

March 31, 2009

Dear Member of Congress:

As a National CoSponsor of Arts Advocacy Day 2009, and on behalf of our diverse constituency of 404 member organizations and more than 3 million students, parents, and staff and faculty members, the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts asks that you help us ensure all Americans have access to quality arts instruction throughout their lives.

Today, over 2,500 nonprofit, community-based arts organizations and government agencies provide arts instruction to people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. These organizations include community music schools and arts centers, and education divisions of universities, performing arts organizations, arts councils, parks and recreation departments, museums, and social service agencies.

Since its founding in 1937, the Guild has advanced community arts education by researching and promoting best practices, providing opportunities for professional development and dialogue, engaging in advocacy, and making grants to the field. Collectively, our member institutions serve more than one million students, employ over 16,000 teaching artists, and reach an additional five million Americans through performances and exhibitions.

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, convener 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 \$200 million for FY10 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