



March 31, 2009

Dear Member of Congress:

VSA arts, the leading organization in the world for arts, education, and disability, is proud to support Arts Advocacy Day 2009. We are asking that Congress, once again, restore and increase its support for these fundamental programs by appropriating \$53 million for Arts in Education. Specifically, *VSA arts* is requesting \$10 million so that it can continue to create innovative learning opportunities through the arts, as well as expand professional development opportunities for teachers that enhance inclusion for people with disabilities.

VSA arts is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a society where people with disabilities can learn through, participate in, and enjoy the arts. The arts are widely recognized as an avenue for learning and a universal language across cultures. Our programs and professional development apply this understanding to the education and personal growth of people with disabilities.

Designated by Congress as the coordinating organization for arts programming for persons with disabilities, *VSA arts* offers arts-based programs in creative writing, dance, drama, music and the visual arts. Over five million people participate in *VSA arts* programs every year through a network of affiliates throughout the United States and in 60 countries worldwide.

VSA arts makes the arts essential to inclusive learning. Research shows that a complete arts education, including dance, music and drama, contributes to improved academic performance – particularly for students with disabilities. By applying the learning potentials of the arts specifically to this need, *VSA arts* programs cultivate lifelong educational skills and encourage people with disabilities to contribute to the cultural and economic life of their communities.

We urge you to support increased funding for FY 2010 for *VSA arts*, so that people with disabilities continue to receive an outlet for creative expression and unlimited possibilities for personal, academic, and professional success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Soula Antoniou".

Soula Antoniou
President, *VSA arts*

AN AFFILIATE OF THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

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