

Massachusetts Cultural Council
Cultural Facilities Fund Grant Program
10 St. James Avenue
Boston, MA 02116



December 29, 2021

To the Review Panel:

I am writing on behalf of the Waban Area Council to express our full support for the application submitted by the Suzuki School of Newton for a Technical Feasibility Grant. The Waban Area Council (WAC) is an official, elected part of Newton's city government. Our role is to advocate for what is in the best interests of the village of Waban and surrounding neighborhoods, and the people, businesses, institutions, open spaces and historic sites within the area we represent. The Suzuki School of Newton (SSN) is a treasured institution in our village and undertaking a feasibility study aimed at improving accessibility for those facing mobility challenges is the logical next step in its evolution.

The SSN is located in the most important historic site in Waban, the Staples-Crafts-Wiswall Farmstead. The house, built in mid-1700s, sits on its original 1688 foundation, and is a link to Waban's agricultural beginnings. The property was first farmed by Deacon John Staples in the late 1600s and is associated with early and prominent Waban figures, including those from the Craft, Woodward, Wiswall and Strong families. The site is landmarked and sits on the National Register of Historic Places. The village grew out from this earliest farmstead, and today the SSN is at the center of Waban village, with an elementary school, MBTA station, small commercial district and other beloved village institutions, all within walking distance of residential neighborhoods. The SSN preserved this crucial historic asset and raised funds to purchase and restore it, while transforming it into a wonderful music school and arts-based pre-school. Everyone in Waban and Newton owes a debt of gratitude to the SSN for preserving this historic site for future generations.

The SSN opened its doors in Waban in 2019, and despite the pandemic, has made a big impact in the village. Suzuki parents frequent village businesses and restaurants, boosting our local economy. The SSN offers a high-quality pre-school and music lessons within walking distance of many village residents. The SSN presents their own concerts and through the Porchfest series, provides free performances at Waban Village Day and other events and offers free music workshops at the Waban Library Center. With their scholarship program, the SSN has made music education possible for less-advantaged children in the Newton area, a longstanding program to improve opportunity and access for all that we applaud.

With the goal of improving opportunity and access for all, the Waban Area Council fully supports the efforts of the Suzuki School of Newton to secure funding to do a feasibility study and begin the capital campaign necessary to add an elevator and make other needed improvements for accessibility for those facing mobility challenges in a way that preserves the historic integrity of the building and improves the overall appearance and beauty of this iconic site. Thank you for considering our view.

Christopher B. Pitts
President