August 10, 1994

The Honorable Claiborne Pell
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Pell:

As a member of the American Arts Alliance and on behalf of the 1,300 performing arts presenting organizations, artists and artists' managers across the nation, I am writing to thank you for your leadership in the inclusion of the Cultural Partnerships for At-Risk Children and Youth program in the Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act (ESEA, S. 1513). While I am pleased with the inclusion of this program, I am concerned about the trigger mechanism which would defund the initiative unless the NEA, NEH and IMS receive FY95 funding at their FY94 levels. Given that both the House and Senate have approved cuts to the NEA’s FY95 appropriation, it seems quite possible that this program might not have a chance to get off the ground. I therefore urge you to eliminate the trigger mechanism during conference.

In the past, performing arts presenting organizations, in partnership with artists, have worked with at-risk youth in communities across the country. Presenters like Sharon Morgan, director of Oregon’s Newport Performing Arts Center, have demonstrated their unique ability to promote learning through outreach programs. The center’s program, known as the Family Arts Agenda, joins forces with a number of social service agencies to serve emotionally disturbed children with the use of the arts. When one eight year old participant was asked if the program was successful, he immediately answered, "I know this program was successful!" Working with the artist had completely changed his life. I have no doubt that this legislation would have a tremendous impact on many other communities like Newport, Oregon.

The Cultural Partnerships for At-Risk Children and Youth program would provide the necessary resources to ensure that work with communities like the one in Oregon would continue. Again, I urge you to support the program and eliminate the trigger that would kill this vital program before its birth.

Sincerely,

Susan S. Farr
Executive Director