

Hello everyone,

Thank you for having me today. It's a pleasure to be here in support of Senate Bill 260. First and foremost, I'm here as a deep admirer of arts and culture and their profound contributions to the human experience. Secondly, as someone who has built a career, locally, rooted in those passions.

I grew up in Dover and was fortunate to have access to a wide range of artistic experiences. I was able to explore many disciplines through the guidance and support of my art instructors and family members. Because of those relationships, I was able to navigate limited opportunities for young artists. Still, I found ways to grow, earning recognition for my work and advancing through respected fine arts programs, which ultimately led me to begin my career in arts education. I have since left the classroom, but currently work alongside art educators and cultural leaders in my role as Director of Learning and Engagement at the Biggs Museum.

In the classroom, I taught every level and ability of learners. The most compelling and challenging experience came in my final teaching role, working with junior and senior visual arts pathway students at Middletown High School. During my time there, I also served as the school's Capstone Coordinator. This gave me the opportunity to oversee and develop work-based learning goals for visual and performing arts students, while also comparing their experiences to those of hundreds of students in other pathway programs, many of which had significantly greater resources and long-established support systems.

In that role, I often found myself reflecting on my own experience aspiring to an art career. The conversations around those ambitions were mostly limited and discouraging; always an expectation of having a "backup plan,"... as if art were something to pursue only after achieving financial stability elsewhere.

By formally recognizing artistic achievement at the high school level, we create more equitable opportunities for students to pursue their passions with confidence and credibility.

That's why Senate Bill 260 matters. Without institutional support, students are left with far more to prove, and far less room to fail. It's not just acknowledgment, it is about legitimizing a pathway that has too often been overlooked. It sends a clear message to students of the arts that their work, their discipline, and their ambitions are valued within our education and career systems.

Thank you all for your time and consideration.

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