

**HOWARD COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL**  
**Testimony submitted to Howard County Council**  
**Regarding FY2016 Proposed Budget**  
**April 29, 2015**

Good evening Chairwoman Sigaty and members of the County Council. I am Coleen West, Executive Director of the Howard County Arts Council located at 8510 High Ridge Road. On behalf of the Arts Council, I want to thank you for your past support. We appreciate all that you do on behalf of the citizens of Howard County. I am here this evening to remind you about the important contributions the arts make to our community. For FY2016, County Executive Allan Kittleman has proposed \$800,000 to support the arts through the community services partnership grant to the Arts Council, a 20% decrease over last year's arts appropriation.

The arts community understands that this is a very difficult budget year, there are many difficult decisions to be made, and cuts are needed across all sectors, but we are disappointed in the level of cuts proposed for the arts community. We hope the Executive will reconsider and will work with the Council during its upcoming work sessions to restore \$50,000 of the funding. Seventy-five percent of the FY16 arts appropriation will fund grant programs that provide operating and project support to about 50 organizations and schools that serve children and adults.

The Arts Council was established in 1981 to fulfill the provisions of County Code # 12.804a. The Arts Council has 34 years of service to the community – providing a wide variety of programs that foster the arts and encourage community-wide participation in the arts. As County leaders look for ways to improve the local economy and maintain our quality of life, the arts can be – and should be - part of the solution.

I was recently at a Howard County Chamber of Commerce meeting where President and CEO Leonardo McClarty said “we can't have business development without community development. Investments in small and mid-sized arts and cultural organizations and neighborhood based groups are integral to community development. In building stronger, more resilient communities we can create an environment that will support growth in business.”

A strong arts sector improves our quality of life and is an economic asset that stimulates business activity, attracts tourism revenue, and retains a high quality work force. The 2012 U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reports that the arts and culture sector made up 4.32 percent, or \$698.7 billion, of the nation's GDP —a larger share of the economy than construction, transportation and warehousing. The Bureau also reports arts and culture generates 4.7 million jobs and U.S. exports of arts goods (e.g., movies, paintings, jewelry) resulted in a \$25 billion arts trade surplus.<sup>1</sup>

American companies face an international marketplace where value is increasingly determined by technology, knowledge and ideas. These companies rely on innovative, highly trained workers - many of whom are self-employed or freelancers. A study published by the Conference Board (serving the Fortune 1000 U.S. companies), found 97% of employers say creativity and innovation skills are important in U.S. workplaces, while 85% of these employers say they can't find the creative, innovative applicants they seek.<sup>2</sup>

In an economy that is driven by creativity and innovation, we will need to attract entrepreneurs and tech-savvy innovators – and in order to attract them - we will not only need strong public education, safety and transportation systems, but we will have to have state-of-the-art entertainment, arts, and recreational amenities and unique housing options that appeal to their active, 24-7 lifestyle. Ensuring that our workforce is competitive starts – right here- at home.

Howard County has positioned itself well to meet the expectations of this 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. Ellicott City was recently named one of the “Top 20 Leading Creative Class Cities” by Richard Florida.<sup>3</sup> The arts curriculum in our public schools is one of strongest in the nation, we have a growing state-of-the-art community college, we have excellent recreational facilities, we have a vision for a vibrant Downtown Columbia that includes an arts and entertainment park, and we are home to over 792 arts-related businesses that employ 2693 people in the County.<sup>4</sup> These include major tourist attractions, such as Merriweather Post Pavilion, for-profit media and design businesses, and a vibrant network of non-profit arts groups. The arts sector accounts for 4.3% of the total businesses in the County.

Howard County is a special place that has developed a strong community for the arts. To illustrate this point, a 2015 recent study by Webb Management Services found:

- Howard County has the second highest number of individual artists and creative industries per capita out of the seven Baltimore-Washington area counties.
- Howard County residents spend more per capita on arts and entertainment out of the seven metro counties.
- And, Howard County has the second highest level of arts participation per capita out of the seven metro counties.

The arts (both for- and non-profit) are an important part of the County's small business sector and the heart of the arts community are non-profit groups such as the Columbia Festival of the Arts, HoCoPoLitSo, Candlelight Concerts and others. These non-profits provide opportunities for engagement and participation, incubating artistic ideas and enterprises, and creating distinctive experiences that attract tourists, businesses and residents alike.

