

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Brandon M. Scott
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of School Commissioners

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Testimony to the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee in Support with Amendments of House Bill 1469 – Maggie McIntosh School Arts Fund – Established

March 29, 2022

The Baltimore City Public School System (City Schools) supports HB 1469, which seeks to establish a School Arts Fund to provide grants to public schools in Baltimore City. The fund will be used to expand the arts curriculum for students in schools with high concentrations of poverty, as defined under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Grants will be used to purchase art supplies for classrooms and to provide arts experiences.

City Schools is deeply committed to supporting arts education and to reducing barriers to participation so that students can be engaged and empowered through excellent arts opportunities. Specifically, we seek to increase student access to fine arts instruction – including the highest quality of music, visual arts, theater, dance, and media arts instruction – while nurturing each student's unique gift of talent and creativity. While this commitment has long been a priority for the district, none of us could have foreseen a global pandemic that would cause us to rethink our priorities and establish and refine how we educate our students.

Research has long shown that participation in the arts can support the social and emotional learning needs of students, especially in addressing healing and trauma. As we continue to face the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, we recognize the arts can play a critical role in providing an outlet for students to process their emotions so they can begin the healing process and build resiliency as they adjust to post-pandemic transitions.

While City Schools wholeheartedly supports the proposed legislation, we respectfully request what we believe to be a technical amendment to ensure all Baltimore City Public Schools be eligible to apply for the Maggie McIntosh School Arts Fund. We believe the House inadvertently drafted the bill in a way that limits eligibility to schools with concentrations of poverty, and respectfully request the following change:

THE FUND SHALL BE USED TO EXPAND THE ARTS CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS IN ELIGIBLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS UNDER THE CONCENTRATION OF POVERTY GRANT PROGRAM IN BALTIMORE CITY, AS DEFINED IN §5-223 OF THIS SUBTITLE, WITH GRANTS TO:

In closing, we look forward to partnering with Arts Every Day to administer the school arts fund established by HB 1469 and to maximizing the reach of the grant dollars throughout the district. For all these reasons, we enthusiastically urge a favorable with amendments committee report of HB 1469.