

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL
AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP
RELATIONS

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January 27, 2025
Start: 10:15 a.m.
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HELD AT: Committee Room, City Hall

B E F O R E: Carlina Rivera, Chairperson

COUNCILMEMBERS:
David M. Carr
Shahana K. Hanif
Farah N. Louis
Chi A. Ossé
Sandra Ung

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Laurie Cumbo
Commissioner
NYC Department of Cultural Affairs

Lance Polivy
General Counsel
NYC Department of Cultural Affairs

Jamel Burgess
Asst Director of Social Impact Programs
Carnegie Hall

Ian Su
Carnegie Hall

Dimitri Jackson
Carnegie Hall

Ayanna Cole
Director of Social Impact Programs
Wild Music Institute
Carnegie Hall

David Freudenthal
Government Relations Director
Carnegie Hall

La-Tia Morris
American Museum of Natural History

Erin Prada
Assistant Director of Youth Development
Wildlife Conservation Society

Yandel Ramirez
Wildlife Conservation Society

Albeliza Perez
Sr Mgr of Youth & Workforce Development
American Museum of Natural History

Laura Monges-Velazquez
STEM Engagement Coordinator
New York Hall of Science

Eryn Hatzithomas
Assistant Director of HR and Engagement
Queens Botanical Garden

Jennifer DiBella
Director of Education
Roundabout Theatre

Jacob Smith
Roundabout Theatre

Manuel Marroquin
Roundabout Theatre

Hannah D'Amico
International Alliance of Theatrical
Stage Employees

Kimberly Olsen
Executive Director
NYC Arts in Education Roundtable

Lisa Gold
Executive Director
Asian American Arts Alliance

Fran Garber-Cohen
Regina Opera Company

Stephanie Nantell
Senior Director of Programs
Education Through Music

Nicole Touzien
Executive Director
Dancewave

Lindsey Buller Maliekel
Vice President of Education and Public
Engagement
New 42/New Victory Theater

Kate Madigan
The Public Theater

Rachel Neches
Data Researcher
Center for an Urban Future

Courtney French
Artistic Director
Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning

Ava Kinsey
Director of Education
Brooklyn Academy of Music

Karen Jolicoeur
Executive Director
Creative Art Works

Lyndsay Werking-Yip
Director of Development
American Composers Orchestra

Trevor New
American Composers Orchestra

Christopher Leon Johnson
Citizen of New York

Lucy Sexton
New Yorkers for Culture and Arts

Psacoya Guinn
New York Theatre Workshop

Melody Capote
Caribbean Cultural Center African
Diaspora Institute

Tony Mazzocchi
Executive Director Designate
Kaufman Music Center

Potrirankamanis Queano Nur
Kinding Sindaw

Sarah Calderón
Executive Director
Creatives Rebuild New York

Terry Greiss
Executive Director
Irondale Ensemble Project

Patricia McGregor
Artistic Director
New York Theatre Workshop

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

7

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to
3 today's New York City Council hearing for the
4 Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and
5 International Intergroup Relations. At this time,
6 please silence all cell phones and electronic devices
7 to minimize disruptions throughout the hearing. If
8 you have testimony you wish to submit for the record,
9 you may do so via email at testimony@council.nyc.gov.
10 Once again, that is testimony@council.nyc.gov. At
11 any time throughout the hearing, do not approach the
12 dais.

13 We thank you for your kind cooperation. Chair,
14 we are ready to begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Good morning everyone. I'm
16 Councilmember Carlina Rivera, Chair of the Committee
17 on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International
18 Intergroup Relations.

19 Welcome to today's oversight hearing, Pathways
20 into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers.
21 In addition to our oversight topic, the Committee
22 will be hearing Resolution No. 720, calling on the
23 New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor
24 to sign the New York City Arts Space Act to promote
25

1 the development of affordable arts spaces in New York
2 City, which I have sponsored.

3
4 These state-level bills, sponsored by State
5 Senator Julia Salazar and Assemblymember Joanne
6 Simon, would support the creation of affordable arts
7 spaces for nonprofit organizations by using property
8 tax breaks to incentivize owners and developers to
9 establish long-term affordable arts spaces.

10 Affordable arts spaces are crucial for preserving New
11 York City's identity as a hub of creativity and
12 cultural innovation, and artists and organizations
13 face mounting challenges in securing inexpensive
14 workspaces. We must bolster efforts and further
15 align ourselves with CreateNYC, the City's cultural
16 plan, whose goals also include the preservation and
17 development of long-term affordable artists'
18 workspace and housing.

19 As a global arts capital, New York City thrives
20 on its vibrant cultural sector, which attracts
21 millions of visitors annually and generates billions
22 of dollars for the economy. We must do more to
23 ensure that nonprofit arts organizations can remain a
24 fundamental part of our city's economic and social
25 fabric.