It takes a special ecosystem to maintain a vibrant arts community on a local level – you need the talent and dedication of practicing artists, strong arts organizations, innovative arts businesses, enthusiastic audiences, policy and support from government, and contributions from businesses and individuals. I am here tonight to advocate for the non-profit arts groups by asking you to do your part by supporting the County Executive's 2016 arts appropriation.

The non-profits work year round to make the arts available to people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. They do an incredible amount of work with very little resources. Even in good times, their budgets are extremely fragile. They are used to operating on a shoe-string budget. County funding provides them with a reliable source of unrestricted support that they use to underwrite their core activities and to leverage private dollars.

County investment in the arts serves the public interest by broadening public access to the arts and by fostering diverse art forms. The non-profit arts groups, in turn, give back to our

community by enhancing our quality of life, attracting businesses and jobs, and generating revenue for the County. In FY14, not only did Howard County grantees provide us with exceptional programming, they used these funds to leverage \$3.75 million in revenues – 29% from earned income, 19% admissions, 15% Howard County, 12% individuals, 7% corporations, 6% State and Federal, 4% foundations, 4% from the Columbia Association and 4% other – and 133 FTE jobs.<sup>5</sup> For every direct county dollar spent on the arts in Howard County, the arts groups raised an additional \$6 from other sources– a good return on our investment.

Statewide, there are 13,704 arts-related businesses that generate 47,852 jobs<sup>6</sup>, including 241 non-profit arts groups that generate 12,700 FTE jobs. The non-profit sector alone has a total annual impact of \$1 billion; most of these are located in Central Maryland.<sup>7</sup>

The arts add tourism dollars to the local economy as well. Locally, 20-30% of our non-profit arts audiences are made up of people who reside outside of Howard County,<sup>8</sup> these visitors come to our County and spend money at local restaurants and businesses. The Maryland State Department of Business and Economic Development reports that every \$1 of operating generates an additional \$3.94 in spending on goods and services.<sup>9</sup> Using this formula, the non-profit arts groups in Howard County, contributed an extra \$14.8 million in secondary spending to our local economy in FY14 for a total economic impact of \$18.5 million (this does not include revenue from for-profit venues such as Merriweather Post Pavilion, Toby's Dinner Theatre, movie theaters, or design, marketing and printing companies, or others that do not receive direct funding from the Arts Council).

Seventy-five percent of the proposed county funding will go to support 4 grant programs that provide operating and project grants to about 50 organizations and schools.

- 1) The Community Arts Development program provides operating and project grants to local arts organizations as well as non-arts groups interested in presenting arts programs. In FY14, the Arts Council awarded \$324,931 (CAD: \$307,774, JRT: \$13,620, Organizational Development: \$3,537) to 20 Howard County organizations through this grant program.

- 2) The Baltimore City Arts and Culture program awards grants to city organizations that have regional significance and provide considerable services to Howard County residents. In FY14, we awarded \$162,464 to 11 city organizations.
- 3) The Outreach Howard program awards grants to City grantees to produce projects IN Howard County. In FY 14, \$65,000 was awarded to 7 organizations.
- 4) The Artist-in-Education program, a partnership with the County PTAs, provides grants to place visiting artists in school classrooms to enhance student experiences and skills and meet local and state goals for arts education. In FY14, we awarded \$32,000 to 19 schools.

Each grant must be matched at least 1-to-1 by the organization receiving a grant award. The goals of the grant programs are:

- To foster excellence, diversity and vitality in arts offerings for Howard County residents.
- To broaden opportunities for Howard County audiences, artists, and arts organizations.
- To increase the availability of arts activities in Howard County. And,
- To increase awareness of arts.

All grantees are required to submit final reports, which the Arts Council uses to evaluate the grant programs, to track attendance and budget figures, and to hold grantees accountable to their request. These reports show that community interest and support, in terms of participation, is very strong – 344,000 attended arts events sponsored, in part, through County funds in FY14 and grantees matched County dollars nearly 6-to-1. We also provided opportunities for 6,536 artists through these grant programs.

