endowment's many services to the country, including its leadership in developing noteworthy programs for communities, military personnel, veterans, students, and many others. NASAA and state arts agencies proudly partner with the Endowment and work collaboratively and in solidarity to benefit all communities. Together we accomplish what neither side can achieve alone.

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,



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