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October 7, 2019

Dr. William E. 'Brit' Kirwan: Chair, Commission on Innovation & Excellence in Education
Blueprint for Maryland's Future Funding Formula Workgroup
House Office Building, Room 121
Annapolis, MD, 21401

To the Members of the Commission:

Arts Education in Maryland Schools (AEMS) applauds the work of the Commission on Innovation & Excellence in Education, which has produced findings that articulate the critical need to reform Maryland's education system and has enumerated carefully thought-out recommendations for how to achieve those goals. The globally competitive education that the Commission envisions should deliver equitable support to all of Maryland's children, and foster a society in which its supported citizenry contributes to a thriving culture, economy, and community. Adequate education, much less a world-class education, can only be achieved through the inclusion of arts education.

Executive Director

Quanice Floyd

AEMS urges the Commission to:

- **Include language in its foundation (base) per pupil funding formula that specifies funding for arts education in Maryland's public schools and**
- **Explicitly list "music and the arts" consistently in guiding documents such as the Interim Report (and succeeding iterations) and legislation in all places where standards and core subjects are enumerated as they are in Policy Area 3, Element 3a Design Assumption 1 where music and the arts are included in the definition of core subjects.**

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AEMS has been engaged and involved with the work of the Commission on Innovation & Excellent in Education since the Commission's inception (see below), and is writing to again urge the Commission that **their goals cannot be achieved without arts education**, which cultivates creativity, social- emotional learning, cross-cultural understanding, and abstract thinking. For students to be college and career ready, they must have the skills and attributes sought-after by businesses and employers. World Economic Forum includes complex problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, emotional intelligence, and cognitive flexibility in its top 10 skills sought-after by CEOs from 2020 to 2030. The arts effectively imbue these skills and attributes into young learners – without arts education, the whole child's potential has not been accessed.

History of Engagement:

AEMS has a history of engagement with the Commission. This includes communications with the Commission in November 2016, oral and written testimony by AEMS

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"The importance of social emotional skills such as empathy, cultural understanding and adaptability will rise by 26% in the U.S. by 2030."
–World Economic Forum

"The whole brain becomes intensely engaged when creating art;

Artistic expression reduces levels of cortisol, the stress hormone.

Artistic activities and experiences cultivate empathy and support social/emotional learning."

–The International Arts and Mind Lab

New Jersey is the first state in the country to provide access to arts education for all students having reached its benchmark for "universal arts education access" as of 2019. New Jersey is ranked #2 consistently for the quality of its public education.

"For at-risk/at-promise students, intensive arts experiences correlate to academic achievement and civic engagement levels close to or exceeding those of the general population AND much higher than their art-risk/at-promise peers with low levels of arts exposure."

–Catterall, Dumais, Hampden-Thompson

representatives in 2017, and Dr. Kirwan's participation in the Higher Education in Arts Taskforce 3rd Decennial Deans Round Table in October 2018 as keynote speaker.

Foundation (base) Per Pupil Funding Formula:

The Commission is aware of the perils of unfunded mandates. All Maryland public schools are required by the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR Ch. 13A.04.16) to offer arts education. However, no definition of adequate funding stipulating inclusion of arts funding as guidance nor specific funding for the arts has been provided to schools to ensure compliance with regulation. Because so many schools are struggling to use their resources just to cover subjects that have standardized testing, additional effort and intention must be exerted to rectify the neglect of arts education that has disproportionately impacted students of color and those living in concentrated areas of poverty. **The Commission MUST include clear language to explicitly ensure that part of the foundation (base) per pupil funding is allocated to make arts education accessible to Maryland's public school students through adequate staffing and materials.**

Consistency in Language:

It is commendable that the Commission recognizes the arts as core subject areas as they are in Policy Area 3, Element 3a Design Assumption 1 of the Interim Report, which states: "Standards, or curriculum frameworks with embedded standards, in **core subjects** (English language arts, mathematics, sciences, history/social studies, **music and fine arts**)...". Other references to core subject areas in the Report do not include the arts as they should to maintain consistency and clarity. **Every opportunity must be taken to intentionally acknowledge that arts education is essential to the intellectual growth of the whole child.** Interestingly, Element 3g recommends the use of the arts in intervention curricula, to help struggling students meet the CCR standard by 12th grade. This is clear acknowledgment that the arts are effective in improving student performance (as research confirms). The consistent acknowledgment of the arts as a core subject throughout Element 3 and the rest of the report will better articulate the baseline expectation that schools would be providing students with access to systemic, sequential, standards-based instruction in all arts disciplines *throughout* their PreK-12 education.

We eagerly await the Commission's final report and finalized funding formula, as does the rest of Maryland. AEMS approves of the Commission's engagement of Dr. Toldson to ensure that its approach acknowledges the systemic racism that affects so many Maryland students and seeks to dismantle it. Access to arts programming and its accompanying pedagogical and quality-of-life benefits have been long denied to marginalized populations; these are an integral part of the equity that the Commission hopes to achieve. The deprivation of at-risk/at-promise students of arts education denies them cultural literacy and some of today's most valued and practical skills. AEMS urges the Commission to consider all of these factors and to choose to incorporate our recommendations into the final report, ensuring that adequate funding is defined to include support for instruction in the arts.

Sincerely,



Quanice Floyd, AEMS Executive Director

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