

April 13, 2010

Dear Member of Congress:

As a National CoSponsor of Arts Advocacy Day 2010, and on behalf of our diverse constituency of 400+ member organizations and more than 6 million students, parents, and staff and faculty members, the National Guild for Community Arts Education (formerly the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts) asks that you help us ensure all Americans have access to quality arts learning opportunities throughout their life-spans.

Today, more than 5,000 nonprofit, arts organizations and government agencies are providing professionally-led, direct instruction in the arts to people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities in community settings. Many of these organizations also are providing learning/development *through* the arts with a focus on positive aging, youth development, community building and other areas. Through partnerships with public schools, senior centers, public agencies and other organizations, they ensure the broadest possible access to arts education in our communities.

Since its founding in 1937, the National Guild for Community Arts Education has supported and advanced access to lifelong learning opportunities in the arts. Our dynamic network of arts education organizations includes neighborhood music schools and arts centers; and arts education divisions of universities, theater and dance companies, local arts councils, museums, parks and recreation departments and other organizations. United by their common commitments to quality, accessibility and accountability in arts education, our members foster lifelong participation in the performing, visual and literary arts, and develop the artists (amateur and professional) and audiences of the future.

Research shows that high quality 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 and improve health. They also foster democratic decision-making, advance economic growth and promote a sense of shared culture and community belonging. They can be a valuable adjunct to or enrichment of K-12 education and a catalyst and conduit for innovative and collaborative community-wide and cross-sector alliances.

These benefits accrue over time and demand long-term partnerships, professional development for staff and teaching artists, and financial resources. To ensure that the arts learning needs and interests of all Americans (including young children, older adults, ESL students, learning disabled students, etc.) are adequately addressed, we ask you to support an increase in funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to \$180 million for FY11 and to support \$53 million in funding for the Arts in Education program at the U.S. Department of Education. With your support, we can continue to strengthen arts education and increase lifelong learning opportunities in the arts for every American.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Herman
Executive Director