

April 2022

Dear Legislator,

The New York State Summer School of the Arts (NYSSSA) has consistently and steadfastly been providing opportunities for New York State students to cultivate and nurture their artistic growth in the areas of visual arts, performing arts, media arts, dance and theater with funding through the New York State Department of Education for the past 50 years. This valuable Arts program has transformed the lives of thousands of students. It has also provided an opportunity for them to connect with other students who share their enthusiasm for the Arts, as well as the opportunity to learn from world-class artists in their respective areas.

While we are happy to hear the budget will allow for $150,000 scholarships to local programs and arts camps for the summer of 2022, we are concerned that there is no plan for continuing to fund the program into the summer of 2023. In its 2022-2023 Non-State Aid Budget and Legislative Priorities, the Board of Regents included a $2 million annual request for new state funding to ensure NYSSSA continues to be available to New York State students in 2023-2024 and beyond. We are deeply concerned that the fate of NYSSSA is in jeopardy – and as of now, there is no NYSSSA funding in the budget proposals. As such, this vital Arts program, which reaches students throughout the State of New York, will be another example of Arts Programs around NYS that continue to struggle or be diminished post-pandemic.

It is my understanding that for many years the summer school of the arts has no longer been a line item, but rather an expense within a line under the umbrella of the Cultural Education Department. Should the funding for NYSSSA not continue to be supported thru Cultural Education, it is critical that funding be reinstated directly into the budget. Now is not the time to limit or reduce artistic opportunities for the students of NYS who choose to use their summer vacation to advance and further their educational opportunities in the Arts. This is particularly important for the young musicians who represent our urban and rural school communities who otherwise would not have such opportunities. On behalf of the million-plus students and families we represent, please take a stand for this legacy of Arts Education in the State of New York.

Sincerely yours,

Russ Faunce – NYSSMA President

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