



Joint Finance Committee Hearing – Public Education

Monday, February 19th, 2014

1:00 PM

Record of Public Comments Representing the Delaware Arts Alliance

Presented by Carrie Gray, Board President and Guillermina Gonzalez, Executive Director

Thank you Senator McDowell, Representative George-Smith and the members of the Joint Finance Committee for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Carrie Gray and I currently serve as the President of the Board of Directors of the Delaware Arts Alliance. With me is Guillermina Gonzalez, our Executive Director.

The visuals accompanying our remarks reflects just a sampling of the fine examples of arts-education programs in our state – the Southern Delaware School of the Arts in Sussex County, Dover High School in Kent County, and Kuumba Academy in New Castle County.

Since this is the first time that the Delaware Arts Alliance has participated in the Public Education hearing, we'd like to briefly explain who we are and how we can support the work of the Department of Education.

The Delaware Arts Alliance is the unifying voice for the arts and arts education throughout the state, advocating for the central role of the arts in advancing dynamic communities and a creative citizenry. The Alliance believes that the economic well-being of our state clearly correlates with an arts-infused community. This has been the reason that we have continued to make the case for the arts in a number of arenas.

Since its inception in 2009, the Alliance has accomplished an unprecedented level of cooperation among arts organizations statewide. What started with sixteen organizations now represents more than 100 members and has expanded to include board members, organizations, and individuals from a variety of industries.

Today, the Alliance is synonymous with collaboration and the natural dot connector the arts need in our state. It has consistently garnered outstanding support from both the Delaware Division of the Arts and the Delaware Department of Education to strengthen the critical role of the arts in education.

With that support, the Alliance has achieved a number of important successes. These include:

- The coordination of the Delaware delegation attending the National Arts Advocacy Day in Washington for the last four years. State arts advocates have explained to our legislators the importance of the arts and arts-education at a federal and local level.

- During the 2012 and 2013 elections, the Alliance provided Delaware voters with electoral candidates' positions on the arts. Among those topics arts-education was prominently covered.
- The organization expanded its outreach throughout the state by organizing and conducting 9 public forums in 2012 and 2013. Held in all three Delaware counties, these well-attended events featured topics of pertinent interest and were attended by more than 800 arts, business and civic leaders.
- Alliance's Executive Director Guillermina Gonzalez co-hosts the "Delaware State of the Arts" radio podcast with Delaware Division of the Arts' Director Paul Weagraff. The radio program has become a vehicle to explain the transformative power of arts-education with a variety of guests.

In his recent State of the State address, Governor Markell reminded us of the importance of improving the economy and the need for preparing high-school students for the 21st century workplace. Competitiveness in the global marketplace, as you know, is closely related to a well trained workforce. The Council of Competitiveness, whose goal is to increase the United States' economic competitiveness in the global marketplace, warned not long ago that companies that do not embrace innovation as a core business value will fall to global competition.

To educate the workforce of tomorrow, Delaware requires creativity and innovation – the natural springboard to which is the arts. Paul Allen, Co-Founder of Microsoft has said, "In my own philanthropy and business endeavors, I have seen the critical role that the arts play in stimulating

creativity and in developing vital communities....the arts have a crucial impact on our economy and are an important catalyst for learning, discovery, and achievement in our country.”

As well, Charles Segars, CEO of Ovation, has said, "The rapidly evolving global economy demands a dynamic and creative workforce....It is imperative that we continue to support the arts and arts education both on the national and local levels. The strength of every democracy is measured by its commitment to the arts.”

In Delaware, the Alliance will continue to deliver the message of how critical arts education is to the future of our state and our country. In 2014, the Delaware Arts Alliance will work to build a coalition of supporters for the arts and arts education in our state. The Alliance and its ever expanding grassroots base of arts-advocates stand ready to collaborate with you in preparing the workforce Delaware needs to compete globally.

Thank you again for your support of the arts and arts education in Delaware!