

Good afternoon, members of the Joint Finance Committee. My name is Leah Beach, and I'm an artist and the proud founder of the (DAC) - Developing Artist Collaboration and I'm here to advocate for increased funding for the DDOA. DAC was founded in 2017 as a grassroots organization dedicated to supporting emerging and hobby level artists. In the early years, I drew from my own challenging experiences as a mural artist at the Delaware beaches to teach other artists to build sustainable careers.

DAC's model is truly one of a kind. Our mission to transform communities by elevating artists has evolved from a startup from scratch to a thriving organization operating over half a million dollars serving over 1,000 artists through our workforce development initiatives.

DAC's primary focus is workforce development for artists of all mediums and abilities. We offer accessible programs in business, marketing, and mindset, all designed to dismantle the "starving artist" mentality. At DAC, we believe in supporting creatives of all backgrounds and goals—whether it's learning how to scale an art business, or reaching creative goals alongside a career outside of their creative practice.

Since our founding, we've generated \$2.2 million of revenue for Delaware's economy, subcontracted 88 Delawareans through our programming, employed 36, and created over 230 community events, resulting in \$1.5 million in artist sales. Our programming has reached over 250,000 community members and tourists, all stemming from one artist's vision.

Over the years, the support from the Delaware Division of the Arts has been crucial to our success. In fact, of the \$2.2 million we've generated, roughly 12 % has come from DDOA's grant support. As we strive to scale our workforce development programs statewide, this funding is essential. If we were to lose DDOA funding, that would eliminate over \$100,000 of anticipated grant funding of our planned \$750,000 budget, not to mention the instrumental relationships and mentorship this division supports us with.

I'm here today to request your support in increasing DDOA's funding. DDOA directly supports organizations like DAC and Artists like me. Although I had no formal business or nonprofit management training, DAC's growth has been incredible considering our limited resources since inception.

DAC has always done a lot with a little—imagine what we, and other incredible Arts leaders statewide, could accomplish with enough.

Thank you for your time and consideration.