1 Back to the oversight topic, in 2015, New York
2 City took a transformative step forward with the
3 passage of Local Law 46, which calls for a
4 comprehensive cultural plan for our city. The
5 result, CreateNYC, laid out a vision for a more
6 equitable and inclusive cultural sector. This
7 hearing focuses on one of its key goals, expanding
8 pathways into arts and culture careers for people
9 from underrepresented communities. Programs like the
10 CUNY Cultural Corps, Carnegie Hall's B-Side, the SCI
11 Network NYC, Roundabout Theatre Company's Technical
12 Workforce Development Program, Ghetto Film School,
13 and New York Theatre Workshops Fellowships exemplify
14 how we can provide people with hands-on experience,
15 mentorship, and professional opportunities in the
16 arts.

17 These initiatives not only nurture the creative
18 potential of our city but also break down barriers to
19 careers in a field where diversity is so crucial.
20 Internships, apprenticeships, fellowships, and
21 workforce development programs are vital tools for
22 building a foundation for the next generation of
23 leaders and innovators in the arts. Yet disparities
24 remain, and while some students can easily access
25

1 these opportunities, others often face significant
2 financial and logistical challenges.

3
4 It's our job to ensure that every young person in
5 New York City has equitable access to the resources
6 and support needed to pursue their passion in the
7 arts and cultural industries.

8 So, I want to acknowledge my colleagues on the
9 committee who are present today, Council Members Carr
10 and Louis, good morning. I would like to thank the
11 committee staff who put together this hearing,
12 Christina Yellamaty, the committee's counsel, Regina
13 Paul, the committee's policy analyst, and Sandra
14 Gray, the committee's finance analyst.

15 I also want to thank my own staff, Katie Loeb, my
16 chief of staff, and Eddie Amador, who is my director
17 of legislation.

18 I'd like to remind everyone who wishes to testify
19 in person today that you must fill out the white
20 appearance card, which is located on the desk of the
21 sergeant-at-arms near the entrance to this room, even
22 if you have already registered in advance that you
23 will be testifying in person today. I am also going
24 to ask my colleagues to limit their questions and
25 comments to five minutes as a reminder to all of our

1 witnesses, please state your name prior to your
2 testimony for the record.
3

4 I will now turn to Committee Counsel to swear in
5 the administration.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hi. Good morning. Please
7 raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the
8 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
9 before this committee and to respond honestly to
10 Council Member questions? Laurie Cumbo?

11 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: I do.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lance Polivy?

13 COUNSEL POLIVY: I do.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may begin.

15 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: Thank you. Good morning,
16 Chair Rivera and members of the committee. I am
17 Laurie Cumbo, Commissioner of the New York City
18 Department of Cultural Affairs, here to testify in
19 regard to today's topic, Pathways into the Arts and
20 Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers.

21 I just want to preface my testimony by saying we
22 are extremely excited about this topic and we have,
23 as you could say, overperformed in providing as much
24 information as we can about all of the pathways to
25 careers in the arts in New York City.

1
2 This particular hearing has gotten us so excited
3 that we want to figure out a way to consolidate this
4 information so that it can be more readily available,
5 particularly to young people who are looking for
6 careers in the arts. So, we thank you for that, but
7 I just want to give you a preface by saying this will
8 be a longer testimony than usual, but that's because
9 there are so many incredible programs all throughout
10 New York City.

11 This is a topic that is near and dear to my
12 heart. I had an internship at the Metropolitan
13 Museum of Art when I was 15 years old and early work
14 experiences at the Brooklyn Museum and Brooklyn
15 Children's Museum shortly after that. These were
16 formative years for me, which helped me to understand
17 the power of the arts as a career path that offers
18 good jobs that were also deeply rooted in our city's
19 community.

20 So, I just want to say to all of the young people
21 that are here that these pathways are real. I
22 started at the Met and I am Commissioner of the New
23 York City Department of Cultural Affairs, so these
24 are real, viable opportunities for young people.
25 They were fun, they were exciting, and at many

1 organizations they led to good union jobs. We've
2 been inspired by the work happening across the
3 cultural sector to cultivate the next generation of
4 arts workers, but I know that there is still a stigma
5 out there, especially throughout lower income and
6 working class communities, that the arts don't offer
7 a viable career path.

9 We need to change this from both ends, make sure
10 that our arts sector has the support it needs to
11 offer good paying jobs while also creating programs
12 that connect residents to career paths in the art and
13 show them that this is an extraordinary way to have a
14 great job while giving back to your city and your
15 community.

16 One very important way that we have really
17 focused on developing is through the Adams
18 Administration is the city's Summer Youth Employment
19 Program. This is a rite of passage for so many of
20 our city's young people. I know I had a summer youth
21 employment job at Prospect Park and at the Carousel,
22 and everyone who grew up here has a fond SYEP memory
23 they're willing to share.

