

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 18, 2024

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
House Appropriations Committee
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cole, Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member DeLauro and Vice Chair Collins,

As you resolve differences between your Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS-Ed) Appropriations bills, we urge you provide no less than \$36.5 million in funding for the Assistance for Arts Education Program (AAE) under Title IV-F-4 of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*. This request reflects a funding amount equal to FY24 levels and is consistent with previous bipartisan negotiations. We also urge you remove any harmful language included in the House version that prevents the U.S. Department of Education (ED) from providing funding for arts programs.

In recent decades the number of students with access to arts education has shrunk significantly—particularly when accounting for students from historically underserved communities. Yet, participation in the arts, including dance, music, theater, visual arts, and media arts, has grown to become a vital part of students' academic development. Arts education is closely associated with fewer disciplinary infractions, improved academic and social-emotional skills, and greater civic engagement.¹ Additionally, under ESSA, the federal government considers arts education part of a well-rounded education system.

Currently, all 50 states plus the District of Columbia have adopted elementary and secondary arts education standards, and 29 states define the arts as a core academic subject. Unfortunately, less than half, 23 states, provide a dedicated funding stream for arts education grant programs or have the resources to offer a state-funded school for the arts.² While we are thankful the Senate's FY25 LHHS-Ed bill included \$36.5 million for AAE, the program would receive \$0 under the House version. As AAE is the only dedicated federal funding source for arts education offered through ED, the House bill would make it virtually impossible for the department to fulfill its obligation to assist school districts and educators carry out their lesson plans.

¹ Kisida, B., & Bowen, D. H. (2019, February 12). *New evidence of the benefits of Arts Education*. Brookings Institute. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/new-evidence-of-the-benefits-of-arts-education/>

² 2023 *ArtScan at a glance*. Education Commission of the States. (2023, March 30). *ArtScan at a Glance*. <https://www.ecs.org/artscan-at-a-glance/>

AAE provides opportunities for children with disabilities, students from low-income households, and educators. For students with disabilities, AAE offers opportunities to develop important skills such as social-emotional intelligence, social interaction, and self-determination, while providing necessary modifications such as accessible materials and instruments. For students from low-income households who may not otherwise have the means to participate in arts programming, AAE is often the only option available. Importantly, AAE provides professional development for educators, enhancing their ability to teach new classes and providing new skills to integrate arts learning into core subjects such as English, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

In FY21, ED’s Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), provided 27 AAE awards to schools—23 of which were awarded five-year grants. Thanks to the strong bipartisan work of House and Senate appropriators, OESE has been able to provide funding to schools for four of the five years. Unfortunately, if the House’s FY25 LHHS-Ed bill were to become law, OESE will not be able to provide schools with their anticipated FY25 awards. Forcing teachers to terminate programs early or significantly reduce the number of courses schools can offer is wrong and will make it harder for students to access a quality arts education.

Further, the House version of the FY25 LHHS-Ed bill includes harmful language stating, “*the Committee believes that considering the continued decline of public-school performance and student achievement across the country, funding provided by the Department should be focused on core education such as reading, writing, and math.*”³ This language is antithetical to existing statute, when considering how ESSA explicitly recognizes education in the arts as a part of a well-rounded education. We respectfully urge you remove this language in the final version of the bill.

For these reasons, we urge you provide no less than \$36.5 million for the Assistance for Arts Education under Title IV-F-4 of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* for FY25. This funding will ensure current grant recipients receive their total anticipated funding and guarantee continued access so more students can participate in arts education.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to a final measure that shows strong support for arts education.

Sincerely,



David Scott
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

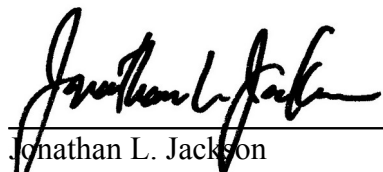
³ U.S. House. Committee on Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee. (2024). *FY 2025 Bill Report*. [CRPT-118hrpt585.pdf](#).



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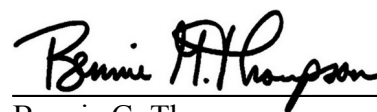
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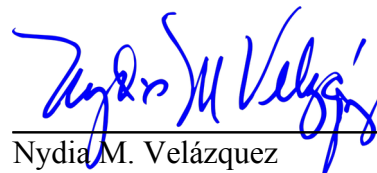
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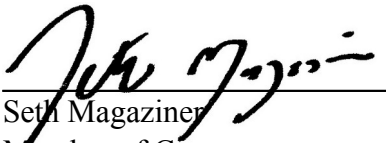
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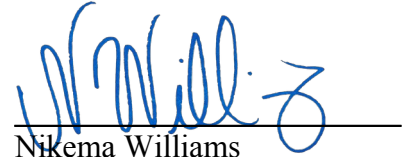
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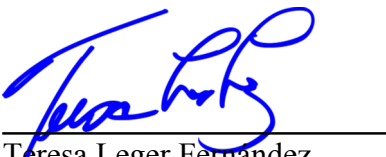
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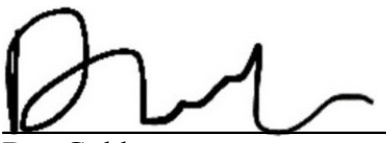
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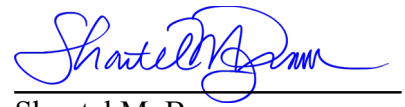
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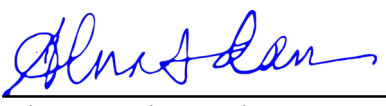
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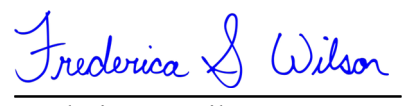
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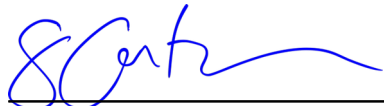
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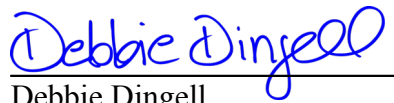
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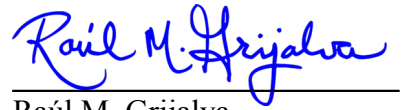
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