In addition to the grants program, the proposed budget provides funds to support the Arts Council's other principle program, the 27,000 square foot multi-purpose Howard County Center for the Arts in Ellicott City. At the Center, we sponsor year-round classes, art exhibits in our

galleries, and performances in the community black box theatre. We also provide low cost studios for 14 visual artists, office space for 3 resident arts groups, and meeting space for 10 volunteer run groups that participate in our Arts Advancement Program. In FY14, 39,450 people visited the Center and we provided opportunities for 2,697 artists and 3,425 students to showcase their work. Whether they take a class, view an exhibit, drop in a studio, or enjoy a performance in the black box theatre, the Center provides rewarding experiences in the arts for people from all walks of life.

Funds we receive from the County also support county-wide initiatives, such as, ARTsites, a partnership with 12 sites throughout the County to place sculptures for one year, as well as free community-based arts activities for low-income students, such as our Head StART in ART program.

Head StART in ART is a model artist-in-residence program for preschoolers from low-income families that has been recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Maryland State Arts Council as an exemplary early childhood arts program. This program introduces 100-120 children to practicing artists and provides them with experiences and training in the arts that would otherwise not take place. Each residency is designed to provide age-appropriate activities that complement Head Start's curriculum and reinforce core life and learning skills that are needed for future success. This program is free to participants. It received the John W. Holland Service Award from the Community Action Council in 2011. Cuts to the Arts Council budget would cause us to reduce or eliminate free public programs such as this and limit free public access to the arts.

Cuts would also adversely affect the groups that receive County funding through the Arts Council's grant programs. Local treasures, such as the Columbia Orchestra, the Columbia Festival of the Arts, and HoCoPoLitSo rely on these grants to meet their day-to-day operational needs. Unrestricted funds for general operations are rare, the Arts Council is one of the only sources of such support. As mentioned earlier, the operations of the non-profit arts groups, both large and small, are extremely fragile – any cuts to the arts budget will have a negative impact on our local arts groups, our community, and the people we serve.

In addition to their economic impact, the arts impact our daily lives in other tangible ways. Numerous independent studies from the academic, arts, business, law enforcement, medical and technology fields confirm that the arts are an effective means to address a wide variety of issues and challenges in our community such as:

### 1) Workforce Development

Early encouragement and training in the arts help students develop core life and social skills that lead to future success, both academically and in the work place. To quote educator, Paul Lehman, “A lot of what is taught in schools suggests that there are correct and incorrect answers – as evidenced by the use of multiple choice and true/false questions. In the real world, questions are not posed that way.” He goes on to say that the academic, business, and public sectors say today’s graduates are not prepared to keep our workforce competitive in the new global economy. This is supported by the Conference Board study cited earlier. In order to be competitive and address real-life circumstances, employers need people who can do more than check off an answer from a prepared list of options or people who have only been taught what is tested - they need people who are able to make independent, complex judgments and decisions. The arts, by their very nature, teach people to seek multiple interpretations and solutions, weigh options and think critically. They also teach us how to be more tolerant and open.

In order to attract and maintain a creative workforce, greater emphasis on the arts education and practice is needed in our schools and communities.

### 2) Education

The contributions the arts make to academic success are well documented, I will take this opportunity to cite two important studies. First, a report from the College Board Profile of SAT and Achievement Test Takers, which has been tracking tests for decades, shows that students who studied the arts or music for four or more years, on average, score 100 points better on their SAT scores than students with just one-half year of arts or music.<sup>10</sup> Second, is a study from UCLA that followed a sample of 25,000 American high school

students over a ten-year period. The results of this study show that students who studied the arts had higher grades, scored better on standardized tests, had lower dropout rates, and were more active in community affairs than other students. In addition, it found that students from disadvantaged families who studied the arts improved their overall school performance more rapidly than other students.<sup>11</sup>

While studying the arts, students hone their perceptual, analytic and interpretive skills while developing creative thinking, communications and problem-solving abilities – providing them with the critical skills needed to succeed in school and in life.

The arts also provide a common ground for understanding. They facilitate intercultural understanding and provide a common lexicon for building relationships in an increasingly diverse and global society. With the growing number of non-English speaking students enrolling in our public schools, it is important to maintain a strong arts curriculum, one that is integrated with other subjects, in order to connect with non-English speakers and bridge the cultural gap.