24 Mayor Adams committed to providing an astounding
25 100,000 summer youth employment positions last year,

1 an ambitious goal that we met, and I am so proud of
2 our close collaboration with DYCD to get more
3 cultural organizations involved in SYEP work sites.
4 In fact, summer youth employment opportunity
5 placements in the arts and cultural industry grew by
6 nearly 28% over summer youth employment in 2023.

7
8 More than 3,000 participants were also placed in
9 related industries, including media, entertainment,
10 and tourism, including museums, production companies,
11 and television streaming services. Members of the
12 cultural institutions group also hosted nearly 400
13 summer youth employment participants. One leader in
14 this regard is Snug Harbor Cultural Center on Staten
15 Island, which hosted nearly 50 summer youth
16 employment participants last year alone.

17 At Snug Harbor, you'll meet SYEP graduates at
18 every level of the organization because they know
19 that this program is a powerful way to tap into New
20 York City's greatest resource, our young people.

21 Through SYEP, New York City's young people get
22 exposure to jobs in cultural organizations and across
23 all sectors. And these organizations in turn get
24 access to a remarkable pool of talent.

1
2 The application period to serve as an SYEP work
3 site this summer is now open. So, to all the
4 cultural groups listening, visit nyc.gov/SYEP to
5 learn more and to apply. And to all the young people
6 who are watching, this is an incredible opportunity
7 for you to participate in. Make sure that you apply.

8 Another program we're proud to support is the
9 CUNY Cultural Corps. Inspired by the city's
10 CreateNYC cultural plan, this program provides paid
11 internship opportunities for CUNY students at dozens
12 of cultural organizations across the city.

13 There are currently 86 cultural partners for this
14 program, from the National Book Foundation to the
15 Bronx Council on the Arts to Harlem Stage and Art
16 Beyond Sight. CUNY students have the opportunity to
17 gain hands-on experience in fields including
18 education and public programming, development,
19 communications, production and curatorial, all while
20 receiving \$20 per hour.

21 This is one key message we want to convey to
22 people considering careers in the arts: The
23 opportunities are endless. The outdated image of the
24 starving artist does not apply here. The arts sector
25 needs people who are good with their hands, who are

1 interested in finance, who are great communicators.

2 These are all skill sets that translate across
3 industries. And the Cultural Corps gives these real-
4 world work experiences to CUNY's already incredibly
5 diverse student body, creating a pipeline that
6 ensures that our cultural workforce reflects NYC's
7 diverse population.
8

9 Of the more than 1,000 Corps members who have
10 gone through the program since it was established,
11 78% identified as people of color. Cultural Corps
12 alumni can be found working in a wide variety of
13 roles across our city's vibrant arts sector.

14 DCLA supports more than 1,000 cultural not-for-
15 profits across the city each year. Many of these
16 organizations have programs that are dedicated to
17 fostering the next generation of talent and opening
18 up doors for New Yorkers of all backgrounds.

19 The city's cultural institution groups have a
20 particularly robust system of internships,
21 fellowships, and other workforce development programs
22 that utilize their world-class institutions to give
23 residents access to a diverse range of professional
24 paths. One key example of this is the SCI Network
25 NYC, a consortium of eight science-based members of

1 the SIG who are committed to providing high-quality
2 STEM internships to the New York City youth. The
3 network includes the Museum of Natural History, New
4 York Hall of Science, Staten Island Zoo, New York
5 Botanical Garden, Queens Botanical Garden, Wave Hill,
6 Wildlife Conservation Society, and Brooklyn Botanic
7 Garden.

8
9 Each year, this consortium hosts nearly 1,100
10 interns who gained experience in a variety of fields,
11 including animal care, horticulture, science
12 communication, teaching, and administration. Make
13 sure, young people, you sign up for this incredible
14 opportunity.

15 According to the network, internships are
16 critical pathways to employment but have historically
17 been available only to those with financial resources
18 and social capital.

19 SCI Network NYC -- I'm going to say it again so
20 you can look it up -- SCI Network NYC is working to
21 ensure that youth from all backgrounds can
22 participate in science internships. We partner with
23 local organizations, councilmembers, and schools to
24 recruit youth and support them as they pursue the
25 rich learning experiences at our institutions. This

1 commitment is borne out in the program's impressive
2 data.

3
4 Of the 1,100 participants, 84% identify as people
5 of color, 59% speak a language other than English at
6 home, and 67% identify as female. We are breaking
7 boundaries. Interns earn \$2.4 million in stipends
8 and wages, and many of the program's graduates have
9 gone on to full-time employment within the network.

10 This is an incredible program, and the SIG's
11 commitment to workforce development extends far
12 beyond these exciting STEM programs.

