Dear Chairman Carter,

Thank you for your strong and effective advocacy for the arts in the United States, which led to a strong budget for this year prior to the pandemic, and for helpful relief for the arts during this pandemic.

I work in an El Sistema-inspired program. Our teaching artist faculties have done heroic work adapting their many hours of work every week, with America’s most underserved students, to online teaching. Where students didn’t have internet access, the teaching artists found a way to support and stay connected to these students, continuing to advance their learning. I write today to draw your attention to these teaching artists who are not only under-acknowledged heroes, but who have also been identified as the most vulnerable part of the entire arts ecosystem. They are both artists and skilled educators, and they fall between the cracks for support; most of their incomes will soon plummet, with many losing all income.

Although there are 30,000 professional teaching artists in the U.S.—the workforce that leads all audience-expanding practices of arts organizations—they are almost invisible in public discussions and to private foundations.

In his recent essay “A Sector in Peril,” Alan Brown, one of the nation’s top arts industry analysts, wrote: “Among the most vulnerable are teaching artists. . .Beyond relief, we must consider if this is an opportunity to start a groundbreaking new work program for teaching artists and other artists working in community contexts, akin to the Depression-era Works Progress Administration (WPA). Initially this might involve paying artists for virtual engagement with children and other community members, as the National Arts Centre in Ottawa has already begun doing, but it could evolve into something much larger.”

Please keep this most essential workforce viable. Another recent essay by a leading researcher [http://wolfbrown.com/news/7-news-and-announcements/736-teaching-artists-as-essential-workers-respect-collaboration-and-heft] referred to teaching artists as “first responders” to the most critically vulnerable. Sadly, they themselves are professionally vulnerable.

Sincere thanks,

*Your name and address*