

Honorable Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

Arts Education in Maryland Schools (AEMS) and Arts Every Day, with the support of the Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) and Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE), are writing in full support of HB1451, the Arts Incubator Workgroup, which is crucial to help further sustain and invest in our creative arts economy. The arts are a cultural asset and a significant contributor to our state's economic vitality. Accordingly, artists are the backbone of the arts sector's success.

In Maryland, the arts sector is a formidable economic engine. For instance, our artists and cultural organizations generate \$837 million in economic activity annually, support eight thousand jobs, and return \$19.6 million in local and state tax revenues, as per the Maryland Department of Commerce FY2022 report. These figures underscore the undeniable impact of the arts on our economy.

The arts also have an undeniable positive impact on our youth. The academic, social and emotional benefits of all disciplines of arts education on students has been proven time and again by research and community engagement and support. Investing in a strong arts economy leads to learning and development opportunities for youth and demonstrates viable career paths to students interested in pursuing the arts.

Especially with the increasing focus on college and career readiness from the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, it is an essential time to invest in one of Maryland's most important industries and demonstrate that creative careers are a priority for our state. Not only are the arts defined in federal and state policies as core subjects; the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Statewide Implementation Plan acknowledges the importance of the arts:

"The Blueprint for Maryland's Future and the updated CCR standard are not intended to alter the need for high quality programs and content in **fine arts**, civics, physical education, and other areas that are **necessary to provide a holistic education and enable every student to be well-rounded and meet the CCR standard.**" (Pillar 3.1.1(b)) This language supports the viability of arts careers as a pathway for students to pursue in their education and into their professional life.

Despite these substantial contributions to Maryland's economy and youth, many artists face significant economic hardships. The path of an artist is often marked by financial instability due to the fluctuating nature of opportunities and the costs associated with producing their work. HB1451/SB 764 proposes an essential framework for addressing these economic challenges. It aims to further study the needs of artists and provide them with the support they need.

Your support of this bill will acknowledge the cultural significance of our artists and reinforce a sector that is a cornerstone of Maryland's economic framework. We believe that with the proper support, our artists can continue to enhance the state's cultural landscape and drive economic growth.

Please consider the profound impact your support could have on the lives of artists and the cultural wealth of Maryland. Vote YES for HB1451/SB 764, ensuring our state remains a nurturing ground for the arts.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this pivotal issue.

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