



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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Alabama
State Board
of Education

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 21, 2024

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Governor Kay Ivey
President

**FAIRHOPE HIGH SCHOOL'S SYDNEY GRAY WINS
2024 NATIONAL SONGWRITING CHALLENGE**

Jackie Zeigler
District I

Montgomery, Ala. – Today Dr. Eric Mackey congratulated Fairhope High School's Sydney Gray on winning the 2024 National songwriting challenge from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Association of Musical Theater.

Tracie West
District II
Vice President

Sydney will receive a \$2,500 scholarship and a trip to New York, where her original song, "Little Miss Heard But Not Seen" will be performed in full orchestration at a concert on Broadway. This award comes from a nation-wide competition through the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Alliance for Musical Theatre (NAMT), as well as Concord Theatricals, Disney Theatrical Productions, and the NMPA S.O.N.G.S. Foundation.

Stephanie Bell
District III

Yvette M. Richardson, Ed.D.
District IV

Sydney is a rising senior at Fairhope High School where she is the section leader in "Encore" the school performing ensemble, First Chair trombone in the wind ensemble and Drum Major for the Fairhope Buccaneer Marching Band. Sydney's theatrical home is with Baldwin County's Eastern Shore Repertory Theater where she has held principal roles and music directed more than a dozen shows with their competition team for Junior Theater Festival and their Showcase team for their New York Central Park performances.

Marie Manning
District VI

"Little Miss Heard But Not Seen" from Sydney's original musical Anaval, is our introduction to Nava Lee. She's bright and hopeful but knows all too well what it means not to fit in—not at school, not at home, not even in the mirror. Nava Lee longs to be more than a shadow moving through life as she fights the doubts in her head. This is an emotional anthem that echoes the universal struggle for visibility and acceptance. Her submission can be heard at <https://namt.org/2024/05/meet-the-mtsc24-winners/>

Belinda McRae
District VII

Wayne Reynolds, Ed.D.
District VIII

Over the next several weeks Sydney will be working virtually with her Broadway team and at 7pm ET May 30th Sydney will be interviewed through Zoom about her winning song at: <https://namt.org/events/meet-the-winners/>.

Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.
Secretary and
Executive Officer

In June, she will come to New York City where she will work with mentors and music directors to hone the orchestration while learning about the process, technique, and production. On the Monday following the Tony Awards, the fully orchestrated and produced composition will be performed live in New York at our Winner Concert by Broadway artists, Monday, June 17, at 7pm ET. This

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performance will be available to watch live and on-demand at arts.gov/songwriting as well as namt.org/challenge. In addition, the seven winning songs will be compiled into a songbook by Concord Theatricals and released at a future date.

"We are delighted to celebrate these winning songwriters in New York City in June," said National Endowment for the Arts Chairwoman, Mario Rosario Jackson, PhD. "The experience of working one-on-one with a dedicated mentor to develop their craft and learn more about the songwriting process is one that we hope will remain with these students for years to come. Thank you to our partners at the National Alliance for Musical Theatre for creating empowering opportunities for students at all stages of this program to develop their songwriting voice."

The Musical Theater Songwriting Challenge is a joint initiative by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Alliance for Musical Theatre (NAMT). This prestigious program provides high school students with an unparalleled opportunity to develop and showcase their musical compositions, that could potentially become part of full-scale musical theater productions.

For additional information contact Chasity Riddick at Criddick@bcbe.org

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