

January 30, 2021

The Honorable Sharon Quirk-Silva
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 6012
Sacramento CA 95814

Re: Informational Hearing: Restarting the Arts: Best Practices for Safely Reopening

Dear Assembly Member Quirk-Silva,

I thank you for holding such an important legislative informational hearing on the topic of the arts in the public sector and in our public schools. The timing is right in light of public pressure to reopen businesses and public schools while simultaneously contending with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The California Music Educators Association (CMEA) is a Federated unit of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) with a statewide membership of approximately one thousand members. The purposes of the association include promoting access to a sequential standards-based music education for all Pre-K through Grade 12 students taught by fully credentialed and qualified music educators and advocating for a standards-based music education among state and local agencies. CMEA played an active role in the development and adoption of the *California Arts Standards for Public Schools, Prekindergarten Through Grade Twelve* as well as supported the process of the new California Arts Framework. Diversity, Equity, and Access are embedded in the mission, vision, and values of CMEA and promotes equitable practices for all stakeholders within the music education community. Membership is open to all music educators working in public and private schools, colleges, and universities in California.

Studies reveal that visual and performing arts are critical in providing a comprehensive education to our students and in addressing their social-emotional needs. Studies also show students have been negatively impacted by school closures, with the lack of social contact and expression. Our students, especially those in secondary education, have been unable to engage in or have been severely limited in performing arts activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the closure of school buildings and implementation of distance learning. Visual and performing arts activities are now delivered virtually.

The School Guidance of the CA Department of Public Health (CA DPH) and of CalOSHA have severely restricted students from playing wind instruments, and singing, and are not in alignment with the California Department of Education CTE Guidance for Reopening.

Scientific studies on aerosol production in performing arts activities was lacking. In order to get students back into the classroom, on stages, and in performance venues at a lower risk, mitigations to aerosol are being tested. A scientific study on this topic was conducted, the International Coalition Performing Arts Aerosol Study.

This study by researchers from the University of Colorado Boulder and University of Maryland was conducted with the focus strictly on the distribution of the respiratory aerosol that is generated while playing wind instruments, singing, acting, speaking, dancing and in a simulated aerobic activity, which may potentially contain virus. Attached is a summary of the study's recommendations.

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The School Guidance of the CA DPH and of CalOSHA does not include the most recent study on aerosol production in performing arts activities. A first “best practice” therefore, should be to incorporate the recommendations of the aerosol study, which have been tested and verified, in the School Guidance of the CA DPH and of CalOSHA.

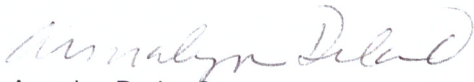
The study recommendations focus on five areas: **masks**- faces and instruments, **physical distance**-in-doors and out-doors for performances and rehearsals, **time**- rehearsals; **air flow**-heating, ventilation and air-conditioning and **hygiene** – washing of hands and cleaning of instruments, are provided. When complied with and followed, performance arts activities will be able to occur again, safely, upon the reopening of schools.

Other “best practices” recommended are:

- A return to the full implementation of an arts education in our public schools upon reopening safely.
- Performing arts activities must be provided and included in an “enriched” extended learning proposal and taught by credentialed teachers.
- Ensure PPE, including specific face masks and instrument coverings, are given to teachers and students.
- Teachers and students should be given training on the “mitigation” practices recommended.
- Funding should be allocated for the specific PPE required by music teachers, students and for instruments.
- Funding should be allocated for classroom, auditoriums and rehearsal space upgrades.

Inclusion of the aerosol study recommendations will provide consistent and uniform guidance to local health departments, school districts, teachers, students and parents on performance arts activities, contribute to the safe reopening of schools and ensure that all students can return to the visual and performing arts.

Sincerely,



Armalyn De La O
President

cc: Members of the Assembly Committee on Arts, Entertainment, Sports, Tourism and Internet Media
Dana Mitchell, Chief Consultant; Assembly Committee on Arts, Entertainment, Sports, Tourism and Internet Media