

Lisa Cataldi

From: SUSAN ROOT <smrgraphics@verizon.net>
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2024 7:34 PM
To: House Education Committee
Subject: Please Approve moving H-7020 to the House.

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Susan Root and I am a Visual Arts Educator in Warwick, RI at Pilgrim High School. I am asking that you approve moving H-7020, **The Transparency in the Arts Education and Proficiency Act** to the full house and also recommend its passage.

I graduated from RI College with a degree in fine arts and began my career as a graphic designer before becoming an arts educator after 20 years in the field. The arts are very much alive in RI and many arts-related small businesses contribute to the tax revenue of RI. As an educator, I was shocked and saddened at how the importance of the arts has been diminished over the years even since I became an arts educator in 2005.

RI needs this bill to raise the status of Arts Education as a required curricular academic subject for a well-rounded education, and to ensure districts are truly working towards The Arts Proficiency mandates of the BEP and recently updated HS Graduation Requirements. As an arts educator in Warwick, I feel like the arts have been pushed aside and it is to our students' detriment. We live in a world where music and visual arts are everywhere we look, and yet, we are taking their ability to produce it away in RI.

From the Bureau of Economic Analysis: Arts and cultural economic activity accounted for **4.4 percent** of gross domestic product (GDP), or \$1.02 trillion, in 2021. That is an important amount!

The expansion of CTE programs in many high schools has limited the ability for students to take Arts courses, even if they have a passion for art and though they need to become proficient, according to the **Basic Education Plan** arts requirements.

More importantly, the expanded credit requirements for all students in Math, World Language, and other traditional academics in the updated graduation regulations is really making it hard for even students who intend on going to arts school to find room in their schedules for enough art to create a portfolio that will compete with students from other states.

In Warwick, we have experienced severe budget cuts post-Covid in the arts. We need to remember the Arts proficiency mandates are for all students, and the need to maintain access and improve equity is imperative.

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.

I think it is extremely important that the Arts Data be added to the School Report Card to make it 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.

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.

PLEASE support the arts in Rhode Island by passing this bill. Without it, RI may not maintain its cultural identity as the Creative Capital!

Sincerely,

Susan M. Root