

Joint Finance Committee Hearing Presentation  
Mary Jane Vanvestraut  
The Music School of Delaware  
February 4, 2026



**Good afternoon. Thank you, 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 Mary Jane Vanvestraut, and I am a Delaware constituent who serves as the Director of Community and Operations with The Music School of Delaware. We serve students across all three counties through our campuses in Wilmington and Milford, and through partnerships that expand access into more rural communities.

I want to briefly share a story that illustrates the impact of your investment.

At our Milford location, we work with families who might otherwise have to drive over an hour for high-quality individualized music education — or go without it. One of our students, a middle schooler from Sussex County, began lessons with the help of financial assistance. What started as weekly violin lessons has grown into class participation, community performances, leadership skills, and confidence that shows up in school and at home.

Behind that student stands one of our full-time faculty members — a professional musician who has built a stable career here in Delaware because of institutions like ours. The Music School of Delaware is one of the largest employers of musicians in the state, and the only accredited community music school with full-time teaching artists. That means your investment doesn't just support programs; it supports sustainable careers.

When the State funds the arts, you are strengthening small businesses, stabilizing nonprofit employers, and ensuring that geography does not determine opportunity. You are helping us keep tuition accessible, offer financial assistance, and present free public concerts that bring families into our downtown communities. I invite you see that in action on Sunday, February 22nd, when our students and families come together for our I Love Music Month performances at our Milford Campus.

In today's challenging nonprofit environment, public funding provides critical stability. It allows us to retain exceptional educators, serve rural communities, and contribute meaningfully to Delaware's economy, cultural significance, and overall quality of life.

Thank you again for your leadership and for recognizing the arts as both a cultural and economic driver in our state. I respectfully ask that you continue to prioritize funding for the Delaware Division of the Arts so we can build on this momentum together.

Thank you for your time today and for your ongoing service to Delaware.

MJ

Joint Finance Committee Hearing Presentation  
Mary Jane Vanvestraut  
The Music School of Delaware  
February 4, 2026



THE MUSIC SCHOOL  
OF DELAWARE