

**Testimony to the House Committee on Education Budget by Megan Keller
March 8, 2012**

Thank you for hearing my testimony in support of H.B. 2766 today. My name is Megan Keller and I am a freshman at Wichita Northwest High School. I am on the school dance team, a member of the drama department, a straight A honor student, and a member of the ladies ensemble, Bella Azul. I was also named Miss Wichita's Outstanding Teen.

The arts have greatly impacted the local economy of Wichita, Kansas. Wichita has a population of 354,865 as of 2005. Nonprofit arts generated over \$49.1 million in local economic activity. \$27.5 million was generated by nonprofit arts organizations and \$4.76 million was generated in event and event-related spending by audiences.. The nonprofit arts support 814 full-time jobs, generating more than \$20.3 million in household income to locals, delivering \$2.3 million in local and state government revenues. Many other cities have also been impacted across the state of Kansas and across the country.

Citizens are more likely to live and raise their children in a place that offers arts. It makes kids proud to be born and raised in a community that has been known for the arts. In Wichita, artistic tourist attractions are everywhere--art museums, theaters, galleries. People with dreams of being the star in a movie or singing and dancing on Broadway, typically follow their dreams to places like New York or California. Kansas could be one of those places where big dreamers look forward to living out their dream one day.

I am proud to be a Kansan and I am proud to say I've been in musicals and choirs that are produced, directed, and performed by Kansans. It makes me feel unique and special. Teens in my school live for the opportunity to express themselves through arts. Every day I see kids singing or playing instruments. They are proud to be making something special. When I'm watching a TV show like The Voice or American Idol, and I hear that a person on that show is from Kansas, I get a feeling of joy and loyalty to my state. If you are interested in how the arts impacts the economy—one of the biggest impacts on a community's economy is getting individuals who graduate from there to stay there, grow a career there, have a family there. A key to that is having arts opportunities for all ages. Therefore, I believe that the arts need to be funded by the government and supported throughout Kansas.

Thank you for hearing what I have to say, and I will stand for questions.