



Tony Estrella, *Artistic Director* • Jason Cabral, *Executive Director*

1245 Jefferson Boulevard, Warwick, RI 02886 • 401.723.4266 • gammtheatre.org

May 9, 2024

RE: Testimony in Strong Support of House Bill No.8047

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Jason Cabral, Executive Director of The Gamm Theatre. I am writing in support of HB.8047 introduced by Rep. Shallcross Smith, which provides \$4 million to support after-school, school vacation, and summer learning workforce development programs for K-12 students with annual reports on status and programs.

This bill is important to me and the students in the Rhode Island communities that The Gamm Theatre serves. Year after year, The Gamm has seen the positive impact of after-school programs throughout the state on student's literacy and social emotional learning skills, and their ability to engage their families and communities through the arts. This year alone, The Gamm has facilitated 47 after-school programs in school districts across the state. We have been able to bring engagement and excitement to students in several areas including Rhode Island's designated urban core communities of Woonsocket, Pawtucket, Providence, Warwick, and Central Falls.

We have seen the positive impact of partnering with schools and organizations throughout the school year which allows students a sense of consistency and opens up creative outlets necessary for their development. As many schools in the state have limited or no arts programming built into their curriculum, these after-school opportunities afford students the ability to problem solve more creatively, learn to work as part of a team, and express themselves in a safe and accepting environment.

We need this to pass this bill for several reasons:

- Students who participate in after-school programming are given a safe place to continue learning and engage each other in a variety of ways.
- After-school programs provide supervision and support for students whose families may need to be working when regular school hours are over. This is especially true in designated urban core communities in the state.
- After-school programs allow students the opportunity to build social emotional skills and develop relationships with peers.

- Many of these after-school programs also supply students with much needed nutrition assistance, including snacks and dinners, which helps support the students' physical and overall wellbeing.

Currently, 59,000 local youth are without after-school time program opportunities. It is critical that we invest in Out-of-School-Time so that every student has access to comprehensive and effective programming both after-school and during the summer.

I hope you consider how important this is to me. We are depending on you to make the right decision.

I appreciate and thank you for your time and consideration today.

Jason Cabral
Executive Director
The Gamm Theatre
1245 Jefferson Boulevard
Warwick, RI 02886
jason@gammtheatre.org