

Lisa Cataldi

From: Mike Feroce <mferoce@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2024 1:13 PM
To: House Education Committee
Cc: Sen_Raptakis; michael.feroce@cumberlandschools.org
Subject: SUPPORT H-7020

My Name is Michael Feroce. I live, and teach music in Cumberland, at Cumberland 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 RI need this bill to raise the status of 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 seeing more and more challenges that are beginning to unintentionally undermine some of the progress we've made, and exacerbate the inequities that continue to exist from district to district. These challenges include:

- a. 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.
- b. The continued lack of significant, if any, arts courses at many vocational schools in our state.
- c. 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 makes 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 Bennet, but it is already in danger of being eliminated, further marginalizing the Arts as 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 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 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.

Thank you,

Michael Feroce