13 At Carnegie Hall, the B-Side is a program for
14 young people aged 14 to 22 that introduces different
15 career opportunities in the music industry. This
16 program provides industry-related skills and
17 connections and offers participants the opportunity
18 to learn the ins and outs of the music business from
19 guest speakers, field trips, networking events, and
20 more.

21 The Bronx County Historical Society offers
22 several research-based internships and professional
23 development programs. Students from Fordham
24 University and Lehman College get hands-on archival
25 experience through one of these programs. And

1 through their Mott Haven History Keepers program,
2 nine long-time community members in the South Bronx
3 have received extensive training and resources in
4 order to help preserve and tell their neighborhood's
5 history.
6

7 These history keepers have gone through a year of
8 professional development training and will be
9 presenting their work at an international research
10 conference in Montreal this March. Wow.

11 Staying in the boogie-down Bronx for the next
12 example, the Bronx Museum's Teen Council, created in
13 2005, is a paid internship that offers students aged
14 14 through 19 the opportunity to engage deeply in the
15 work of the museum.

16 Applications for the Spring 2025 session of Teen
17 Council are due February 2nd. That's right around
18 the corner. So if there's a teen in your life who
19 might be interested, learn more at bronxmuseum.org.

20 The Brooklyn Museum has a museum education
21 fellowship program for emerging arts professionals.
22 This paid 10-month fellowship offers in-depth
23 fieldwork, teaching experience, and ongoing
24 professional development for museum educators and
25 curators. Alumni of this program have gone on to

1 work at cultural institutions across the city and
2 country, creating a vital pipeline for diverse
3 cultural leaders.
4

5 In 2023, New York City Ballet launched the
6 Emerging Female Choreographers Workshop, which
7 partners with the School of American Ballet to give
8 three women choreographers an opportunity to develop
9 new works with SAB students fostering female talent
10 in ballet. Wow, if only I knew about that when I was
11 younger.

12 At Queens Botanical Garden, the Growing Justice
13 Program involves youth from the Flushing and Corona
14 areas in weekly workshops, hands-on urban farming,
15 running the QBG Farm Stand, and leadership
16 development activities that open their eyes to the
17 possibilities of food justice, environmental
18 sustainability, community health, green careers, and
19 climate change.

20 The Staten Island Zoo offers a robust internship
21 program for undergraduate and graduate students
22 pursuing degrees in biology, zoology, veterinary
23 medicine, or education. During the summer sessions,
24 the education department conducts professional
25 development workshops twice a week.

1
2 Through the Cultural Development Fund, DCLA
3 supports more than 1,000 not-for-profits across the
4 city each year. These grants support a range of
5 professional and workforce development programs.

6 The Stage Directors and Choreographers Society's
7 Professional Development Program creates paid
8 opportunities for early career directors and
9 choreographers to observe or work with established
10 artists throughout the production process. The
11 program provides access, develops skills, and makes
12 possible relationships that are otherwise hard to
13 fund. The Drama League offers a comprehensive career
14 development for emerging directors.

15 Teen Art Salon's Drawing All Stars Program is a
16 free, pre-professional development program for high
17 schoolers focusing on New York City's next generation
18 of artists.

19 Hook Arts Media's Arts Forward Program offers a
20 multi-phase media education pipeline helping nearly
21 90 Brooklyn youth build skills and prepare for media
22 careers.

23 BEAM Center's Youth Projects connect youth to
24 paid training and employment experiences that focus
25 on the creation and teaching of public art projects.

1
2 So Harlem's Creative Collective builds on the
3 organization's mission as a cultural industries
4 incubator, working at the intersection of the arts
5 and economic development. New York Theater's
6 Workshop Administrative Fellowship Program, which
7 represents one of several NYTW initiatives to address
8 the economic barriers that may prevent talented
9 individuals from pursuing careers in theater.

10 I and Daryl Ensemble Tech Track Program teaches
11 students about all aspects of theater production from
12 costume and set design to marketing and lighting
13 design through a variety of hands-on projects.

14 But these are just a few of the programs
15 specifically supported by CDF grants. But I'd like
16 to note that many more organizations are deeply
17 committed to creating equitable pathways into the
18 cultural workforce in practice programs they operate.
19 Whether or not these are specifically mentioned in
20 their CDF applications, groups like the Asian
21 American Arts Alliance, Dance NYC, New York
22 Foundation for the Arts, Arts and Education
23 Roundtable, and other service organizations also
24 offer a range of resources for current and aspiring
25

1 cultural workers to secure work and advance in their
2 careers.
3

4 DCLA also works with agency partners on a number
5 of programs that create pathways into the city's
6 cultural workforce for people from diverse
7 backgrounds.

