

SARAH LAWRENCE COLLEGE,
Bronxville, N.Y., May 15, 1961.

Hon. FRANK THOMPSON Jr.,
House Office Building,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. THOMPSON: On behalf of the National Council on the Arts and Government I wish to submit the following statement in support of legislation H.R. 4174 to establish a program of grants to States for the development of programs and projects in the arts.

I do so, not only because of the interest in the legislation which I share with thousands of citizens concerned for the cultural and spiritual welfare of the United States, but because of my deep conviction that our schools, colleges, and universities have within themselves a magnificent opportunity to raise the level of the arts and of cultural achievements for the entire population of the country.

During the 22 years in which I have been closely associated with American colleges and universities as a faculty member and a college president, I have seen a remarkable growth of the creative arts in our educational system. Twenty years ago the first resident painter was appointed to a major university, the University of Wisconsin; the Pro Arte Quartet became a resident group there, to play for the citizens of Madison and in towns and villages all over the State where previously no chamber music concerts had ever been heard. Since then the movement in the universities toward bringing the arts directly to the citizens has grown enormously, with music and arts festivals in dozens of institutions, writers' workshops in more than a hundred colleges, art exhibits, plays, poetry centers, and opera sponsored by the universities themselves.

H.R. 4174 is a dramatic proposal at exactly the time when we now have the intellectual and cultural resources to make use of its provisions, and when the stimulation of the Federal Government to the work of the States would have direct and immediate results in giving the arts a central place in the lives of Americans.

It is clear that the communities of the country and the educational institutions are not able to finance the creative arts by themselves. The universities are so hard pressed for funds of all kinds and for the arts in particular that they are unable to go further on their own, at a time when we are in serious danger of overwhelming our culture with the accumulation of scientific research and scientific enterprises. The huge Government budget now being spent for science must be matched by an appropriate budget for the arts if we are to have a society which retains its spiritual health and achieves the necessary balance between technique and idea.

It is also true that the present costs of theater, dance, opera, and of musical organizations is so great that only rarely is it possible for communities to sustain first-rate work in the arts themselves unless supported by foundation grants or unusual private gifts. Instead, the arts become commercialized, and accordingly fail to provide the conditions for genuine creative development by the country's most serious artists.

In addition, there is no place to go for those who are young and talented in the arts, no outlet for their gifts except in commercial enterprise where the esthetic standards become unavoidably debased.

Through the universities and the community organizations of the country we have the instruments for developing a citizenry which will not only find richness and satisfaction in the cultural opportunities H.R. 4174 would provide, but would elevate the taste and judgment of the country as a whole, making demands on television and the mass media which would in turn force their standards to rise. A cycle of growth would then begin which would surpass in speed and range anything which we or any other country has ever seen.

I support strongly your efforts in this cause, and I know I speak for the majority of serious American educators in support of H.R. 4174 now before your Subcommittee on Education.

Yours sincerely,

HAROLD TAYLOR,
President, Sarah Lawrence College, 1945-1959.