



2026

JOINT LEGISLATIVE BUDGET HEARING ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

New York State Council on the Arts

On behalf of the New York State Alliance for Arts Education, the statewide network representing thousands of educators in the fields of Art, Music, Theatre, Dance, and Media Arts across New York’s 731 school districts, 37 BOCES, 64 SUNY Colleges, as well as arts educators and teaching artists in independent schools, colleges, and community based organizations, we wish to lend our voice to the chorus of creative advocates urging you to support a \$200 million appropriation to the New York State Council on the Arts, to include

- ✓ **\$100 million for Grant Programs and Initiatives including sustained commitment to regional arts councils – urban, suburban, and rural - for re-granting through decentralized, local decision-making.**
- ✓ **\$100 million for capital projects**
- ✓ **\$10 million for Stabilization Reserve Funding grants for small, emerging arts organizations.**

While acknowledging that advocating for state investment in public education through the Education Budget remains our core mission, we appreciate the opportunity to testify to the immense value that NYSCA funding brings to key intersections between the informal world of community arts and artists and the formal world of lifelong Arts Education:

First, community collaborations deliver hundreds of enrichment programs to millions of PreSchool, Elementary, Secondary and Post-Secondary students, whether it’s the Teaching Artists of NYC’s Arts In Education Round Table, Arts Education programs at the Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall, Long Island’s Patchogue Partners In Education, Arts, and Community Empowerment, or Poughkeepsie’s Individual Arts Assessment Partnership with The Art Effect.

As no doubt you know, the NY Regents are in the process of adopting new pathways to postsecondary readiness, *The Portrait of A Graduate*, whose potential for success will be enhanced by such collaborations.

Secondly, as the artistic capital of the United States, with global cultural and economic implications, we must create and sustain a pipeline of talent in art, music, theatre, dance, and the media arts to ensure the continued health of our creative economy and equality of

opportunity for all our creative learners.

Recent budgets have rightly singled out Broadway and the Film industry for key industry support: but without arts education and the educational efforts of scores of statewide organizations large and small, the pipeline of talent will wither. This talent reflects the intrinsic link to the creative workforce and blossoming communities which we all celebrate, nurtured by the grants your NYSCA appropriations provide

As the Governor put it:

New York's creative sector is a key driver of economic growth that employs hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers...New York's status as a cultural capital gives it a competitive advantage that supports core industries including tourism, retail, and hospitality...In remote areas, arts organizations serve as important regional hubs for community activity, anchoring downtown revitalization efforts, reanimating abandoned buildings and blighted lots, and contributing to the renaissance of towns and cities facing population loss and the decline of traditional industries. In every corner of the state, they provide programming that supports healthier, happier, more connected, engaged, and equitable communities.

We cannot afford the indifference and denial of potential immortalized by Denver's City Poet Abelardo Delgado, when he wrote:

Remember that Chicanito flunking math and science?

He is the Picasso of your western states.

But he will die with one thousand masterpieces

Hanging only from his mind.

We are grateful to the Legislature for your Herculean efforts in 2025 to stabilize arts funding, and to the Governor and NYSCA for their recognition of the need for sustained funding in 2026 – we look forward to

- ✓ **Expanded investment in the truly rewarding organizational reserve program**
- ✓ **The implementation of the *Arts Pluribus Unum* fellowship program**
- ✓ **Articulated and equitable funding for new, emerging organizations through the Statewide Community Regrant Agencies**
- ✓ **Enactment and expansion of the State's first "Regions of Cultural Significance" bill.**

Your vision and wisdom, these past years, has transformed what was rapidly becoming an artistic desert, occasioned by the post-recession budget cuts and the impact of the pandemic, into a level playing field, where regardless of their zip-code, their socio-economic background or demographics, families have been afforded access to a panoply of artistic activities, and future award-winning artists have been given access to the training and experience they need to succeed.

We thank you for the state's investment in the arts in recent years, which has ensured the survival of our creative communities: in these years, NYSCA has been able to restore its grant programs to pre-recession levels, including their vital Arts In Education grants

program...and regional arts councils have been able to invest in Arts Education Partnerships, which support and enrich student learning P-20, and close the opportunity gaps facing creative students in far too many of our state school districts.

NYSAAE joins our colleagues in Arts New York State, and other statewide stakeholders in recognizing that it is only through strategic partnerships between school-based and community-based arts programming that New York can ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the cultural pipeline which grows our own artistic talent, trains our desperately needed arts teachers, and engenders the cultural literacy and primacy for which the Empire State is known and admired across the globe.

Your continued support of the Arts and community-based Arts in Education is an investment with at least ten-fold guaranteed return.

Thank you for your understanding and support: please continue to fuel this creative engine which contributes so much to the state's economy, its workforce, and its quality of life.

It has been said that New York is not New York without the arts: your investment will sustain that claim for decades to come.

Lori Orestano-James

President

lorijames.nysaae@gmail.com

845-798-1770

2 February 2026