

Written Testimony of  
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before the  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

on  
Fiscal Year 2019 Funding of the National Endowment for the Arts

My name is Neil Portnow, I am the President/CEO of the Recording Academy, an organization that represents 23,000 individual music creators and professionals—songwriters, performers, studio professionals, and others creatively involved in making music. I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony to the House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies and I commend the subcommittee’s efforts this week to fund the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) at \$155 million in its Fiscal Year 2019 spending bill—a level of funding supported by the Recording Academy.

As appropriators you are tasked with difficult decisions, but it is important to remember why we must continue to support the arts. American culture is our identity. Music and art make our nation strong and prosperous. It gives value to us as a nation beyond defined borders, ensuring that America continues to be, to borrow a phrase from American literature and invoked by President Reagan, the “shining city on a hill.”

For less than \$1 per American per year, funding the NEA is truly one of the most financially-sound investments our country makes. In 2016, NEA funds yielded more than \$500 million in matching support—leveraging outside funds at a ratio of 9:1. The agency is at the center of our creative economy—a \$700 billion industry that accounts for a larger share of our GDP than the American construction or transportation sectors. And with a \$26 billion trade surplus, the American arts industry serves as a powerful ambassador abroad; it teaches our shared values and history in compelling ways, and it connects us as a people and as a world.

When it comes to music, the NEA has been invaluable to the development of music creators across the country, while helping preserve America’s rich music culture. The agency has provided more than \$400 million in funding to domestic music programs and is an essential part of American music culture; it must be funded to ensure that Americans in all congressional districts can continue to enjoy and participate in our rich musical and cultural heritage.

By funding the NEA at \$155 million for FY19, you and your colleagues in Congress will protect and renew America's commitment to the arts and to music. It's our collective responsibility to preserve what binds us and to ensure that the whole world continues to benefit from one of our most unique and economically and spiritually important assets — and exports: American music.

It is an investment worth making.