



DELAWARE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STATE OF DELAWARE
411 LEGISLATIVE AVENUE
DOVER, DELAWARE 19901

April 25, 2025
Joint Finance Committee
411 Legislative Avenue
Dover, DE 19901

RE: Support for Increased Funding for the Delaware Division of the Arts in FY26

Dear Chairwoman Williams and Vice Chairman Paradee,

We write to express our support for an increase of at least \$1 million to the Delaware Division of the Arts (DDOA) budget for Fiscal Year 2026. This increase is essential to sustaining and strengthening the arts and creative sector that enriches every community in our state.

The Delaware Division of the Arts plays a vital role in providing grants and services to nonprofit arts organizations, artists, schools, and community groups. Over the past decade, rising operating costs and growing demand for these services have outpaced current funding levels. Many of our constituents, including 67% of individual creatives and 68% of institutions have not received grants in the past two years, highlighting a critical gap in support.

With small businesses comprising over 70% of the sector, this funding would enable broader access to professional development, technical assistance, and essential workforce development necessary for sustaining and growing the sector. This need is well documented in the state's new [CREATE Plan](#) – the first in the nation.

Previous funding increases to the DDOA – a win we celebrate – helped recover from ten years of stagnant funding, and completing the full funding increase is imperative to maintaining parity with inflation and supporting growing demand to existing grant funds. While the need for this funding existed before pending federal cuts, those cuts make this funding even more essential. Additional funding will ensure DDOA can meet its mission and help artists and organizations continue their work creating vibrant communities, generating economic return, and fostering cultural equity and connection across all three counties.

We encourage discussion between leaders of the Joint Finance Committee, Controller General's Office, and Office of Management and Budget, and Secretary of State's Office to

determine the best way to ensure the DDOA receives additional funds to fulfill its mission, such as Appropriated Special funding available for arts and culture.

With your support, we can build a stronger, more resilient arts sector that contributes to Delaware's economic growth and enhances the quality of life for all residents. Thank you for your continued leadership and attention to this matter.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth Lockman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Senator Elizabeth Lockman
Majority Whip
Delaware State Senator, District 3

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bryan Shupe", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Representative Bryan Shupe
Delaware State Representative, District 36