

Good afternoon everyone,

My name is Jeff Leager and I come to you today in support of SB260 as a current Delaware Music Educator; having spent 7 years here in the Capital School District and in my 4th year in the Appoquinimink School District where I am the Director of Band at Louis L. Redding Middle School. I also am here to speak in support of SB260 as the President-Elect for the Delaware Music Educators Association.

SB260 is streamlined to help bring further support and engagement for our schools' Performing and Visual Arts programs. Music, dance, visual art, theatre and the countless evolutions of their incorporation in our schools is a fundamental grounding point of connection for our students to come together - share in creative processes unlike in any other subject - and advance themselves as well as one another in collective synchrony.

Whereas I went on to continue my role in society as a music teacher, my peers went on to other equally rewarding careers - banking, engineering, criminal justice, public service, non-profit, real estate, and community empowerment groups - when we get the chance to reconnect and reflect on our experiences in life there is always a commonality that comes back to realizing how far we had all come BECAUSE of our experiences in the Arts that better prepared us for the real world.

SB260 works to continue the effort recognizing and expanding legitimacy to the tremendously talented work thousands of Delaware students & Arts educators bring to the table for all of our communities' benefits. Not only are the Arts programs in Delaware striving to strengthen our student's creative abilities and skills - but we are also focusing on helping prepare the next generation of great hearts and minds.

To close, I would encourage all of our legislators to continue the efforts put in motion here through SB260. Elevating the value of Arts Education in our schools provides more than just performances on stages and venues. It helps shape the development of our students not only academically, but also positively impacts their social-emotional wellbeing. Elevating the value of Arts Education in our schools shapes, grows, and connects communities that then are able to foster generational support, economic growth, and stability. Elevating the value of Arts Education in our schools is a critical need at a time in history where the value of human effort, ingenuity, and creative processes should be more celebrated and nurtured rather than a keystroke or computer process.

Thank you for your time and support for the Arts in Delaware.

*Mr. Jeffrey Leager*

Director of Band, Louis L. Redding Middle School  
Appoquinimink School District  
President-Elect, Delaware Music Educators Association