### 3) Community Health and Wellness

The arts have a positive impact on community health and wellness. Nearly one-half of the nation's healthcare institutions provide arts programming for patients, families, and staff; 78 percent deliver these programs because of their healing benefits to patients—shorter hospital stays, better pain management, and less medication.<sup>12</sup> Physicians and therapists use visual art, music, dance, and drama to treat patients with a variety of therapeutic needs. Here, the arts are used to strengthen speech patterns, self-image, and socialization skills; they help patients overcome or reduce physical dysfunction; and music therapy, in particular, has been very successful in treating seniors with Alzheimer's Disease. The arts not only help patients cope with loss, isolation, depression, and the effects of mental and physical illnesses, but help families cope as well.

The arts provide a means for seniors to remain active and productive in the community as participants, volunteers and audience members. Controlled research by the Center on



Aging found that older Americans involved in the arts demonstrated better health, fewer doctor visits, and less medication usage – saving money and improving the quality of life of seniors.<sup>13</sup>

As Howard County's special needs and senior populations grow, more programs, such as the Arts Council's Fabulous Fifty+ Players musical theatre program for older adults and the No Boundaries musical theatre program for people with developmental disabilities, will be needed to meet their needs.

#### 4) Youth At Risk

The arts help at-risk youth. Numerous studies have found that arts education programs can help reduce dropout rates - increasing the retention and engagement rates of students and raising educational attainment levels. Participation in arts programs decreases young people's involvement in delinquent behavior, increases academic outcomes for disadvantaged children, and improves students' attitudes about themselves and their future. Studies by the U.S. Department of Justice demonstrate increased pro-social behavior among adjudicated youth involved with arts programs.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, an evaluation of Core Arts examined the effect of arts programs on adjudicated youth in Mississippi and found that participants in this program made notable improvement in cooperation, self-control, academic performance, interpersonal skills, attitude, and incidence of disruptive or risky behavior.<sup>15</sup>

As the number of youth-related incidents continues to rise, Howard County may want to take a look at ways to use the arts as a preventative measure or as an alternative teaching method for troubled youth.

While many of us value the intrinsic impact of the arts on our lives - isn't it nice to be able to show those who are more outcome oriented the contributions the arts make to our local economy and how they help solve other challenges facing the County too!!

In closing, the arts entertain, engage, and enlighten us in many different ways and on many different levels. They are part of the solution - for economic development, for academic success,

for community health, and for our own personal well-being. They are a good investment with many great returns.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak with you this evening.

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<sup>1</sup> *Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (1998-2012)*, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and National Endowment for the Arts, January 2015.

<sup>2</sup> *Ready To Innovate*, Conference Board, 2008, cited on [www.artsusa.org/information\\_services/tookkit](http://www.artsusa.org/information_services/tookkit) by Americans for the Arts.

<sup>3</sup> *America's Leading Creative Class Cities in 2015*, Richard Florida. *City Lab*, The Atlantic Monthly Group, April 20, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> *Creative Industries: Business & Employment in the Arts*, Americans for the Arts and Dun & Bradstreet, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Source: FY14 Howard County Arts Council Revenue Sources for the Arts, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> *Creative Industries 2015: The State Report*, Americans for the Arts and Dun & Bradstreet, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> *Economic Impact of the Arts in Maryland*, Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> *ArtsVision: State of the Arts in Howard County 2003*, Howard County Arts Council and Vision Howard County, 2003, page 21.

<sup>9</sup> *Economic Impact of the Arts in Maryland*, Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> *2012 College-Bound Seniors: Total Group Profile Report*, The College Board, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> *A Study of Model Community Arts Programs*, Howard County Arts Council and the Horizon Foundation, 2002, pp 76-77.

<sup>12</sup> *2009 State of the Field Report: Arts in Healthcare*, Society for the Arts in Healthcare, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Source: Americans For the Arts, [www.artsusa.org](http://www.artsusa.org).

<sup>14</sup> Source: Americans For The Arts, [www.artsusa.org](http://www.artsusa.org).

<sup>15</sup> *A Study of Model Community Arts Programs*, Howard County Arts Council and the Horizon Foundation, 2002, pp 77-78.