

February 22, 2022

HB0678 — Arts Equity in Education Act – FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Ways & Committee;

The Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST) is a statewide organization dedicated to closing opportunity gaps by expanding both the quantity and quality of afterschool and summer learning opportunities for school-aged young people. MOST is one of the fifty statewide networks supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and serves as Maryland's affiliate to the National Afterschool Association.

The Maryland Out of School Time Network supports the general assembly's effort to promote arts education research in the state. The benefits of exposing young people to creative outlets such as music, dance, and visual arts are numerous, and the state would be wise to provide the resources necessary to ensure that all Maryland students can explore these outlets if they choose to.

Arts education improves students' lives in ways that are often difficult to quantify but are no less essential to their personal and professional development. Stages and arts studios are places where students can form lasting bonds with those who share their passions. Young people with introverted temperaments can find new sources of confidence and self-esteem as they watch their skills develop over time. Youth development professionals have even begun to identify the ways in which arts education contributes to students' grasp of science and technology, as artistic skills like design and creative problem-solving play invaluable roles to the development of new technologies. The arts make invaluable contributions to young people's emotional and cognitive capabilities, and the state should ensure that students from affluent families are the only ones who reap the benefits from these creative outlets

A 2020 report by Arts Education in Maryland Schools, a Baltimore-based advocacy organization, notes that many **arts educators in the state's public schools lack the most basic supplies to carry out their duties.** Many rely on donors or pay out of pocket to alleviate shortages. In some cases, this is the result of funding cuts that began prior to the pandemic. Allocating \$25 million to ensure arts opportunities within schools match the requirements for arts in COMAR would be an effective way to address the financial instability that artseducators are all too familiar with.

The arts are often given low priority in school budgets and are therefore among the first program subject to budget cuts. **Students in low-income neighborhoods, therefore, are the ones experiencing arts education deficits most acutely.** In short, this is fundamentally a problem of equity. To ensure that all Maryland students have access to quality arts education, we recommend the Way and Means Committee provides a favorable report for HB678

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