



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Media Contact:** Dominique Davison  
Communications Coordinator  
Houston Arts Alliance  
713.581.6126 direct  
[DominiqueD@haatx.com](mailto:DominiqueD@haatx.com)

## **Houston Arts Alliance names former President's Committee on the Arts & Humanities director as new CEO.**

**Houston, Texas – John Abodeely**, former Acting Executive Director and Deputy Director for the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, will be Houston Arts Alliance's new CEO, Philamena Baird, Chairman of the Board, announced today.

Abodeely administered the strategy and operations of the Committee's four pillar programs, managed a \$4 million fundraising program, and directed the first bilateral government delegation to Cuba following President Obama's historic trip in March 2016.

With a strong background in arts education, Abodeely was responsible for co-designing a new program model for Turnaround Arts, an innovative program using high quality and integrated arts to boost academic achievement and increase student engagement. During his four years at the Committee, the program expanded from eight schools to 68 across the nation. Other prior experience includes service as Manager of National Partnerships for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Manager of Education at Americans for the Arts, and his significant work in arts policy, including work as graduate professor at Corcoran College.

"We are delighted to have identified John as our new CEO," said Philamena Baird, who has been acting CEO since February. "His experience, skill and high energy are just what we need in Houston and at Houston Arts Alliance."

"I'm thrilled to join the Houston community and the Houston Arts Alliance team. It's a remarkable city and a remarkable organization," said Abodeely. "Houston is full of vibrant arts organizations, talented artists, engaged donors, and committed audiences. I'm eager to dive in and learn more. I can't imagine a city more 'full of opportunity' for the arts."

Abodeely joins HAA at a critical juncture for the organization. Later this year, HAA will roll out a new grants program in phases. This revisioning, with direct input from community stakeholders, has been months in the making. The redeployment of Hotel Occupancy Tax dollars, with more of those dollars going toward grants, has catalyzed HAA to redefine the programs and services that will be available to arts and culture organizations beginning in 2018. Additionally, the "Arts & Economic Prosperity Study 5," spearheaded by Americans for the Arts, has recently been released and shows the great economic benefit of the arts sector in Houston.

"The Houston "Arts & Economic Prosperity Study" will be presented on October 20 at a Greater Houston Partnership luncheon. The release of this information makes it a great time to join HAA," said Abodeely. "The city is ready to imagine what's next in the cultural sector and to more deeply support the hardworking artists and arts organizations in every corner of the city."

Of the organization's well-known and highly respected programs of Folklife & Civic Engagement Abodeely said, "I'm arriving just in time for the 'Food & Family: Edible Museum' program, 'Port of Plenty.' In addition to being a great arts town, Houston is a great food town!"

Abodeely will begin his tenure on November 6, leading the local arts agency into its second decade.

###

## **ABOUT HOUSTON ARTS ALLIANCE**

Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) is a nonprofit, public-private initiative that invests in Houston's arts and cultural sector, advances Houston's reputation as an arts and culture destination, and works to elevate the quality of life for all Houstonians through arts and culture. As the city's local arts agency, HAA provides programs and services for the arts and cultural sector and administers the City of Houston's grants program, which awards over 200 grants annually to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and individual artists. The Alliance takes permanent and temporary art to Houston's public spaces; engages and creates programmatic access to the city's many diverse communities; nurtures up-and-coming arts organizations through its capacity building programs; connects the business community with the arts; convenes the field as necessary, and provides the latest information and research on cultural policy, economic development and Houston's folklife. In addition, it is contracted by the City of Houston to care for the public art collection.