



NEWS FROM ASSEMBLYMEMBER SAM HOYT 144th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Date: Tuesday, October 5, 2010
Contact: Sam Hoyt 885-9630
samhoyt@samhoyt.com

Hoyt Calls on NYS Council on the Arts to Restore Funding to Buffalo Schools Arts Programs

Erie County suffered a 69% cut in funding while New York City received 100% of last year's allocation

Buffalo, NY (10/4/10)—Assemblymember Sam Hoyt in a letter to the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) is demanding a restoration of funding to five Buffalo Arts in Education programs that were entirely defunded in this year's grants cycle. That decision has impacted 6,000 students and hundreds of classroom teachers. The five programs are: Musicians United for Superior Education (MUSE), Folkloric Productions Dance, Hallwalls, the Institute for Arts in Education in WNY and Young Audiences of WNY.

Hoyt's letter identified two areas of concern. The first was the disparity in funding levels between New York City and Buffalo and the second was the process employed to allocate those funds.

An analysis of grant awards for the 2010-2011 grants cycle, published on NYSCA's website, showed that New York City Arts Education received \$1,575,400 in 2010, which is nearly a 100% match of its 2009 funding of \$1,576,815. As compared to Erie County funding levels, which in 2010 were \$98,000 and represent a 69% cut from its 2009 funding of \$317,000.

While NYSCA experienced a cut of 16% to its overall funding, it seems that certain regions, like Western New York, experienced more drastic cuts in order to preserve funding for New York City. "While I understand that with the state in fiscal crisis, every program is going to have make some sort of sacrifice, what I fail to understand and will continue to question is why New York City's Arts in Education program was cut by less than 1%," said Hoyt.

One factor that contributed to the unequal distribution of funding were flaws in a new evaluation process that NYSCA adopted for this year's grant cycle. The process eliminated staff reviewers, who were familiar with the entire state's scope of programming, and instead turned it over to a panel selected by the Council. While New York City had nine representatives on the panel, the City of Buffalo had none. Familiarity with a program, and its record of success, are often fundamental to securing competitive grant funds.

Lucinda Ingalls, Executive Director of MUSE, said, "Having been a NYSCA award recipient for more than a decade, I am surprised at the incredible discrepancies in this year's allocation review. What had been a thoughtful, thorough and representative set of criteria was replaced by an arbitrary and subjective process that resulted in a favoring of those organizations known by the panelists. These are public dollars meant to benefit the whole state, not disproportionately New York City. Our Buffalo kids deserve parity."

"We value the work our cultural partners bring to the students of the Buffalo Public Schools," said Superintendent James A. Williams. "For urban students, the arts and humanities become important to the development of the total child. We need NYSCA funding now more than ever."

Hoyt concluded, "That inherent problem with the process has led me to call on NYSCA and Governor Paterson to do what is right and restore the funding back to Buffalo's programs. Buffalo's children not only deserve the programs, but need them and I have a duty to see that the funding is distributed fairly, so that no child is left behind because of a broken system."

###