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HONOLULU, HAWAII

From: BeckyAloha@aol.com
Sent: Friday, April 10, 2009 6:09 AM
To:
Cc:
Subject: Council Meeting Testimony - RESTORE MOCA'S PROPOSED BUDGET CUTS

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Aloha Honorable Nester Garcia, Chair Todd Apo, and Members of the Budget Committee and Council,

I am writing in hopes that you will consider restoring the proposed line item cut of \$172,500 to the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts (MOCA) 2009-2010 Budget. This is a 50% cut to MOCA's programs! These cuts will either eliminate or drastically reduce funding and support to all Cultural and Arts organizations supported by MOCA which would be devastating.

I realize that during these difficult economic times you need to look at reductions to so many programs, and I can appreciate the difficult task you have of balancing the budget with the deficit that you are facing largely due to the overall economy and not through a mis-management of funds. I work for the State and too look at shouldering a chunk of the State's deficit through a salary cut, furlough and drastic reductions in benefits. So I truly appreciate the difficult task before you. However the Hannemann administration and I believe that we need to maintain cultural and arts programs in order to maintain economic and cultural vitality as well as to produce culturally literate keiki with a balanced educational experience.

So often when there are budget cuts especially for schools, they occur in the arts and physical education. We have seen the devastating effects this has had on our keiki over the years. With culture and the arts cut from the educational system together with cuts from the community, I believe that our keiki will be less competitive academically, and possibly grow up to be more aggressive, overweight, unhealthy and perhaps even unstable.

Music has its foundations in mathematics providing foundations in fractions, problem solving, rhythm and patterns. It stimulates creativity and can have a strong impact on moods and the physical well being of people. So strong are the ties to music that much research has been done and money invested on exposing babies even while still in the womb and through infancy to classical music - touting that it will increase their intelligence. Music can have a calming, soothing effect and has been used to alter the moods of people with violent behavior and the mentally ill.

Dance too has its foundations in music and encourages free expression that ultimately comes from deep within one's soul, piko. Dance and music help put people in touch with a higher spirituality. It also provides much needed physical activity and discipline and sparks creativity and the imagination.

Likewise with drawing, painting, sculpting and other forms of fine arts. A foundation in these can directly be applied to the education and advancement in such careers as engineering and architecture, interior design, dentistry and medicine and so many others. So many studies have been done on the impact of color on peoples moods that it is an extremely important decision when designing hospitals, classrooms, eating establishments, even prisons.

Thank you for deferring Bill 35 and preventing it from moving forward and for not eliminating the 1% appropriation of funds from the construction of new public buildings to culture and the arts. However, now that the funding source will be there, we ask that it be used for what it was intended,

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funding public programs in culture and the arts and not be diverted away. That would be deceptive and dishonest.

I live in Kailua and my twin 5 year old daughters attend Kailua Elementary School. Because it is a Title 1 school, we have a fabulous artist that comes in and provides individualized art instruction with the kindergarteners. The artwork that the 5 and 6 year olds produce at Kailua Elementary School is well advanced for their age - and frankly good enough to be framed and in art galleries and museums! The entire class produces beautiful chalk pastels of still life and animals that most adults can't produce. They are taught to "see," compose and render in a sophisticated way, decades beyond their young years! It is truly amazing the work that they produce.

Also at their elementary school, they had a fabulous music program called, "Music with Mr. Wall." Though the keiki thought they were simply having fun with music and movement, dance, the parents were given a demonstration and introduction to the theory behind his teaching. He explained the sophisticated and advanced rhythms and patterns as well as musical programming that he was introducing and instilling in our keiki. I as duly impressed! But I was sad to learn that their grant that supported his education of our keiki had ended and future funding been cut. What a devastating loss! Many of these keiki do not have the means otherwise for such an enriching exposure to music and dance.

Though our means are meager, I feel that culture and arts education is so important that I supplement our twins' public school education with public and private, extra curricular culture, music, dance and arts instruction and exposure, many of which are supported by the Mayors' Office of Culture and the Arts. The Hawaii Youth Opera Chorus (of which my girls are members), receives a small but greatly appreciated and well used grant from MOCA for operations support and toward the support of their OPERAtunities which helps to expose and educate the young ones to opera. The choral music and beautiful harmonies that these young voices produce is truly amazing and world renowned!

We have participated in programs for keiki at the Honolulu Symphony, Art at the Mark, Honolulu Theater for Youth, and have memberships to the Academy of Arts (we enjoy participating in their Sunday programs), The Contemporary Museum and Bishop Museum.

These and many reasons are why I strongly believe in the importance of music, culture and the arts education. I urge you to please not make such a drastic cut to the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts (MOCA) 2009-2010 budget.

Thank you for reading my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Becky Hayashida Choi
(808) 261-5851 (home)
(808) 282-4225 (cell)

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