

Good afternoon. Thank you to the Members of the Joint Finance Committee and the Controller General's Office for the opportunity to speak today.

I am here to thank you for your recent investments in the arts and to advocate for continued funding through the Delaware Division of the Arts that builds on this momentum.

My name is Cony Madariaga. I live and work in Wilmington, Delaware, and I am in Representative Kimberly Williams' district. I am a visual artist, teaching artist, and curator, as well as a 2023 Delaware Division of the Arts Emerging Artist Fellow. I work with organizations such as the Delaware Art Museum, the Delaware Institute for the Arts in Education, and Mariposa Arts.

State investment in the arts has had a direct impact on my career and my community. Support from the Division of the Arts has allowed me to build a sustainable artistic practice and continue working as a teaching artist. Being in classrooms and community spaces matters deeply to me, especially when young people can see that the arts are a real and possible future. In recent years, I was able to lead a Delaware Institute for the Arts in Education residency at my alma mater, A.I. High School, and experience firsthand how powerful it is for students to see someone who was once in their position working as a professional artist.

Additionally, with support from the Delaware Division of the Arts, I have continued to grow my artistic practice and career. Over the past three years, I have curated exhibitions centered on Latinx and emerging artists, creating opportunities for artists to be seen and for communities to connect through shared experiences.

Without the support of the Delaware Division of the Arts, I would not be where I am today. I am grateful for that investment, and I respectfully ask that you consider increasing funding so artists across Delaware can continue contributing to our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.