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Contact: Fahizah Alim
(916) 651-4026

SENATOR PRICE'S HEARING OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE ARTS FOCUSES ON REHABILITATIVE POWER OF THE ARTS

Hearing draws Actor Tim Robbins and Musician Wayne Kramer

Los Angeles, CA - California State Senator Curren D. Price, Jr., (D-Los Angeles), Chairman of the Joint Committee on the Arts, convened an Informational Hearing on Friday, May 3rd at the Grammy Museum that heard from famous celebrities speaking out in support of the rehabilitative powers of the Arts.

The hearing examined the history of Arts in Corrections programs in the State of California and explored how Arts can be an effective rehabilitation tool prior to an inmate's release.

Musician Wayne Kramer, founder of Jail Guitar Doors, USA, shared his positive experiences with inmates when bringing his program into California prisons.

And Oscar-winning actor Tim Robbins, with the Actors' Gang Prison Arts Program, spoke about his successes with Prison Theater classes. Many others shared similar first-hand experiences.

"With realignment and the stresses on our prison system, we need to take a close look at the prison pipeline," said Senator Price. "We need to hear from experts who are working with youth in our "underserved" communities to determine what role the Arts play in steering these kids in the right direction, away from gang activities or simply from making bad decisions that get them in trouble at an early age.

"Too many of our kids are entering our juvenile justice system and that has got to stop," he said. "We need to use all of the tools in our "tool box" so to speak, to turn this around."

Senator Price noted that the hearing, held at the Grammy Museum, near downtown Los Angeles, was a “fitting venue since many notable Arts in Prison programs include music as a form of therapy.”

The hearing also heard from Alma Robinson, the executive director of California Lawyers for the Arts, who has partnered with the William James Association to develop a demonstration project using the Arts as a methodology for inmate rehabilitation and renewal.

Ms. Robinson stated, “Their goal is to develop new research supporting institutionalization of these programs which will save the state resources by reducing tensions inside (the prisons) and by improving outcomes for released inmates, thereby reducing recidivism.”

The NEA, the Andy Warhol Foundation and the California Arts Council are a few of the major grantors supporting this project.

Craig Watson, Director of the Arts Council, said that the Arts in Corrections programs were once widely deployed throughout the state corrections systems. He compared that “rich legacy” with “positive outcomes” to the “shamefully small and modest nature of these current programs.”

The hearing also looked at the potential of the Arts to positively influence youth in underserved communities and in youth detention centers as a way to break the “undereducate-overincarcerate” cycle.

The hearing in its entirety can be viewed at:

<http://livestre.am/4rEcl>