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ARTS ORGANIZATIONS STATEWIDE ASSESSING IMPACT FROM PROPOSED LOSS OF FUNDING TO ARIZONA COMMISSION ON THE ARTS

Governor Ducey Plans to Take \$2 Million Designated for ACA Grants to Pay for Teacher Raises

PHOENIX, Ariz. (April 19, 2018): Arts organizations statewide are assessing the impact on their educational programs and outreach without grant funding from the Arizona Commission on the Arts (ACA) under Arizona Governor Doug Ducey's plan to use \$2 million the Arizona legislature intended for the Commission to help fund his proposal to raise teacher salaries by 20 percent over the next three years.

Every year, ACA grantees offer more than 6,250 workshops and classes to Arizona residents of all ages, over 3,300 arts and culture-focused school field trips and more than 5,250 arts learning and arts integration programs in schools.

"No one disputes that teachers and school support staffs deserve to be appropriately compensated and we fully support the movement to make that happen," said Arizona Citizens for the Arts Executive Director Catherine "Rusty" Foley. "But there needs to be a better plan to fund the Governor's proposal, one that doesn't hold the potential to eliminate arts services and arts programs for schools in communities statewide, let alone the impact on other state agencies that provide critical support and services to struggling Arizonans."

Economic projections put the cost for the Governor's proposal at \$270 million for this year and more than \$670 million in three years when the proposed, well-deserved raises reach 20 percent.

Without the \$22,000 grant the Del E. Webb Center for the Performing Arts in Wickenburg receives, "I will not be able to go forward with our Arts for Kids Program," said Executive Director Cathy Weiss. "We have one high school in the region and many elementary, K-6 and some 6-8 schools for which we provide curriculum-based arts experiences that reach 3,100 kids in 11 schools in the West Valley and as far away as Aguila, Congress, Morristown and Prescott Valley."

Weiss said 71 percent of the students in the program are on free or reduced lunch and that the Wickenburg Unified School District is the state's largest based on square miles. "I don't have another \$22,000 for this program. I'm done"

In Flagstaff, "education extends beyond schools and The Museum of Northern Arizona is an important place of learning. Every year thousands of children explore science and nature through our summer camps, extend their classroom learning with field trips to the museum and attend weekend programs promoting science and literacy," said Carrie M. Heinonen, CEO and the Robert Breunig

Director. “The funds our museum received this year from the Arizona Commission on the Arts are critical to funding our extensive educational programs. Teachers need to be fairly paid and fully funded, but not at the cost of other educational opportunities.”

Samantha Turner, Executive Director of Ballet Arizona, said that “support from the Arizona Commission on the Arts is critical to the programs that Ballet Arizona offers for free or very low cost to residents throughout the Valley and state. Children and families in crisis are invited to attend Ballet Arizona performances at Symphony Hall for free to provide a moment of respite while they endure hardships. Students at Title I schools participate in student matinees and arts integration program to supplement arts programming not always available at their schools. These programs are threatened when state of Arizona abandons support for the arts.”

Foley explained that funding to the Commission in four of the last five years has come from earned interest from the state’s Rainy Day Fund and should, “absent any other source of funding, be restored,” she said. “The money appears to be there and is not being used for the teacher pay package.”

For the Tucson Symphony Orchestra, “it is the Arizona Arts Commission support that allows the TSO to take music off of the stage and into schools and communities throughout Southern Arizona,” said TSO President and CEO Tom McKinney. “With Commission funding the TSO served over 40,000 students with music education programs such as with Music in the Schools (a curriculum enhancement program), KinderKonzerts!, Young People’s Concerts, and the TSO Southern Arizona Residency education and community engagement programs.

He added that professional musicians from the orchestra “work with teachers to provide value to the classroom experience, enhance learning and inspire creative thinking. The TSO can charge a minimal amount to ensure affordability for teachers and schools because Arizona Arts Commission funding helps provide the rest. Teachers count on us.”

For Arizona residents opposing this decision, Foley recommends contacting elected officials in the Arizona Legislature and the office of Arizona Governor Doug Ducey. For contact information, visit <http://azcitizensforthearts.org/arts-advocacy-center/legislativeactioncenter>.

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Arizona Citizens for the Arts, a 37-year-old 501 c3 organization, acts as the eyes, ears and voice of the nonprofit arts and culture sector in Arizona at the State Legislature, in local city halls and partnerships with business and community leaders involved in building and supporting quality of life in Arizona.