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I'm Linda Hafer, the Executive Director of The Art League, a 57-year-old nonprofit visual art organization headquartered in the Torpedo Factory Art Center, with two additional classroom annexes in Old Town. I wish, first of all, to **thank you for the support** afforded to The Art League by the City—both through the **rent support** for our space in the Torpedo Factory, and for the **resources provided through the Alexandria Commission for the Arts and the Cultural Affairs Office**—that make it possible for us to provide our programs. We appreciate that Alexandria has shown leadership in supporting the arts.

There are many reasons that a city supports the arts. At the most practical level, studies show that the arts have significant impact as an **economic driver**. Four decades of research tell us that they are critical to our **children's development, education, and success**. The enlightened recognize that art embodies qualities of creativity, innovation, problem solving, identity, communication, & expression—the **tools needed for 21st century success**.

As you consider the 2012 budget, you are tasked with the challenges of balancing limited financial resources with a variety of needs—all very compelling. I hope you will consider that a strong arts community can be a partner in addressing some of those needs.

As the Americans for the Arts' economic study revealed, arts activities generate a significant return on the money invested.

Since I'm speaking for The Art League, let me reference the **economic impact**, for example, of our annual Patrons' Show fundraiser. This event brought some 800 participants to Alexandria, for multiple visits, during a typically inactive January-February timeframe. Responses to a post-event survey indicated significant additional expenditures at restaurants, shops and parking facilities here.

On a year-round basis, more than 11,000 class registrants in The Art League School come to the area an average of 7 times each for classes—and a significant number of them also patronize local restaurants and shops when they are here.

In the area of **social services**, arts organizations provide resources that complement the city's programs. As an example, The Art League's award-winning SOHO (Space of Her Own) program was developed in concert with Alexandria's Court Service Unit to address identified needs of pre-teen girls at risk for court involvement. We provide instruction and venue for an excellent art education experience, and we obtain foundation funding to help support the program, allowing CSU to focus on the services at which they excel. It has been a very successful partnership!

A strong and stable arts community will ultimately enhance the city and share the burden of providing many benefits to its citizens. I hope you will recognize the value of maintaining funding for the Arts Commission and its grant programs, as well as ensuring adequate staffing in the Cultural Affairs office. I would encourage you also, looking forward, to consider a public art funding policy that will ensure appropriate funding into the future.

We are proud to be a partner with the City of Alexandria, and hope you will include substantial support for the arts in your budget. Thank you.