

State Representative Kay Khan
October 29, 2013
Joint Committee on Education
Testimony in Support of H. 2994, Resolve Establishing a Commission to Study the
Inclusion of Arts in STEM Related Programs

Chairwoman Chang-Diaz, Chairwoman Peisch, and members of the Committee, I wish to offer testimony in support of my bill, *Resolve Establishing a Commission to Study the Inclusion of Arts in STEM Related Programs*, **H. 2994**. This bill would create a commission designed to study and report the feasibility of including the arts in programs designed to promote STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education and training and the possibility of changing “STEM” to “STEAM.”

The STEM to STEAM movement, created and championed by the Rhode Island School of Design, is built around the idea that the skills learned in art-related learning environments are just as valuable as the areas of education on which STEM focuses toward building a productive and innovative population. These skills, which include creativity, confidence, problem-solving, collaboration, and effective communication, are fostered and cultivated through arts programs. The development of arts programs is extremely effective in working toward the same educational and job-training goals as STEM programs. The strength and durability of our economy, both as a Commonwealth and as a nation, depends on the development of a competitive and well-educated

workforce. Confronted with new industries and unforeseen challenges, we need an education system that prepares our children for the future with a well-rounded set of skills and the ability to succeed in any field they may choose.

There have been several case studies and pilot programs that have explored the idea of including the arts in STEM programs, one of which occurred in the Andover Public Schools. There, educators from a variety of fields have worked together to shape a curriculum designed to promote STEAM-inspired strategies. Further, these strategies were officially included in the public school system's educational plan for 2013-2015. This bill calls for the establishment of a statewide commission to study how best to incorporate arts programs in the existing STEM-related programs, thus enabling more students across the Commonwealth to develop a wider range of skills similar to those established in Andover Public Schools. The advantage of such a commission would be its ability to find efficient and effective ways to implement potential changes by drawing on the combined expertise and experiences of educators, specialists in STEAM fields, and the Department of Education. Together, they could utilize their shared resources to develop a comprehensive and cost-effective way to ensure that the students of Massachusetts get the best education possible in all essential fields of study, recognizing the value of arts as an integral part of that education.

Thank you for your consideration on this important matter. I respectfully request that the Committee adopt a favorable report for H. 2994 as expeditiously as possible.