

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

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Prepared Testimony
To the Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
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Chairwoman Pingree, Ranking Member Joyce and members of the Committee, thank you for providing the opportunity to submit this testimony regarding federal appropriations for the National Endowment for the Arts in Fiscal Year 2022. My name is Pamela (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 thank the members for their tremendous support of the National Endowment for the Arts and urge the Committee to consider increasing funding in FY 2022.

Over the last year, as the nation has grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic hardships, this Subcommittee repeatedly supported artists and arts organizations, understanding the important role they play in our communities. The arts and creative sector workforce was especially devastated as a result of the pandemic; for this reason, state arts agencies doubled down on providing services and resources to the field. This Subcommittee provided funding to assist states in this important work, for which NASAA and the states are extremely grateful; we especially appreciate that committee members worked together in a bipartisan manner to provide funding to the Arts Endowment.

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 funds 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.

Federal funding for arts and creativity is a high return investment in cities, towns and rural communities nationwide. It improves the lives of all Americans, equips an innovative workforce and keeps us competitive globally. It is a great example of government done right, as it fuels public-private partnerships, leverages \$9 in additional funds for every federal dollar invested and puts tax dollars and decision-making authority into the hands of citizens.

State arts agencies use their share of NEA funds, combined with funds from state legislatures, to support almost 23,000 grants to arts organizations, civic organizations and schools in more than 4,600 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 an increasingly 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. The Maine Arts Commission, for example, quickly transformed services to provide meaningful benefits to its arts community struggling to deal with impacts of the pandemic. The Arts Commission mounted a professional development series designed to help arts organizations retool development and fundraising practices for difficult times, manage crises to help organizations transform their operations during turbulent times, and reinvent audience development strategies to help organizations engage audiences during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. These are but a few examples of how the Maine Arts Commission and many other state arts agencies are providing needed services to the arts and creative community.

New research tells us that the recovery of the arts and creative sector is also inextricably linked to the recovery of the nation's broader economy. [Arts and Economic Recovery Research](#) shows how the arts strengthen the economy following periods of acute economic distress. Rigorous quantitative data and case studies show that the arts can improve—not merely reflect—broader economic conditions at the state and local levels. The findings reveal that the arts are an agile and resilient sector with the capacity to ignite job growth, reduce economic risk through diversification, stimulate commerce and attract tourism. As we work toward arts sector recovery and stability, that work not only benefits the arts industry, but it also positions the arts to benefit the broader economy. Strengthening the arts provides opportunities to help strengthen the nation.

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 across the country. Together we accomplish what neither side can achieve alone.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony. 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 Breau". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Pamela (Pam) Breau
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Assembly of State Arts Agencies