

Lisa Cataldi

From: Brandon Lahoud <bman12688@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 24, 2024 12:01 PM
To: House Education Committee
Subject: Transparency in Arts Education Access and Proficiency Act HOUSE BILL No. H-7020

Hi,

My name is Brandon Lahoud and I live in Providence, RI, as well as teach music in Lincoln, RI for Lincoln High School. I am writing to ask you to approve moving H-7020, the Transparency in Arts Education Access and Proficiency ACT to the full house and recommend its passage. The students of Rhode Island need this bill to raise the status of the ARTs Education to its rightful place as a major curricular academic subject that every child must study for a full comprehensive education, and to ensure districts are truly working towards following The Arts Proficiency mandates of the BEP and recently updated HS Graduation Requirements.

Over the past few years, we are beginning to see more and more challenges that are beginning to unintentionally undermine some of the progress we have made, and exacerbate the inequities that continue to exist from district to district. These challenges include:

- The expansion of CTE programs in many high schools while maintaining existing traditional schedules, making it almost impossible for some CTE students to fit the Arts courses they have passion for and need to become proficient in.
- The continued lack of significant, if any, arts courses at many vocational schools in our state.
- the expanded credit requirements for all students in Math, World Language, and other traditional academics in the updated graduation regulations Any high school that implements these without substantially adjusting their traditional scheduling methods make it challenging, if not impossible, for many students to fit in the Arts courses they require and desire, and are in fact required by the Basic Education Plan arts requirements.

As budgets in local districts get tighter with the elimination of Post-COVID relief funding, there will once again be a likelihood that the Arts will be targeted for unfair reductions if we don't shine a spotlight on the Arts proficiency mandates for all students, and the need to maintain access and improve equity.

The recent addition of an Arts Curriculum Coordinator at RIDE has already proven its worth via the work of Carolyn Bennett, an exceptional leader and friend, but it is already in danger of being eliminated, further marginalizing the Arts as a vital component of every child's education. The position's current funding via ESSER funds runs out in September 2024, and RIDE has already indicated it is NOT planning on renewing it. Without this position, RIDE will continue to not have the ability, or perhaps even the motivation, to properly monitor compliance with current Arts education mandates.

Adding the Arts Data to the School Report Card will make it much easier for communities, parents, guardians, families, and students to measure how their schools compare to others, helping to point out inequities in Arts education that can then be addressed.

This bill should NOT be a major added burden to RIDE since much of the needed data is already being collected via the RISCA funded Arts Education Data Dashboard, and would be coordinated by the RIDE Arts Education Curriculum Coordinator.

As a music educator in Lincoln at Lincoln High School, we have seen the benefits of a successful music program. Our community respects the Arts, celebrates the Arts, and endorses the Arts. Through our hard work and dedication, we

have been fortunate enough to create a CTE program that will increase the ability for students to succeed in the music industry, as well as enhance their abilities to be successful performers and enjoyers of music.

It is evident that the state lacks support of the Arts, and specifically in music, as seen from the "local music scene" in Rhode Island. We have successful artists like JVKE ("Golden Hour" a 3x Platinum Certified song from 2022 among millions of streams and sold out tours), Emeline (currently has over 600 million combined global streams), Deer Tick and AraabMuzik, however, they are the only recent successful music acts. The decline of arts is also evident through "PVDfest", and the lack of musicians from RI that perform, as well as Newport Folk Festival and Newport Jazz Festival that rarely have RI locals. If we preach a "spiral-curriculum" and the National Education Standards, if our music programs in every district was as strong as the words in bills etc. are led to be believe, then we would have many successful local musicians, a thriving music industry, as well as continuous RI acts successfully performing at all of our local venues. For the sake of the professional industry, and the Arts that our state allegedly believes they support at the professional level, then support for the Arts in schools MUST matter in order for the business to be there, to enrich our communities with the art of creatives.

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Cheers,

Brandon Lahoud
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Lincoln High School VHS Site Coordinator/Teacher
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"I am in the present. I cannot know what tomorrow will bring forth. I can only know what the truth is for me today. That is what I am called upon to serve, and I serve it in all lucidity." - Igor Stravinsky