8 And I'm going to try to abbreviate more of this,
9 but it's just so much good stuff here.

10 The Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment has
11 a number of programs dedicated to opening pathways
12 into the city's creative workforce. Their Made in
13 New York PA training program prepares New York City
14 residents ages 18 and up for entry-level positions in
15 the TV and film industry. Unemployed and low-income
16 New York City residents are eligible for the four-
17 week training and two years of job placement support
18 as production assistants on film, TV, commercial, and
19 music video sets.

20 One partnership I'm particularly proud of is
21 Roundabout Theatre's Theatrical Workforce Development
22 Program, created by Roundabout, MoM, and IATSE and
23 supported through our CDF. This program offers an
24 incredible level of support for people who want to
25 break into the city's performing arts industry.

1 Roundabout's program has also contributed to the
2 progress towards the Adams Administration's moonshot
3 goal of creating 30,000 apprenticeships by 2030. In
4 November of last year, I joined MoM and NYC Talent at
5 Roundabout to announce that the city was already
6 ahead of schedule and halfway to achieving this
7 ambitious goal, with 15,000 apprenticeship positions
8 created through public and private partnerships
9 across multiple industry sectors.
10

11 Our partnership at New York City's Public Arts
12 Office are also doing amazing work in preparing our
13 students for careers in the cultural sector. Their
14 New Work-Based Learning programs bring together arts
15 partners and a DOE teacher to co-facilitate
16 programming for students who are interested in early
17 professional experiences in the arts.

18 Arts-focused public schools also offer robust and
19 rigorous post-secondary prep programs. The High
20 School of Art and Design in Manhattan offers a half-
21 dozen majors in areas like film, video, graphic
22 design, photo illustration, and more. The new Motion
23 Picture Tech in Queens focuses on below-the-line
24 careers in film and TV. They are currently serving
25 an inaugural class of ninth graders who will spend

1 the February school break working in a production
2 company to produce a short narrative film. Wow!

3
4 Fordham High School for the Arts in the Bronx has
5 certified programs in drama and technical theater
6 where students get professional training in
7 stagecraft, lighting, carpentry, and more. Our very
8 own Materials for the Arts program offers development
9 classes that provide teachers with the tools to
10 infuse the arts into a variety of subject areas.
11 These programs allow public school teachers to earn
12 continuing teacher and leader education credit and
13 plus 30 credits towards NYC Public Schools Salary
14 Differential Program.

15 MFTA also partners with the New York City Public
16 Schools Office of Arts and Special Projects to host
17 off-site professional development classes for
18 teachers across the five boroughs. Last year,
19 Materials for the Arts launched its Young Designers
20 Program, a collaboration with BK Style Foundation,
21 supporting talented young designers between the ages
22 of 18 and 25.

23 Culture is the pillar of our economy. In 2019,
24 this creative sector had a \$110 billion local
25 economic impact, generated \$30 billion in wages, and

1 employed 300,000 workers. Tell that to anyone who
2 says that arts and culture isn't a viable workforce
3 development plan.
4

5 Culture is also the backbone of the city's
6 tourism industry, which generates \$74 billion in
7 economic impact with more than \$48 billion coming
8 from direct spending.

9 New York City has attracted 62 million visitors
10 last year, closing in on the \$66 million high water
11 mark achieved in 2019 and helping to drive the city's
12 recovery. Since the start of the Adams
13 Administration, the city has invested more than \$1
14 billion in expense and capital funding in the
15 cultural sector in collaboration with the Council and
16 borough presidents.

17 I'm so proud of this working partnership we have
18 with the Council, which funds a range of cultural
19 initiatives like the Coalition of Theaters of Color,
20 which are critical to smaller BIPOC-led
21 organizations, which are crucial to our city's
22 cultural ecosystem.

23 Slowly but surely, we've seen major progress
24 across our sector in opening up career pathways for
25 people of all backgrounds in our cultural sector.

1
2 One hopeful sign of this is the incredibly diverse
3 class of leaders we currently see across the cultural
4 landscape. We have people of color at the helms of
5 AMNH, BAM, Wave Hill, Brooklyn Arts Council, the
6 Perlman Center, Brooklyn Children's Museum, Bronx
7 Children's Museum, Queens Library, and more.

8 This doesn't even include the trailblazing
9 leaders at organizations that are rooted in
10 communities of color, which continue to foster
11 incredible talent across disciplines. The city is
12 committed to building on our partnership with these
13 institutions to invest in their work and support
14 institutions that are reflective of and responsive to
15 our community.

