**Swiss Cheese Letter Instructions**

Please use the same letter to write to the following individuals:

The Honorable Kathleen C. Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Shelly B. Mayer

NYS Senator, Chair of Committee on Education

Legislative Office Building Room 509

Albany, NY 12247

The Honorable Michael Benedetto

NYS Assemblyman, Chair of Committee on Education

Legislative Office Building Room 836

Albany, NY 12248

Your local State Senator (please include your State Senate District number in this correspondence)

Your local State Assembly Representative (please include your State Assembly District number in this correspondence)

If you’re not sure who your representatives are, use the following resources to find them:

<https://www.nysenate.gov/find-my-senator>

<https://nyassembly.gov/mem/search/>

Make sure each letter has both your written signature as well as your name typed beneath it.

Save your letter as a PDF for email purposes.

Send each letter via postal mail, and also send a copy via email to each recipient. “Bcc” Lori Orestano-James on your emails at advocacy@nyssma.org

If you have any questions about how to proceed, feel free to email NYSSMA Advocacy Chair Lori Orestano-James at advocacy@nyssma.org or text or call her at 845-798-1770.

Please note that the letter below is a starting point. It is in “Word” format so you can easily personalize it with your own language, perceptions, experiences, etc.

Your Name

Your Street Address

Your Town, NY, Zip Code

Date

The Honorable…

Title

Street Address

Albany, NY Zip Code

Dear Title Name,

It is my privilege to write to you in strong support of Senate Bill S285 and Assembly Bill A1502 as introduced in the current NYS Legislative Session. These bills will provide necessary amendments for the purpose of updating education laws passed in 1951 and 1958 by adding Music and Arts Education as part of curriculum for public school students. This will align our education laws with the language of the 2015 Federal and State “Every Student Succeeds Act.”

Music and Arts Education have direct developmental benefits to children and adolescents and is an essential component in providing a well-rounded education to all of our students. Numerous studies have shown that Music and Arts Education have a significant positive impact on all students including those that are traditionally underserved.

The need to update these laws has been evident for a long time. The recent pandemic has demonstrated the urgent necessity for this important change. Music and Arts Education were placed on the back burner in many school districts throughout the state, and in some areas of the state were totally eliminated. However, it has become clear that these losses had significantly negative impact on students, parents and their communities.

Conversely, Music and the Arts provided much respite for so many during the pandemic. On a daily basis, many families came together to create and perform in the areas of music, visual arts, dance, theatre and media arts. YouTube, Tic-Tok, Facebook and other social media platforms were filled with amazing artistry to help many fill the time, communicate, reflect and de-stress during a very difficult time.

This did not occur by accident. It happened because Music and the Arts are innate parts of our everyday existence. We naturally sing along to music on the radio. We tap our foot and dance when we hear music. We doodle and draw from the moment we can pick up a crayon or a pencil. We take pictures and videos on our cell hones and tablets to share with others. We role-play and act out our dreams in natural play as toddlers, adolescents and adults. Music and the Arts provide us with meaning in our life. We know that Music and the Arts put the **CIVIL** into **CIVIL**IZATION.

Research shows that students involved in Music and the Arts are more accomplished as cognitive and creative thinkers. The skill sets learned through the study of Music and the Arts including collaboration, communication, creativity, organization, research, independence, confidence, reflective work practices and tenacity are what employers are seeking in their hiring processes. Providing a well-rounded education inclusive of high quality, standards-based sequential Music and the Arts instruction will ensure that our students are well prepared for arts and all other employment opportunities as we rebuild our economy post-pandemic. Music and Arts Education enriches our communities, strengthens our economy, and creates educated consumers.

Music and the Arts provide the foundation for cross-cultural, diverse learning and social-emotional understanding for all students. No other curricular area so deeply impacts these vital skills and experiences. How could Music and the Arts not have been included in our legal requirements for learning for so many years?

We must take advantage of this opportunity to update our laws to assure that all students have access to Music and the Arts. To do otherwise would be a true disservice to our youngsters, to their future, and to the future of our state and its communities.

I am seeking your support for the passage of this amendment and stand ready to assist you in any way possible to ensure forward movement as soon as possible to incorporate it into New York
State education law.

Thank you for all you do to support the good work that is being done to educate all of the students of New York State. Please know that I appreciate what you do and look forward to our continued work together to make a difference in the lives of our citizens. Should you have any additional questions or if you would like to speak with me in more detail, please feel free to contact me at YOUR PHONE NUMBER.

Sincerely,

Your Signature (not electronic)

Your Name

Your Title and Place of Employment (optional)

Your street address

Your town, NY, Zip Code

Your Phone Number

Your Email Address