

Good afternoon and thank you members of the Joint Finance Committee and Controller General's Office for your time, and allowing us to speak here today. I am here in support of increased funding of \$1 million for DDOA needs.

My name is Kiara Florez. I'm a Kent County established artist, currently showcasing across the Eastern Shore. I've lived in Delaware for 8 years and began my professional art career since then. I currently work at the Biggs Museum in Dover as the Development Associate.

DDOA welcomed me into the arts scene when I received the DDOA Fellowship award in 2022. These funds provided long lasting opportunities such as networking with creative individuals and organizations, strengthening professional development, and, above all, allowing each and every talented artisan a chance to share their story. I've personally seen my art career flourish through this fellowship and always inform this opportunity to fellow artists. Seeing and hearing the stories from new fellows year after year has made an immense impact in this state and beyond. Delaware artisans need to be heard and recognized.

As for the Biggs Museum, state funding continues our substantial efforts in strengthening our education and programming resources, collections and exhibitions, and general operating needs. We are undergoing a reinstallation phase in the galleries and designing exciting new programs and programming spaces. Without these funds we wouldn't be able to expand our galleries, programs, and historic and contemporary collections into an immersive experience for the community. Advocating for the arts in Delaware is a goal that is sought out by both artistic organizations and individuals respectively.

Thank you again for allowing me to speak on this platform and hope that you carry out the mission of art advocacy in Delaware through increased funding for the arts. If you wish to connect with myself and/or The Biggs, please don't hesitate to reach out as the museum is right around the corner on Dover's historic Green. Thank you so much!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kiara Florez".

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