16 Before I close, I also want to wish a happy Jobs
17 Week to one and all.

18 All week long, the Mayor's Office will be
19 highlighting ways that the city is helping to get New
20 Yorkers into good-paying jobs across the city. One
21 of the most critical ways we can make sure that
22 working people can continue to live here and raise
23 families here. We're proud that the arts provide one
24 important pathway for these great jobs, and the city

1 supports so many vital workforce programs for the
2 arts.
3

4 There's clearly a lot of amazing work happening
5 across the cultural sector aimed at opening up work
6 opportunities. Culture offers an exciting, rewarding
7 way to explore our world and serve our communities.
8 But there are always new challenges arising,
9 especially post-COVID, and new ways for us to meet
10 those challenges.

11 So, I thank you again for the opportunity to
12 discuss today's urgent topic, and I look forward to
13 working in partnership with the Council to find ways
14 we continue to support this work.

15 I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.
16 I want to thank all the people that have come here
17 today and given of their time to testify, and I hope
18 that this hearing will be replayed many more times,
19 because as you can see, New York City is doing
20 phenomenal work with providing workforce development
21 into the arts and cultural sector, and I hope that
22 everyone will support these incredible programs.

23 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you so much. It was
24 comprehensive. 20 minutes of--

25 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: Robust.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: --testimony. We love to
3 hear it.

4 All right, well, I just want to thank you for
5 your work, because I know you're a great New York
6 City cheerleader, and you love the arts and cultural
7 organizations in our city, and I think the goal of
8 this hearing is to hear from so many of the amazing
9 groups that you have mentioned, and then, of course,
10 some that you haven't, not intentionally, but because
11 there are so many across the five boroughs, and
12 they're certainly deserving of a chance to let us
13 know the challenges that they're facing and how we
14 can be of more assistance and support.

15 You mentioned some great programs that we're
16 certainly going to get into. You mentioned the
17 Cultural Corps, you mentioned B-Side, Roundabout.

18 You know, with SYEP, which is the Summer Youth
19 Employment Program, which is a great program, 100,000
20 positions you mentioned last year, we have our
21 cultural institutions and groups hosting around,
22 about 400 SYEP positions.

23 You know, this is something I think we all want
24 to grow. We all want to grow these positions. We
25

1 want to ensure that they're paid and paid a living
2 wage.
3

4 I don't know if I've ever admitted this, but I've
5 never taken an unpaid internship. I've just never
6 felt like I was in the financial position in my own
7 family, growing a very low income, that I could work
8 for no money. I felt like I had to contribute to my
9 household, and I had expenses, and so sometimes it
10 was passing up an opportunity that I found
11 interesting to wait tables, you know, because I knew
12 that that was cash. And I think a lot of people in
13 New York City face that because of so many factors,
14 including the fact that this is a very expensive
15 city. And everyone wants to live here, though,
16 because it is, indeed, the greatest city in the
17 world.

18 So, what are some actions that DCLA is taking to
19 track the progress of some of the strategies that you
20 laid out in your testimony? We know CreateNYC has a
21 number of goals, including an update every two years.

22 So, do you have any metrics or key indicators for
23 these strategies for the past three years? Do you
24 plan to update the plan for 2024 and 2025? And how
25 do you measure success, right? What is that metric?

1
2 What are the outcomes? Are you tracking where some
3 of these individuals are placed? Are you trying to
4 assist them, maybe, into other agencies? Clearly,
5 all skills developed at a cultural institution or
6 group are transferable. There's no question. So can
7 you talk a little about the metrics and outcomes and
8 how you track that success?

9 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: I want to thank you for that
10 question. I think what's so important about this is
11 that for the CUNY Cultural Core Program, we've only
12 tracked it in the way of how many young people
13 participate in it each year.

14 So we've tracked that. We haven't been able to,
15 and perhaps CUNY has been able to do that, to
16 determine exactly where they are going following
17 their internship. But we've tracked the number and
18 the data in terms of how many CUNY Cultural Core
19 participants there are each year.

20 Our CDF grantees, as well as our cultural
21 institution groups, those particular organizations do
22 their own internal tracking. But I think it is a
23 good idea to understand more about how young people
24 are participating and flourishing in these particular
25 organizations and the ability to utilize their final

1 reports to determine how they are faring with the
2 programs. Are they able to expand? Are they able to
3 utilize more young people? Are the wages or the
4 stipends going up, as you pointed to?
5

6 Because one of the things that we've been really
7 proud of is that these internships, for the most
8 part, have been paid internships. Whether it's CUNY
9 Cultural Corp at \$20 an hour to the ones that we
10 mentioned like at Roundabout Theater, all of these
11 programs are stipend-led and that young people have
12 an opportunity to earn while they're also learning.

13 And so, I appreciate that question. We have to
14 do more in terms of understanding where are our young
15 people going? While the organizations do that
16 individually, we haven't consolidated that
17 information from all of them to do a readout report
18 for that.

19 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And obviously, it's just an
20 idea in terms of how we're getting people the
21 comprehensive support that they need financially, and
22 finding the affordable spaces. I mean, let's put
23 housing aside just for a second. These are
24 affordable spaces for rehearsal to create.

