

Ladies and Gentleman of the NY State Budget Committee, I am writing to you to urge you to make a commitment to increase Arts funding in the 2008 budget for New York State.

As the Executive Director of the Brookhaven Arts and Humanities Council, I have seen first hand the effects of the dwindling support for Arts in the state and country. Arts funding is as essential as funding for any of the programs which are deemed to be of the utmost importance.

Communities throughout the state depend on continuous support to maintain and improve programs that are vital to their constituents.

In Brookhaven Town, as in other towns across the state, small arts groups as well as larger non-profit organizations, feel every change in funding from state, county and town. Programs are limited, fewer grants and support is passed on to smaller arts groups and commerce is attracted elsewhere or dwindles.

Arts programs are vital to the economic growth and stability of New York State, attracting increased commerce in both the private and public sector. Our local gallery programs and music programs are a vital component of our tourist industry, helping to support the hotel industry, transportation, and recreational areas of our community, as well as enhancing community identity and involvement. Our programs help to keep our youth involved in enriching pursuits and out of trouble, they help to develop future interests and involve them in activities that are multi-cultural, intergenerational and identity validating.

Our local community businesses not only contribute to our programs, but benefit from their continued support and growth to help grow their businesses and in turn contribute more to their community. Arts organizations create forums for local businesses and community members to interact and collaborate in ways that strengthen and develop a greater sense of community and civic involvement.

Finally, funding for the arts helps to develop communities of people who work in a collegial atmosphere, are team players, community minded and work to solve problems creatively with a different perspective. They are volunteer minded and willing to work with community leaders to develop constituent forums and work towards community development and improvement.

Funding for the Arts is vital to the health of New York State. I urge you to not only continue such funding in the 2008 budget, but to assign the Arts the level of importance that it deserves and increase its funding as you inevitably will other important areas such as Education and Health Care.

Sincerely,  
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