

Testimony for the House Appropriations Committee
HB 1469: School Arts Fund - Established
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Good Afternoon, my name is Derrick Hewlett and I am proud to be a Baltimore City Public Schools graduate and a current music director at City Springs Elementary Middle School. I am delighted to express my support of HB 1469: School Arts Fund.

Music saved my life. There was no music program at my elementary school on the westside of Baltimore City. It wasn't until my teacher recommended me to the advanced academics program in Roland Park that I took my first music class and chose the saxophone to play in the school band. I sang in the school choir and served as the student conductor in the school choir. From there I went on to the Cab Calloway Music Program at Frederick Douglass High School. Sometimes the only reason why I wanted to go to school was to go to music class or to sing in the choir. My school experiences opened up opportunities for scholarships, jobs, and prepared me to become a performer, a music educator, and a church music director.

Today I feel blessed to be able to give back by pouring my passion back into City Schools as an educator. That doesn't mean it is easy! I have taught for years and consistently struggle to secure the instruments and materials I need for my classroom. I teach in a Title 1 school and typically only receive enough supply money to replenish consumables - definitely not enough to purchase instruments. This year, Arts Every Day made it possible for us to buy a bass Xylophone and ukelele classroom set. These early instrumental experiences are critical for teaching the fundamentals of music and give students their first experiences playing an instrument.

In a district where there are limited music teachers and even fewer opportunities to introduce instrumental music, this fund has opened the door for our students. HB1469 will have a dramatic impact on students districtwide.

I enthusiastically support this bill and ask the committee to give HB 1469 a favorable report.