

The arts give hope to communities
Letter to the editor, Columbus Dispatch
June 27, 2009

The Columbus Dispatch editorial on June 23 “Don’t Make it Worse” makes an excellent case for our leaders to reconsider the ramifications of trying to primarily solve the state budget deficit through drastic cuts to agencies and services. Many of these cuts, like those to the Ohio Arts Council, will only further diminish the prospect of the state’s economic recovery by making Ohio an even less desirable place to live.

We all understand the state is facing an unprecedented financial crisis and that basic services need to be preserved. However, Ohio’s young graduates are fleeing their home communities, businesses are choosing not to relocate or remain in the region, and there is an increasing feeling of hopelessness among Ohio citizens. But arts organizations such as BalletMet, Columbus Museum of Art, Phoenix Theatre Circle and Jazz Arts Group, just to name a few, provide us with a reason to stay, a reason to believe that we are not one of the fastest dying states in the nation.

These organizations rely on funding from the Ohio Arts Council for their basic operating expenses and in return our communities reap rich rewards—including the development of creativity and imagination in our children, and economic development and revitalization in our cities.

The budget cuts proposed to the Ohio Arts Council budget will, in many communities, effectively kill off not just the arts but also the last remaining hope we have for a chance at revitalization. When our performing arts centers go dark and restaurants and others businesses who depend on the arts community shut down, perhaps our legislators will rethink their decision. But by then it may well be too late.

I urge readers to contact their legislators and ask them to maintain the Ohio Arts Council budget at the Executive Recommendation of February 2009, which was still a 25 percent decrease from the 2008-2009 budget allocation. The support of the Ohio Arts Council to our communities is absolutely critical in times like this. Now, more than ever people need the arts to give their lives perspective, meaning, and most importantly, hope for a better future.