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**To: Representative Robert Cupp, Chair, Joint Education Oversight Committee
Members of the Joint Education Oversight Committee (JEOC)**

RE: Statement on Ohio's Consolidated Plan for *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA)

Chairman Cupp, members of the JEOC Committee, I appreciate this opportunity to share with you some feedback and specific recommendations regarding Ohio's draft Consolidated Plan for implementing the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA).

My name is Tim Katz, and I'm the executive director of the Ohio Alliance for Arts Education. We are a statewide service organization with a mission to ensure that the arts are an integral part of the education of every child. Founded in 1974, our 8,000+ members include individuals, arts educators, artists, arts and cultural organizations, and the major arts education organizations in Ohio, including OhioDance, the Ohio Music Education Association, the Ohio Educational Theater Association, the Ohio Art Education Association, Ohio Citizens for the Arts, VSA Ohio, and more.

The OAAE believes that there are many opportunities for Ohio's ESSA Plan to directly support arts education programs, and overall, we had hoped that there would be considerably more emphasis in the consolidated plan about ESSA's support for a well-rounded education, which includes the arts.

Based on findings of my organization and its membership, and on the findings of a statewide arts education advisory committee we began convening in 2016, last week my organization submitted specific recommendations for changes to the Consolidated State Plan to this committee in the form of written testimony dated February 26, 2017. Today I'd like to emphasize a few of the more important points in that submitted testimony, and to comment on points made at last week's JEOC forum on this topic.

The first point to emphasize is that the plan should show Leadership and Support for a Well-Rounded Education.

The Ohio Department of Education should indicate throughout Ohio's Consolidated ESSA Plan that it is taking a leadership role to encourage local education agencies (LEAs) to use federal funds to support student access to and achievement of a well-rounded education. This includes encouraging LEAs through guidance, technical assistance, and professional development.

Next, the plan should commit Ohio to reporting Data to Verify a Well-Rounded Education.

According to the consolidated plan Ohio will ensure that students have access to a well-rounded education through implementation of *Ohio's Learning Standards* and model curriculum. Ohio has worked hard to create and periodically revise and update comprehensive learning standards. But the mere existence of learning standards has no value whatsoever in the absence of solid data regarding students' opportunities to learn in alignment with those learning standards. Student access to standards-based learning opportunities is what matters most. The learning standards have no use when just sitting on the shelf. There should be a commitment made in the state plan to report on actuals, i.e., student access to learning in the subject areas that make up a well-rounded education.

To document this, Ohio's Consolidated ESSA plan should state that data about student enrollment in all courses, including integrated courses, aligned to Ohio's Learning Standards at each grade level for each school, each school district, and for the State, will be published annually. This data is already being collected via EMIS. The point here is that it should be reported.

We also believe the state plan should identify a different Measure of School Quality and Student Success.

Rather than chronic absenteeism, Ohio's consolidated ESSA plan should include a data-based measure called "The Educators in Your District" (comparable to the professional educators currently categorized as "educational service personnel") as an indicator of School Quality and Student Success on the Report Card and in Ohio's accountability system for schools. Chronic absenteeism is a measure of poverty; it is not a measure of school quality.

“The Educators in Your District” measure we propose would recognize school districts and schools that are supporting a well-rounded education, and are meeting the diverse needs of students through engagement with arts and music teachers, physical education teachers, school librarians, school nurses, school social workers, school counselors, and teachers of gifted students. These all contribute to increased student, educator, parent, and community engagement in the schools, and directly support a positive school environment and student success. Again, the data required for this is already being collected via EMIS.

This past Tuesday, March 7th, Education Week published an article titled, “States Introduce New Measure of Accountability: Arts Education.”

The article pointed out that, “New Jersey was the first state to include arts in its accountability system. The state added student enrollment in arts classes as a measure on school report cards in 2014,” and that “Connecticut also includes arts access as part of its “Next Generation Accountability System” for schools.”

According to the article, “In Colorado, the idea has been proposed in the state's legislature via a bill called “Rewarding Access to Arts Education in Public Schools” that recently passed in a Senate committee. In Arizona, the state's board is considering including arts in a new grading system for schools,” and “Delaware, Michigan, and Massachusetts have included the arts in drafts of their state plans for implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act.”

I offer this committee and ODE the assistance of the Ohio Alliance for Arts Education to examine what these states are doing and identify the best elements to incorporate into Ohio’s consolidated plan.

In our formal Recommendations document shared with this Committee last week, OAAE made several other specific suggestions for the state plan, including:

- A request to add other options for students to prove college and career readiness, including work portfolios and auditions.
- A suggestion that the school climate survey should include measuring the effects of arts education programs on school climate.
- The suggestion that language be added to say that the Ohio Clearinghouse will include evidence-based strategies and best practices in all content areas to support a well-rounded education.

- The suggestion that the state plan commits ODE to provide guidance to LEAs on the use of district federal title dollars for early childhood through the early grades to support student access to and achievement of a well-rounded education.
- And a request that the omission of Ohio’s graduation requirement in the fine arts (one credit in the arts between grades 7-12 is currently required) in College and Career Ready Standards Graduation Requirements section of the plan be remedied.

In last week’s JEOC forum on the Consolidated State Plan for ESSA, Senator Hite asked the question, I believe to some degree rhetorically, *“How can we create a sound education plan that is apolitical, something that can last, and allow educators to apply their expertise, something that focuses on students and education?”* This is exactly the right question. It is a common sense question and begs a common sense answer, and the answer is embedded in the question itself.

The answer is, by allowing educators to apply their expertise, and by focusing on students and education. By focusing on student needs and opportunities to learn, and by supporting teachers. The answer is by focusing – and allowing teachers to focus - on teaching and student learning.

Ohio’s legislators should let ODE know that they will join ODE in respecting and responding to stakeholder input, especially the input of professional educators, school administrators, and parents. Yes, Ohio engaged many stakeholders in conversation, but so far Ohio’s Consolidated State Plan is not reflective of the changes requested by those stakeholders. Instead we’ve been told that the state plan is “not the end of conversation” about what should be done. But why allow this broad and deep dissatisfaction to continue? Why not take this opportunity for true engagement and the raising of morale across the entire state when it comes to education? Surely common ground can be found here that would offer all sides a sense of constructive change in the spirit intended by the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Last week committee members spoke of the importance of achieving buy-in for the state plan. If you want the buy-in of the professional educators who spend their days face-to-face with Ohio’s K-12 student population, then allow yourselves to follow their lead. Support them in word and action.



If you want the buy-in of parents and education stakeholders across the state, then stand behind the common sense changes asked for. Emphasize assessment designed to improve teaching and student learning rather than state-mandated testing. Insist that a well-rounded education is emphasized much more clearly in the Consolidated State Plan. Support well-informed local decision making by including timely sharing of comprehensive data regarding actual student access to a well-rounded education as part of the state plan.

Please don't let this opportunity go by on the vague promise of future conversation. That is not good enough. Common sense tells us all, that won't serve Ohio's students well enough.

Thank you very much.

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