

April 1, 2008

OPENING DOORS  
TO EXCELLENCE IN  
ARTS EDUCATION

Dear Member of Congress:

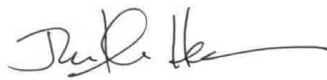
As a National CoSponsor of Arts Advocacy Day 2008, and on behalf of our 370+ member organizations, our Board of Directors, and our constituency of more than 2 million staff, teaching artists, parents, students and volunteers, the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts—the association for community arts education—asks you to help us ensure that high quality arts instruction is accessible to every American.

The National Guild believes involvement in the arts is essential to individual fulfillment and community life. Our members are nonprofit, non-degree granting, community-based institutions offering open access to high-quality, participatory arts instruction by professional teaching artists. Collectively, these organizations provide direct instruction to over 500,000 students in 45 states, employ over 15,000 teaching artists, and partner with public schools, senior centers, public agencies and other organizations to ensure the broadest possible access to high quality arts education. Many also provide learning/development *through* the arts with a focus on positive aging, youth development, community building and other areas. Over 10,000 non-profit community arts education organizations nationwide share our members' commitment to quality, accessibility and accountability in arts education, and together are working to engender a lifelong love of, and participation in, the arts in diverse communities from coast-to-coast.

Research shows that high quality, sequential instruction in the arts has many benefits for individuals and communities. When sustained and responsive to community needs, these programs foster cognitive development, increase creativity, improve self-esteem and promote better health. They also increase social capital, foster democratic decision-making, advance economic growth, and promote a sense of shared culture and community belonging.

These benefits accrue over time and demand long-term partnerships, professional development for staff and teaching artists, and greater financial resources. To ensure that the arts learning needs and interests of all Americans (young children, older adults, ESL students, learning disabled, etc.) are adequately addressed, we ask you to support an increase in funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to \$176 million for FY 2009, which would restore the agency's budget to the high point that it reached in 1992, and to support \$53 million in funding for the Arts in Education program at the U.S. Department of Education. With the President's FY 2009 proposed budget to cut NEA funding by \$16 million, now is the time to join together and demand the preservation and promotion of the arts and arts education for all Americans, now and in the future.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Herman  
Executive Director