

TESTIMONY ON H.B. 2766

Presented to

House Committee on Education Budget

Presented by

Henry Schwaller

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I want to thank the chair and committee for allowing me to testify today on H.B. 2766. I am Henry Schwaller, past chair and current member of the Kansas Arts Commission.

The bill that you are considering today is based, in part, on a model implemented in other states, including Colorado and Michigan. The Colorado model is particularly important because it has a proven track record of success and its history is similar to Kansas' experience.

In 2002, the Colorado legislature cut funding for the (former) Colorado Arts Council as part of an overall reduction in state spending that year. Former Governor Bill Owens subsequently terminated the director and all but one staff member in June 2003 and ordered the agency to operate with an annual budget of \$40,000 for payroll and operational expenses.

The legislature and governor then worked together to create a new state arts organization by moving the Arts Council to the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade. This new entity was named "Colorado Creative Industries" and its mission is "to promote, support and expand the creative industries to drive Colorado's economy, grow jobs and enhance our quality of life."

The first task for the organization was a broad, comprehensive strategic planning initiative that identified the state's needs, objectives for the agency and a strategic focus. The plan was approved by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), allowing the state to receive NEA matching funds. In fact, Colorado remained in the NEA's Partnership Program during these changes, and with the exception of one year (2006), it received full matching funds under the program. Colorado Creative Industries currently operates with a small staff of 3, along with an outside consultant. Its mission is focused more on economic development, particularly the developing/promoting the film industry in Colorado. Two other staff members work solely on this.

A comparison between Colorado and Kansas is timely, and it is crucial. We need to evolve our thinking and approach to our state arts program in a rapidly changing world. We need to clarify and prioritize our strategy on the basis of where we are today, what other states are doing today and tomorrow, and where we want to be tomorrow.

The success of our state arts strategy depends on our ability to achieve the following objectives:

- Providing non-profit and for-profit creative businesses, artists and creative entrepreneurs with increased access to financial support, skill development and professional networking.
- Ensuring that opportunities for arts learning and creativity skills development are available to Kansas youth to help them succeed in school - and to be better prepared to enter the workforce.
- Expanding professional and financial support for creative businesses and cultural and artistic programs through local government partnerships and coalitions.
- Provide access to creative environments and experiences for all Kansans.
- Preserving and promoting Kansas' unique cultural heritage.
- Achieving national recognition of Kansas as a premiere creative hub—a home for world-class creative businesses, productions and experiences.

To that end, I encourage the Committee to continue working on H.B. 2766 while considering three additional items:

- 1) Providing an annual appropriation in the state's budget for the new state arts agency that is sufficient to achieve the above objectives;
- 2) Creating statutory language that establishes a board that reflects the interests of all Kansans; and
- 3) Staffing the agency with qualified, professional individuals.

Kansans support state investment in the arts, due in part to the past success of the programs of the Kansas Arts Commission. Our past investment was successful in creating jobs, in the non-profit and private sector, enhancing the skills of our future workforce through arts-in-education programs, and enriching the quality of life of all communities, both rural and urban. However, funding for all state activities is limited. This means that a successful state arts strategy must be effective and leverage these funds at a premium. Our few dollars must be stretched and they

must be targeted. I believe that if the objectives and changes that I provided today are incorporated in H.B. 2766, Kansas will again have a state arts program that is widely acclaimed and emulated.

Thank you for your time today.