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April 5, 2019

Joint Committee on Student Success
Oregon Legislature
900 Court Street, N.E.
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Roblan, Smith-Warner and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of over 300 nonprofit organizations and individual members of our Coalition who deeply value the impact of creative expression for every human being, we write to support your recommendations to support arts and music education specialists to elementary schools. As an advocacy group lobbying in Salem for public investment in the cultural sector, we want you to know of our support for this important fiscal priority as you consider HB 2019. We know you have heard from Oregonians around the state that arts and culture are often the pathways by which our youth engage positively in the world around them, and by including these topics as part of our educational experience, we will increase our chances of improving educational outcomes in Oregon.

The funding of school arts and music specialists is an important foundation from which to build, but it is an incomplete strategy on its own. We also need to address access to creative expression in middle and high schools where exposure to arts is proven to help reduce drop-out rates. We also need to recognize the importance of bringing artists into schools and of schools partnering with cultural nonprofits in their communities. All are key to a holistic approach to arts and culture for our youth.

We are encouraged by the results of the five-year investment the Oregon Community Foundation has made in its Studio-to-Schools program and we are working with the foundation to mine those lessons for statewide policy change. We intend to partner with OCF, and others such as the Oregon Arts Commission and groups like the Right Brain Initiative and Young Audiences, to convene statewide conversations in late 2019 and 2020 to attempt to develop a comprehensive, and community-based, approach to arts and culture education for the 2021 legislative session. Until then, we will do all that we can to highlight your important recommendations on elementary specialists and to educate others about the importance of creative expression for every child.

We deeply appreciate your leadership.

Sincerely,

Dr. Nancy Golden, President of the Cultural Advocacy Coalition