25 Those are very few and far in between.

1 I also want to recognize Councilmembers Ossé,
2 Hanif, and Ung. Thank you.

3
4 So, I think the apprenticeships, that's a great
5 pathway to placement, to success, to a career rather
6 than a job. And so, there is the goal of creating
7 30,000 apprenticeships by 2030. You mentioned the
8 Roundabout Theater, which is doing fantastic work.

9 How can cultural institutions, SIGs, and artist
10 nonprofits access this funding so they can enhance
11 their apprenticeships programs?

12 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: How can they enhance the
13 programs?

14 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And access the funding, too.
15 What are ways that they could actually access this
16 funding to create apprenticeships? Because it's one
17 thing to say you want to create them. You need the
18 funding, you need some expertise and guidance, and
19 you also want to make sure that that pathway is laid
20 out fairly clearly.

21 The unions have done this for many, many years
22 over time. And I know they're also trying to
23 diversify where apprenticeships are. Not just write
24 painters, they want to do it across union work as
25 well.

1
2 So what are ways that they can access the funding
3 and then also enhance their apprenticeship programs?

4 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: Well, I'm going to let my
5 general counsel also weigh in on this. But one of
6 the things that is critical for each of these
7 programs, these are public-private partnerships. And
8 so the city provides deep investment.

9 And what we need to see is also more partnership
10 with our private sector as well. So the private
11 sector contributes, we contribute, and we're able to
12 do programs such as that. In the situation of CUNY
13 Cultural Corps, that's a great example of a public-
14 private partnership between private investment,
15 CUNY's investment, city council, mayor's office, our
16 administration.

17 We've been able to partner on that program, and
18 that's really a great example of how we're able to
19 provide paid opportunities for young people to
20 participate in these programs. And we have to do
21 more in terms of showing the data, as you suggested,
22 about how effective these programs, and then
23 presenting that to more of our private sponsors to
24 say, or partners, this is really great work, it's
25 leading the industry in this way, and we need you to

1 participate in this way. And I'll turn it over to
2 Lance.
3

4 COUNSEL POLIVY: I just also wanted to add that
5 we feel so lucky at the city's Department of Cultural
6 Affairs to have the opportunity to partner with other
7 city agencies, SBS, the mayor's office of talent,
8 MOHM, EDC, and so many others that have workforce
9 development programs with careers in the arts. And
10 combined, all working together, I think that's how
11 we'll achieve the best results.

12 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Have you explored the
13 possibility of launching a city program that provides
14 financial support for internships and
15 apprenticeships?

16 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: The only mechanism that we
17 have is our CDF application.

18 And so the CDF application will go online in
19 February, and that's going to be an opportunity for
20 arts organizations to decide what type of programs
21 that they want support and funding from. So many of
22 the organizations that we listed here, these are CDF
23 award recipients. So our CDF award recipients, they
24 are able to highlight for their application that they
25

1 would like support for their workforce development
2 programs.
3

4 And in partnership with the City Council, who
5 also has, as you know, discretionary funding, they
6 can also have the opportunity to apply for funding
7 through that process as well. So, we can do it on
8 our end through the CDF. They can do it through the
9 City Council effort, through the discretionary fund
10 that you have.

11 And we're able to partner and come together to
12 create that level of funding.

13 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Well, I say this probably
14 every hearing. It's very hard for the City Council
15 to carve out discretionary funding for a different
16 program.

17 We're always looking to create new initiatives
18 and expand, because we truly believe in arts and
19 cultures as workforce opportunities, and I've
20 actually been trying for years at this point to
21 create another initiative about this, even before I
22 had the privilege and honor of becoming the Chair,
23 and I will not quit. You all have my commitment that
24 I'll keep trying.
25

1 I think one thing that we're looking for is a bit
2 more of maybe funding, support from the city,
3 especially for youth hands-on experience across
4 various facets of museum operations, because that'll
5 expose them to diverse career opportunities.
6

7 And so, the CDF funding is important, but usually
8 that's just to support existing programming that has
9 proven outcomes, that is successful, they have the
10 data, they have the anecdotal. These are people that
11 are getting placed, that are studying, that are doing
12 great things already. So we're looking to grow that.

13 Some cultural organizations have found it
14 difficult to participate in some of the programs, and
15 as I mentioned, those skills are very transferable,
16 right? Visitor-centered communication, data
17 analysis, foundational teaching skills, all of that
18 is transferable to other industries.

19 Can DCLA play a role in advocating for the
20 inclusion of the cultural sector in the city's
21 apprenticeship opportunities? Can we expand that
22 inclusion? Is that something that we're looking to
23 do?

