



Arts Council
OF GREATER GRAND RAPIDS

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March 20, 2009

The Honorable Jennifer M. Granholm
Governor
State Capitol Building
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Governor Granholm:

As the leadership of the Grand Rapids arts organizations that receive state funds, we are concerned about the recommended \$6.1 million cut to the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs (MCACA) budget. In fiscal year 2009, MCACA invested almost \$800,000 in our organizations. In turn, our organizations' activities resulted in \$89,295,851 in total expenditures. We believe this is a significant return on a valuable investment from the state of Michigan.

We understand that yesterday the Senate Subcommittee on HAL introduced Senate Bill 247 that recommends appropriating almost \$4 million for MCACA. This is good news. Of course, we continue to hope that in addition to approving the Senate Bill that you will retain arts and culture funding at its fiscal year 2009 level.

MCACA funds help arts organizations of all sizes leverage support from the private sector. We understand that the state of Michigan is in a dire situation, that the economy is down, unemployment is high, and that the deficit is ballooning and that you have to make difficult decisions about what to cut. However, we ask you to recognize how critical our institutions are to drawing talent and tourists to West Michigan.

Our arts organizations are located primarily in downtown Grand Rapids, an area that City leaders, business leaders, and area nonprofits continue to invest in, invigorate, and revive. For every play at Civic Theatre, exhibition opening at the Grand Rapids Art Museum, performance at St. Cecilia Music Center, or event at Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, area residents and visitors purchase tickets and spend additional funds taking taxis, parking, eating, and shopping. The arts spark ancillary spending and the ripple effect on the economy cannot be underestimated. At a time when we all face extraordinarily challenging economic conditions, please support us in our efforts to maintain programming and, by extension, a healthy and vibrant West Michigan community.

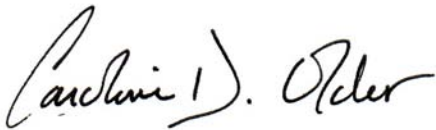
Over the past 10-15 years, the City has diversified its economic base to include, for example, a burgeoning medical industry. In order to attract leading doctors and scientists and their families, Grand Rapids must continue to provide a quality of life

that includes access to the arts – large and small. While they may appreciate art at the Urban Institute for Contemporary Art or music at the Grand Rapids Symphony, a resident may also want to participate in the Rivertown Artists' Guild or the Grand Rapids Symphonic Band. Together our organizations and our arts partners make up the cultural fabric of the City. It is the smaller arts organizations, however, that may not survive the proposed arts and culture cuts.

Finally, we understand that if Senate Bill 247 is not approved and the budget for MCACA is eliminated then the State of Michigan will lose its National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) matching grant. As the NEA received an additional \$50 million from the stimulus bill, we would hope to be able to access these funds in a year when they are needed most.

As Michigan's fiscal year 2010 budget is being reviewed and as federal stimulus money begins to flow into the state, we urge you to rescind your proposed arts and culture budget cuts. By eliminating \$6.1 million of MCACA's budget, you will reduce Michigan's deficit by .5%. We hope that this minimal savings is not worth the state's disinvestments in the arts and the cultural economy of the state.

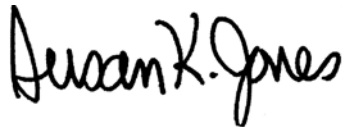
Sincerely,



Caroline D. Older
Executive Director
Arts Council of Greater Grand Rapids



David S. Hooker
President and CEO
Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park



Susan K. Jones
Board President
Arts Council of Greater Grand Rapids



Mary Ellen Rodgers
Chairperson of the Board of Directors
Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park



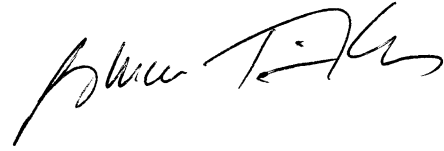
Lynne Brown-Tepper
Interim Managing Director
Community Circle Theatre



Monique Salinas, PhD.
Executive Director
Girls Choral Academy



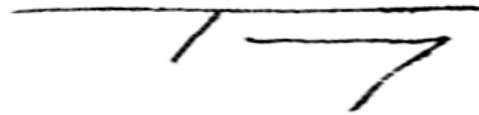
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Director
Grand Rapids Art Museum



Bruce Tinker
Executive and Artistic Director
Grand Rapids Civic Theatre



Scott Wierda
President, Board of Trustees
Grand Rapids Art Museum



Tommy Allen
Patron
Grand Rapids Civic Theatre



Laura Schwenk-Berman
Associate Artistic Director and
Director of the School
Grand Rapids Ballet Company



Peter T. Kjome
President and CEO
Grand Rapids Symphony



Gordon Peirce Schmidt
Artistic Director and Choreographer
Grand Rapids Ballet Company



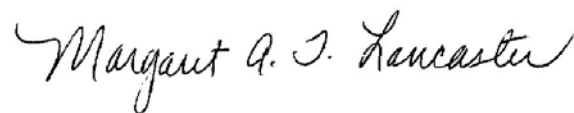
James Preston
Chairperson, Board of Directors
Grand Rapids Symphony



Jack Woller
Intern Executive Director
Grand Rapids Children's Museum



Marjorie Kuipers
Executive Director
Grandville Avenue Arts & Humanities



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Gary Walker
President, Board of Directors
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North American Choral Company



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Executive Director
Opera Grand Rapids



William Fehsenfeld
President, Board of Directors
Opera Grand Rapids



Dale A. Robertson
President and CEO
Public Museum of West Michigan



Catherine Holbrook
Executive Director
St. Cecilia Music Center



Jeffrey Meeuwsen
Executive Director
Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts



Michele Suchovsky
Executive Director
VSA arts of Michigan, Grand Rapids