

**Written Testimony on the Economic Impact of the Arts on PA Cities**  
**Submitted by Joanne Riley**  
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PA House of Representatives, Urban Affairs Committee  
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Good Morning:

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to present my agency and its impact on York to you today. I would like to note that Eugene DePasquale is the representative from York and has been a huge supporter of the arts. Thank you Rep. DePasquale. I hope all of you will feel free to ask me any questions when I have finished my remarks.

My name is Joanne Riley and I am president of a 9 year old United Arts Fund (UAF) – the Cultural Alliance of York County. The Cultural Alliance functions similarly to the United Way – we raise money once a year through the efforts of volunteers and then distribute the money to 9 arts agencies through a rigorous review process. A panel of volunteers representing corporate contributors reviews, in depth, the business operations of arts agencies including budgets, board policies, and business practices.

We are the central vehicle for driving private support to nonprofit arts organizations of all disciplines. The private sector, led by business leaders who valued the arts as vital to the health of the community, created the Cultural Alliance in 1999. The Cultural Alliance is one of the most respected and efficient vehicles for businesses and individuals to support the arts, and has grown into a powerful grant allocation machine, a common voice within the community, and a catalyst for important arts issues. The Alliance raises more than \$1 million annually to provide stable operating grants to 9 member agencies. And these numbers are growing.

The Cultural Alliance is one of more than 60 united arts funds that currently exist in communities across the US, collectively raising more than \$100 million for the arts community. We are private nonprofit agencies that broaden support for the arts, promote excellence in arts management, and help ensure that deserving arts agencies are financially stable.

We further strengthen the structure and capacity of the arts through grants, constructive feedback from our allocation process, and creating new generations of arts leadership.

York is a town of 44,000 and a county of fewer than 400,000, yet we have raised, in eight campaigns, more than \$8.5 million in cash and in-kind services for 9 arts, history, and culture non-profits in York. Let me say that again - \$8.5 million. More than 600 businesses, large and small, contribute to our campaign every year. They are solicited by 356 corporate volunteers who help raise this money. We are one of the top UAF's in the country recognized nationally for our success.

Why are we so successful? Why do so many businesses invest and business leaders volunteer in our campaign? Because the York business community recognizes the Power of the Arts to transform its city and county. They recognize that arts are good for a community's economic growth. They also know that a rich cultural community attracts business and employees.

In the past 8 years, we have seen the arts, history, and cultural community begin to transform York. From the gorgeously renovated Strand Capital Performing Arts Center, to the growth of YorkArts, a gallery and educational center, to the potential new Arts Center, Museum and loft space, to the historic properties owned by the York County Heritage Trust, York is changing. We have a thriving Symphony which recently ended the season with 3 sold out (3600 audience members) concerts - their 75<sup>th</sup> year. We have a youth and junior symphony for children from 5<sup>th</sup> grade through high school. York Little Theatre, a community theatre, is also celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> year. In fact, among them, our nine member agencies have entertained, educated and performed for the people of York and the region for more than 500 years.

The Cultural Alliance has taken the lead role in helping with the growth of our members, which translates to the growth of our city. We have engaged a consultant to conduct a geodemographic analysis of our members and the public through data base analysis and public surveying. Some salient information from that survey, sent to 10,000 households in York and 5000 in a 30 mile radius around York is:

On a scale of 1 -10, 1 being least important and 10 being most important, where should support for arts, history, and culture rank on a community's public agenda?

The average answer for people living in York for 1-10 years was **7.37**.

**84%** of the respondents felt that arts, culture, and heritage experiences make communities more attractive and desirable places to visit and live.

**84%!!!!**

We believe arts, history, and culture is the reason small towns like York thrive. Retail, restaurants, and people follow the arts. The studios open, and a town is revitalized. In York, as I mentioned, we have a first class performing arts center - The Strand Capitol - and it is the first place human resource professionals take potential employees and their families. A potential new employee usually asks - do you have a symphony - because it says something important about a community if you have one - whether or not you attend.

It is becoming difficult to raise corporate dollars for the arts - there is increased competition from human service agencies; the corporate environment is changing due to mergers, closings, and the economic times. York is so philanthropic - if we are feeling the pinch here then it must be much tougher throughout the state.

The Cultural Alliance's efficiency in raising and distributing money is in large part due to The PA Council on the Arts. Their money helps fund our operations, which in turn allows us to re-grant 96 cents of every dollar raised to our 9 member agencies. Support of the arts in PA is critical - you are funding an industry that creates jobs, pays taxes, and attracts tourists.

I am so proud of our success. In addition to raising funds, we also provide Venture Funds to non-Cultural Alliance members to help with their arts programming. Our goal is to ensure a community filled with activities, performances and education on the arts. We can not do that without some support from you. We maximize every dollar you give us with matching private funds. This year, our campaign goal is \$1.2 million - imagine in a town of 44,000 and a county of fewer than 400,000, re-investing that much money into the arts! I can imagine it - because we will do it.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to report a national success story that comes out of a small city. There are many more such stories - we need you to hear them.