



ART · REACH

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Dear Rep. Evans:

It is imperative that funding for the arts not be eliminated from the state budget. As has been heavily documented by now, the arts have a major impact on education and on economic and community development across our commonwealth and are major drivers for tourism and improved quality of life as well. More recently, the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance has revealed a strong correlation between cultural engagement and civic participation: in other words, involvement in the arts actually makes people better citizens and members of their communities.

Unfortunately, the people who can most benefit from the arts are very often the people who have the least access to them. Art-Reach exists to eliminate the barriers that prevent people with disabilities and economic disadvantages from participating in the cultural opportunities that so many of us take for granted. Each year we provide powerful—and empowering—arts experiences to over 15,000 people who otherwise wouldn't be able to have them.

Here's what a group of homeless people who attended a ballet had to say about the experience: "Our group had never been to a ballet performance before or listened to classical music. Everybody was overwhelmed with the magic of the music and the dancing and by the opportunity to enrich our lives and experience something new."

Much of Art-Reach's work depends on the health and vitality of the arts community as a whole, since so many of our activities are done in partnership with theatres, museums, gardens and other cultural organizations. That's why state arts funding is so important. When cultural organizations are threatened with funding shortfalls, they very often scale back the outreach and education programs that don't generate their own revenue and that provide enriching and empowering cultural experiences to so many people who otherwise would never be able to have them.

The arts are not superfluous or elitist. They permeate every corner of our state and make a huge difference in the lives of Pennsylvania residents from every county, socioeconomic class, and ability level. The arts are not just a creative outlet. They are a tool for improving the way we educate our children, engage people in our communities and build healthy environments for business.

On behalf of the 15,000 people Art-Reach serves each year—and the millions more like them across Pennsylvania—I urge you to do everything in your power to ensure that the state does all it can to ensure adequate funding for the arts.

Thank you for your time,

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