

Lisa Cataldi

From: Silveira, Toni <toni_silveira@nksd.net>
Sent: Tuesday, January 23, 2024 3:26 PM
To: House Education Committee
Cc: Karen Anghinetti; dneves@rimea.org
Subject: H-7020 — Transparency in Arts Education Access & Proficiency Act

Good Morning,

My name is Toni-Annette Silveira and I am a music teacher in the North Kingstown School District. I am writing to you in support of House Bill H-7020 - Transparency in Arts Education Access & Proficiency Act.

I have been an RI music teacher since 1996 and have been the North Kingstown Band Director since 1998. As I complete my 27th year of teaching music, I am heartbroken at the decline of participation in my music program. The Performing Arts were hit hard during Covid 19 and the shutting down of elementary and middle school performance groups has resulted in a continuous decline at the high school and collegiate level. Although those years have passed, the decline in Arts Education has yet to pass too.

Covid also exposed the reality that the Arts are not a priority in Rhode Island education. Most high schools only require one Arts class in four years. At the middle school level, students may not have an Arts class at all depending on their schedule and that has unfortunately become acceptable. The math, finance, and language requirements that were recently passed have already resulted in students dropping the Arts classes due to overloaded schedules. There is a constant push for careers in the STEM field and there is little support for students who would like to take a different path. We have lost our vision of a well-rounded student. No matter the career our students choose, an Arts education will enhance their skills to be successful in their future pursuits.

In RI's CTE Programs, the Art & Music CTEs are designated by the Governor's Work Force Board as a non-priority and the financial support to these programs is inequitable. RIDE has labeled the careers of Acting and Directing in Theater, Arts Educators, Craft and Fine Artists, Dancers and Choreographers, Musicians, Media Communications, Arts & Multimedia Artists as a non-priority. This is from a state that depends on patrons and tourist revenue from PPAC, Waterfire, Mansions and Museums, Arts Festivals, and concerts of Folk, Jazz, and Roots music. These are admirable careers and RIDE must realize these are performance skills we introduce and build upon in our schools. When the state education board identifies such career tracks as less important, it has an impact on school programs and in our communities. We know this and this bill will help identify and correct the inequities throughout the state.

I would like to close my letter with a simple yet profound point recently made by musician/actor/writer Steven Van Zandt on 60 Minutes as he discussed the music curriculum he helped develop.

"People don't understand we're the only country in the world that thinks art is a luxury. Everyone else in the world understands it is an essential part of the quality of life."

Please support House Bill H-7020 and stop the decline of Arts Education in Rhode Island.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni-Annette Silveira

--

Toni-Annette Silveira
Band Director

Fine Arts Department Chair
North Kingstown High School
150 Fairway Drive
North Kingstown, Rhode Island 02852
401.268.6275
toni_silveira@nksd.net