

Dear Cultural Supporter:

As most of you know, our cultural community suffered a 94 percent cut in grant funding from the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs due to last-minute budget cuts by the State Legislature. We've been told by legislators that the cut was the result of having to appropriate \$400 million at the end of the legislative session in emergency funding for school safety as a result of the tragic shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Broward County.

Cultural funding went from approximately \$24 million in 2018 to \$2.65 million for 2019 programs in just one year. Four years ago, funding was at an all-time high of \$43

million. The recent loss in cultural funding to Central Florida was in excess of \$2 million, and for most of us the announcement came at the end of the fiscal year with little to no time to make up the losses. This type of funding roller-coaster ride creates huge instability in the sector.

As a result, Local Arts Agencies from throughout Florida have come together to strategize advocacy efforts to reinstate funding in the next legislative session. I and other arts leaders started meeting with state legislators in August in their home offices to make sure they are aware of the severity of the cuts, gain their support in reinstating funding for next year and seek their advice. Thus far, I am happy to report, that every Central Florida state legislator has found common ground regarding the importance of arts and culture and has expressed their support for reinstating funding for next year at prior-year levels.

The next session has not yet begun, but, in the meantime, I ask you to reach out to your elected representatives while they are still in their home offices and urge them to reinstate funding to the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs in the upcoming session. It's



Flora Maria Garcia

especially important to reach those legislators on the TED and Appropriations Committees, who will be named in the coming month. As cultural arts advocates and donors, we must ALL reach out to our legislators about the importance of supporting the arts and the reasons why. As we move into the legislative session you will hear more from United Arts and the Florida Cultural Alliance (our state advocacy agency) on what actions to take to ensure that funding is restored.

As we move into the Early Bird phase of the *Collaborative Campaign for the Arts*, it will be critical for you to continue to contribute, and, if at all possible, increase your contri-

bution this year to help make up for the devastating funding cuts we experienced a few months ago, which affect the current year's budget of many of our cultural providers.

There are three fantastic reasons for giving during the Early Bird portion of the campaign in December:

- 1) You will not be solicited again by multiple cultural groups;
- 2) You can write off your contribution from this year's taxes; and
- 3) You boost reaching the campaign's goal of more than \$2 million, sooner than later.

So please, invest in arts and culture early this year and let our cultural groups know how much you as a donor value their great work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Flora Maria Garcia". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Flora Maria Garcia
President & CEO
United Arts of Central Florida

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we must ALL reach out to our legislators about the importance
of supporting the arts and the reasons why.*
