

Laura Johnson, 6924 Little Brooke Court, Elkridge, MD 21075
Testimony IN SUPPORT OF the Howard County Arts Council's FY16 Proposed Budget
Before the Howard County Council
April 29, 2015

Good Evening. I am Laura Johnson, Vice President for Communications at the National Summer Learning Association and here representing Ducketts Lane Elementary School as incoming president of the PTA Board. I am testifying in support of the Howard County Arts Council's FY16 Proposed Budget and specifically, in support of the Artists-in-Education Grant Program that supports high quality arts experiences for students throughout our county.

As mom of a third grader at Ducketts Lane Elementary School, I am proud of our Howard County Public School System and its commitment to arts education, specifically. It is no coincidence that Howard County Public Schools rank among the best school districts in the nation...or that five Howard County public schools were among the Newsweek list of America's Top High Schools for 2014.

I believe that our school and community leaders have been intentional, creative and forward thinking about fulfilling the promise of college and career readiness for students here. It is clear that the arts: music, dance, theatre, media arts and the visual arts, are an essential part of a complete and competitive education for all students in Howard County.

As such, I urge your continued investment in the Howard County Arts Council's Budget and its Artists-in-Education Grant Program. Here's why:

Decades of research compiled by the Arts Education Partnership (AEP) of the Council of Chief State School Officers show time and again that students highly involved in the arts outperform students with little or no arts involvement, especially in school settings. They receive better grades, have more positive attitudes about school, and are less likely to drop out of high school. The arts inspire creativity and innovation, traits highly valued in the workforce. Research also shows that students who have had an arts-rich education volunteer more often and exhibit greater civic engagement than other students.

Ducketts Lane Elementary School – led by one of Howard County's finest educators, Heidi Balter – was the proud recipient of an Artists-in-Education Grant last year. This grant provided our new school with its very first artist-in-residency program with Amanda Pellerin of Young Audiences, Maryland. Together she and our school's amazing art teacher, Mrs. Lori Mellendick, took 5th grade students on an extraordinary learning experience around the theme of the Chesapeake Bay where they studied the

water cycles, plants, animals and local natural resources. The students functioned as young archaeologists, researchers and artists during the process--eventually creating a massive four by eight foot mural representing the habitat of the Chesapeake Bay.

Using a tactile form such as clay, gave the students a substantial gift in the end – this beautiful mural to forever grace the walls of our school. Tomorrow we will officially unveil this masterpiece to the entire school community at our Enrichment Night and also receive the Arts for Learning Leadership Award from Young Audiences. I can assure you that our 5th grade students who graduate this year will leave their mark on Ducketts Lane Elementary School and I can bet – in time – on the world.

We thank the Howard County Arts Council and its Artists-in-Education Grant program for this and the many rich arts experiences they bring to thousands of students in our schools. Our students will make a mark in this world because – through your continued investment in the Howard County Arts Council - they will enjoy an extraordinary, world class education that includes the arts. Thank you for the opportunity to speak and I urge your support of the Howard County Arts Council FY16 Budget to ensure that our schools and communities thrive for years to come.

###