

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

on
Fiscal Year 2020 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 thousands of 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 Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. For Fiscal Year 2020, I urge the subcommittee to fund the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) at \$167.5 million. For Fiscal Year 2020, I urge the subcommittee to concur with the recently marked-up House Appropriations bill and fund the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) at \$167.5 million.

Throughout my tenure at the Recording Academy, it has been a privilege to support the NEA and its mission to provide all Americans with access to the arts. Every day the NEA enriches our culture and empowers our communities through music and art. As appropriators you have the power to ensure that the NEA can continue to strengthen the creative capacity of our towns, counties and cities—all for less than \$1 per American per year.

At a funding level of \$167.5 million, the NEA will be able to spread diverse opportunities for arts participation across all 50 states, while expanding its grant-making capacity that has proven to be a sound investment. In 2016, NEA funds yielded more than \$500 million in matching support—leveraging outside funds at a ratio of 9:1. The agency is a lynchpin in America’s arts economy that now accounts for more than \$700 billion in economic activity.

When it comes to music, the NEA is responsible for preserving America’s rich musical legacy and remains invaluable in the development and education of our future music creators. Over the last decade, the NEA has supported more than \$53 million in music related grants across all 50 states. From the Sitka Summer Music Festival in Alaska (\$15,000, 2018) to the Tallahassee Youth Orchestra (\$10,000, 2017) in Florida; and from the Outpost Performance Space in New Mexico (\$25,000, 2018) to the Yellow Barn (\$10,000, 2018) in Vermont, the NEA has brought music to your back yard. It must be funded to ensure that Americans in all walks of life can continue to enjoy and participate in the American musical experience.

I urge the subcommittee, and your colleagues in the Senate, to fully fund the NEA at \$167.5 million, so that the agency can execute its mission and enshrine America’s commitment to the arts and to music.