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Dear Minister Lecce:

Re. Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023

The Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators has strengthened education in Ontario since 1970.

Drama and dance are essential subjects unto themselves, but also integrated with other subjects to meet the needs of and engage Ontario students. The proposed Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023 calls to “re-focus Ontario's education system on student achievement, prioritizing hands-on learning and skills development in reading, writing and math.” We believe strongly in holistic education with multiple access points to meet the needs of a diverse clientele of students in an ever changing world.

Drama and dance are important on their own. They provide access points for students to build confidence and essential skills that they will carry forward throughout their lives. Through drama and dance students develop critical and creative thinking, collaboration, problem solving, empathy, planning, and conflict resolution skills. If anything, we need to be providing more opportunities to develop these essential skills, not limiting access. The proposed changes to the graduation requirements in “Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023” will do just that. Skilled trades and technology are one pathway, and a viable one for many students. We need to create opportunities for students to develop and reach their full potential, not limit their ability to do so.

We call upon the Ministry of Education to review the graduation requirements for Ontario students in consultation with subject associations and with an eye toward equity, inclusivity and embodying all 21st Century learning standards, not just technology.

The path to prosperity in this province is one where we find confident, critically aware and collaborative citizens capable of problem solving and communicating effectively. Stronger drama and dance education from kindergarten to grade 12 will help us attain this future.

Sincerely,

Matthew Sheahan