



February 12, 2016

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Last year, we were gratified to see the proposed Executive Budget include a \$5 million increase for the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), which was supported by the Legislature. These dollars are just entering the funding pipeline and will have a direct impact on the nonprofit arts sector's ability to help localities strengthen communities, sustain economic vitality, increase accessibility to the arts and support diverse cultural programs ranging from community-based to world-class arts.

We were disappointed to see that the proposed Executive Budget for FY 2016-17 does not build upon the momentum. As a statewide advocacy group, we are writing you today to respectfully request that you support a \$5 million increase for NYSCA in your proposed 2016-17 budget, enabling arts organizations throughout the state to maintain—and, we expect build on—the momentum triggered by this year's funding.

Our request is not based simply on our belief that the arts merit public support. An increase to NYSCA's budget aligns with your interest in supporting strategy-driven results.

Throughout the state—in urban, suburban and rural areas alike—the nonprofit arts sector is fueling creative industries driving revitalization, and bolstering tourism.

The following statements and data highlight some of the reasons NYSCA's budget increase is warranted:

- 1) **The arts are an engine for economic growth.** Five areas in New York State (the City of Auburn, Chenango County, Greater Syracuse, Tompkins County, and Westchester County) participated in Americans for the Arts' most recent Arts & Economic Prosperity report. In these areas alone, total nonprofit arts and cultural spending contributed a total of \$316 million to local economies, generating over \$46 million in revenue for local and state governments.
- 2) **The arts create jobs.** That same study demonstrated that the nonprofit arts sector in those five areas of New York State supported close to 11,000 FTE jobs.
- 3) **The arts enhance community life and help stabilize marginal communities.** NYSCA's Decentralization grants ensure that arts dollars reach people with limited access to the arts, nurture the development of community-based arts activities, and put artists to work in their communities.
- 4) **The arts add to the quality of life for all residents.** A vibrant cultural scene is key to attracting and retaining millennials, young families, and businesses.

5) **The arts help kids develop important life and work-related skills.** NYSCA-supported activities in schools, after school programs and community-based arts centers bolster academic achievement too.

6) **New York State is home to 52,451 arts-related small businesses** that employ 314,099 people, according to a recent study. These are creative industries including photographers, architects, filmmakers, designers, and galleries--all part of a dynamic arts-centric industry cluster.

7) **The arts encourage tourism.** Studies show that people who attend arts/cultural events spend more money than residents do. These dollars ripple through the local economy.

NYSCA's grants support the cultural institutions that anchor community and economic development and yet: NYSCA's grants funding levels have remained well below the highest allocation to the arts of \$54 million in 1990. We appreciate the added funding your administration has allocated of \$4 million in 2014 and \$5 million in 2015. And while funding for the arts has increased, it remains less than adequate for an industry of its scope, impact and potential. In particular there is a need to address the infrastructures of aging museums, theaters and arts centers. ([*http://artsnys.org/nysca-cuts-are-largest-of-any-state-agency](http://artsnys.org/nysca-cuts-are-largest-of-any-state-agency), November 2015)

An additional increase to NYSCA's budget also helps leverage the creative industry cluster's impact and tourism in keeping with your core goals of making New York State the Empire State once again.

Your administration has an opportunity to strengthen our industry so that we can do our fair share in building and supporting New York State's economy. On behalf of our peers in the arts, culture, and heritage fields, we respectfully ask you to add an additional \$5 million dollars for the New York State Council on the Arts 2016 - 2017 budget.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,
Arts NYS Coalition Members

ARTS NYSTATE MEMBERS

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