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Joshua M. Freeman  
**FOUNDATION**

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Good morning. My name is Darren Silvis and I am the Director of Development for the Joshua M. Freeman Foundation, based in Selbyville. We operate Freeman Arts Pavilion, an open-air performing arts venue, and I am honored to be here today to advocate for more support for the arts in Delaware. We are a public charity committed to providing high quality arts experiences for all. Like my colleagues in the arts here 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.

At a very volatile time for the arts on the national level, Delaware has the opportunity to sustain and grow its commitment to residents and visitors. The arts are essential to Delawareans. The arts break down barriers and bring people together, they increase the quality of life for all, support development in children and are an economic driver for our communities. The Joshua M. Freeman Foundation has utilized the state's funds to bring live arts at Freeman Arts Pavilion and free programming into all Sussex County schools. With continued generosity and investments from the Delaware Division of the Arts, we have expanded programming, and developed a robust arts education program for Sussex County school children in grades PreK – 12. We also work with the underrepresented communities to ensure all can experience live arts performances. We are proud that 50% of our performances each year are free and open to the public.

Since our inception in 2008, over 1 million patrons have enjoyed live arts experiences including over 250,000 children. With your support, in just 19 years, we have put Southern Delaware on the map as an arts destination and are the largest arts organization in Delaware, and also first in the number of children we impact with our programming. In this short time, we have fueled more than \$150M into our economy and support local small businesses which are the backbone of Sussex County. According to a study conducted by the Biden School of Public Policy and Administration at the University of Delaware, each dollar that the Freeman Arts Pavilion spends results in another \$1.90 of economic activity in the County. The arts directly support tourism. Local residents and families can enjoy free programs and we are grateful for our corps of 280 volunteers who annually support our mission.

As demand in Sussex County for the arts continues to skyrocket, our expenses and operations have increased to respond to this demand. We are creating jobs and keeping pace with increased presenting costs. We also have invested in more safety and security measures and equipment to have a venue where people feel safe to enjoy live arts experiences. Our budgets are funded by the generosity of the public, including donors, foundational grants, the State of Delaware, and from fundraising events. We are incredibly appreciative that the state consistently invests funds year after year, and we hope you will consider the requested increase by the arts sector in order to sustain and strengthen operations and community impact. Thank you.

Advancing arts access for all through performance, education and advocacy.

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