

Testimony: Kansas Arts Commission Chairman Linda Browning Weis

HOUSE EDUCATION BUDGET COMMITTEE

March 8, 2012

House Bill 2766

Good Morning, Madame Chairman and Members of the House Education Budget Committee:

I am Linda Browning Weis, Chairman of the Kansas Arts Commission. I am here today to speak with you about a united future for Kansas arts and to convey the support of the Kansas Arts Commission for the passage of SB 440 and HB 2766.

In charting a path forward, these two bills establish the Creative Arts Industries Commission under the Kansas Department of Commerce. We believe this step will provide a solid platform for the meaningful support of existing arts and cultural programs in Kansas. At the same time, we believe it will stimulate the potential of the Kansas Film Commission's job creation and economic development strategies.

The cooperative effort made in designing this unification is tangible evidence of both a devotion to Kansas arts and a joint commitment to working together to foster the economic potential of arts and cultural endeavors. The Kansas Arts Commission wholeheartedly endorses the passage of HB 2766 and SB 440.

In any endeavor for improvement, and true of all mergers, the consolidation of two similar but unique missions presents practical challenges that the newly created Creative Arts Industries Commission will be required to address. In an effort to support an immediately successful merger of the art and film commission missions, the Kansas Arts Commission believes that setting out the some practical concerns will help alert all those involved in this effort and will be useful in the days following passage. In the end we are all devoted to the enrichment of Kansas communities through art and the effort of the film commission to stimulate economic development through the film industry.

Among some immediate concerns that will need to be addressed by the newly established Commission will be the following:

1. Assuring the continuation of Kansas Arts Commission programs such as the Governor's Arts Award to which the current Arts Commission has committed significant effort and resources.
2. Assuring that commitments made by the Kansas Arts Commission to local arts organizations and civic groups participating in the State of the Arts Kansas License Plate Program are kept. It is critically important that the pledge is honored to return 50% of the initial donation to the local organization as well as the promise to use the proceeds for Kansas arts grants and arts programs.

3. Assurance that the Department of Commerce understand the important significance of appointing a Creative Arts Industries Commission executive director with the necessary relevant experience and skills to manage broad-based arts programs, who can successfully interface with other experienced arts program managers at the local, state, regional and federal level.
4. Assurance of the preservation of Kansas Arts Commission valuable property that includes artwork and a supplies and equipment specific to Arts organizations and administration. Sitting Kansas Arts Commissioners have invested a great deal of volunteer time and energy in the relocation and reorganization of these assets during the past year.

By designating the Creative Arts Industries Commission as the state's official arts agency, the new legislation preserves the ability of the consolidated commission to seek participation in federal and regional grant programs such as the National Endowment for the Arts State Partnership Agreement program, providing matching funds to state arts agencies. This has been a potent issue during the past year and the new legislation will afford an opportunity for Kansas to continue to explore this avenue of public financial support for the arts.

The Kansas Arts Commission hopes that this candid presentation regarding the operation of the newly established Creative Arts Commission will be a platform for harmony among the various Kansas arts communities. We are hopeful that this action will stimulate a new era of cooperation among all Kansans who value the contribution which art and film can contribute to the fabric of Kansas culture, while forging innovations in economic development.

The Kansas Arts Commission has voted overwhelming to support House Bill 2766 and Senate Bill 440. In so doing, we are confident that the Department of Commerce will do all possible to ensure that the newly-formed Creative Arts Industries Commission will honor, support, and encourage a balance of art forms that will be committed to the many wonderful statewide arts-related activities and events that give life, color and a sense of community to all Kansans.

Ad astra per aspera!

Thank you.