

March 8, 2023 HEARING ON WHITE BEAR CENTER FOR THE ARTS' PROPOSED WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT LEGISLATION

Hello my name is Wonser Mongrue and I am an 11th grader from White Bear Lake - South Campus...

I just want to start off and say thank you to Chair Jay Xiong and other committee members for allowing us to share the importance of this bill. Furthermore, "**Necessity is the mother of taking chances**".**think about that..** My experience at WBCA, much like testfier Arianna's, started in 9th grade. And we share the experience of a language arts teacher, my honors language arts teacher, who encouraged us to participate in WBCA's WriteNow High School Writing Contest!

During that time for me in my earlier high school years I was a person heavily revolved around academics. It was never in my mind to submit a piece of my writing to a contest, let alone think a piece of my writing could be viable to the coordinators and judges of the contest. So it was a very shy option to me, Although it was the confidence of my language arts teacher that propelled me to take the initiative of this opportunity..

This was going to be the beginning of my creative writing journey and the beginning of embracing the fact that the arts has just as much an impact as core academics. You see, up until my submission of two poetry pieces in 2019, other academic areas had consumed my world! By no means was there an aspect of expressiveness in this realm of my life.

In my life, everything had a specific format and/or structure so when this option came about it was just another reason for me. There was no structure or format; it was just me and what I could usher. **In the many categories: short story, creative nonfiction, persuasive essay, poetry and spoken word.** I received honorable mention and was happy that someone had considered my creative work.

For me, this was validation beyond what I thought could happen. It made me understand that there was a creative side in me worth supporting and how creative writing and other academics can be combined. Along with this realization I met so many people in this program. And some of these people worked closely with my school... and building those relationships allowed me to see the importance of the arts. At least the importance of the arts for people like me.