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July 21, 1994

The Honorable Claiborne DeB. Pell
United States Senate
335 Russell Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Pell:

Because the Arts add so much to Rhode Island's quality of life and economic development, I am writing to urge you to support restoration of the 5 percent cut in the National Endowment for the Arts FY'95 budget. As you probably know, on June 28th the Senate Appropriations Committee reduced the Endowment funding by 5 percent. If such a cut were carried forward our State Arts Council's NEA grant for FY'95 would be reduced to $416,000, $35,000 less than our current grant allocation. In a time when the arts are flourishing in Rhode Island as never before, this would clearly be a step in the wrong direction.

The significance of NEA funding for local Rhode Island arts activities is underscored by the grant awards the State Council on the Arts made earlier this month. Among the groups receiving funding were The Westerly Chorus, The Newport Art Museum and Art Association, The Providence Performing Arts Center, The Trinity Repertory Company, The Slater Mill Association, The Langston Hughes Center for the Arts and Education, The Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra, The Newport Music Festival, and The Cumberland Company for the Performing Arts. A growing number of organizations like these, as well as individuals, are applying to The Council on the Arts for funding and it is my hope that we will be able to honor as many worthy requests for art funding as possible.

I know that many people who have supported cuts in the National Endowment's budget are motivated by opposition to a very small number of controversial projects the Endowment has funded in recent years. I believe this opposition is misplaced because we cannot have a flourishing, vibrant, and creative arts community without freedom of expression and tolerance of diverse viewpoints. Moreover, considering the number of projects that are funded with NEA grants, the fact that only 1/2 of 1% of the Endowment's budget has gone to the highly publicized controversial projects reflects well on the
Endowment's efforts to balance artistic taste with diversity and vitality.

Knowing you share my conviction that the arts add much to Rhode Island's distinctiveness and economy, I look forward to any assistance you can provide in reversing these ill advised cutbacks in the National Endowment's FY'95 budget.

Best personal wishes.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

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