24 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: We can take it in terms of,
25 we can take it back to our agency and look at what

1
2 you're suggesting, but similar to the council, it is
3 also very difficult for us to create something
4 outside of the CDF Program in terms of funding. So
5 right now, CDF is the only mechanism that we have,
6 but of course there can be many opportunities for us
7 to see what MoEM, DYCD, Small Business Services,
8 Mayor's Office of Talent, how can we collaborate
9 together to be able to see, is there something that
10 we could do to further-- I mean, I would love to see
11 more opportunities where we can see internships and
12 the arts and cultural sector, of course, be a wider
13 part of workforce development plans, not only here
14 for the city, for the state, and on the federal
15 level.

16 We need to continue to infuse the arts in terms
17 of all workforce development conversations. Often
18 when people think of apprenticeships, they think of
19 construction, and they think of those sorts of jobs.
20 We have to reeducate people in terms of them learning
21 that arts and culture are a viable part of all
22 workforce development programs, and we've had a lot
23 of success. This administration gets it. And we are
24 excited to partner with the other agencies in order

25

1
2 to see how can we create a lane just for funding and
3 support.

4 Can't promise anything, but I can promise you
5 that the conversations will happen.

6 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Well, how do you gather
7 feedback from the organizations, and particularly
8 from young artists to shape programs that better
9 address their needs and challenges?

10 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: Thank you for that question.
11 That's something that we-- I think that one of the
12 main ways that we have, the main tool that we have
13 are our organization's final reports.

14 So, every organization that is funded by the New
15 York City Department of Cultural Affairs has to issue
16 a final report on the outcomes of the work that they
17 did. We can then take that information and start to
18 look at it in terms of how organizations are faring
19 with their workforce development, how they're able to
20 recruit, maintain, as well as support interns, as
21 well as apprentices, but we're also able to see the
22 work in action. So, part of my role as commissioner
23 is to be on the ground and seeing these programs in
24 action.

1
2 I've gone to Roundabout Theater several times to
3 see their programming, as well as the Brooklyn
4 Botanic Garden and their horticulture program. We've
5 been able to see these programs in motion and to see
6 how they are developing the next generation of talent
7 and creatives.

8 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: What about young artists
9 particularly? Do you get a chance to connect with
10 them? I know we're always looking to-- I know that
11 young artists are going to say a number of things,
12 including the affordability issues that they're
13 facing.

14 And so they'll ask about housing and how to stay
15 in the city, and I know we're all working on that.
16 The administration and the council is a partnership.
17 Do you gather feedback from young artists?

18 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: Our local arts councils that
19 we support, and I'm so proud of the work that we're
20 able to do. That is our mechanism to be able to
21 support our local arts councils and to make sure that
22 they have mechanisms and tools to be able to provide
23 technical resources, to be able to provide pathways
24 to careers and opportunities in the arts.

1
2 So, our five local arts councils are the critical
3 way that we do that, that we provide that technical
4 service, that they're able to communicate with the
5 artists that they support. Many artists come to the
6 arts councils for everything from job opportunities
7 to looking for workforce development programs, as
8 well as making artists aware of housing opportunities
9 that the city is offering. We make sure that we not
10 only support our local arts councils, but that we
11 remain in close communication with them.

12 We meet annually to discuss their needs and
13 challenges, and that's one way that we work with our
14 local arts councils, but that is our most powerful
15 tool and partner in reaching our arts community and
16 our individual artists throughout New York City.

17 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: How do you ensure that
18 you're supporting young professionals who are from
19 underrepresented communities?

20 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: Mm-hmm. I mean, this
21 testimony really, in a very robust way, goes into how
22 so many of those programs are faring in that way.

23 I mean, just looking at so many of the programs
24 from the CUNY Cultural Corps Program, making sure
25 that the SCI Network, NYC, that's a critical

1 opportunity, and in that one, the commitment is born
2 in the program's impressive data of 1,100
3 participants. Eighty-four percent identify as people
4 of color, 59 percent speak a language other than
5 English at home, and 67 percent identify as female.

6 Interns earn \$2.4 million in stipends and wages,
7 and many of the program's graduates have gone on to
8 full-time employment within the network.

9 And just to remind everyone, this program, the
10 SCI Network, NYC, is a partnership of the Museum of
11 Natural History, New York Hall of Science, Staten
12 Island Zoo, New York Botanical Garden, Queens
13 Botanical Garden, Wave Hill Wildlife Conservation
14 Society, and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

15 And this program is very unique in terms of the
16 fact that it is a STEM-based internship program in
17 New York City, but they are not alone in this. So
18 many of the organizations across New York City are
19 producing stats very similar, are having a similar
20 reach, and are able to get into communities that have
21 been severely underserved for so many years to make
22 sure that they get that research and programming
23 right in their own backyard.
24

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So, you do rely on the
3 organizations to sort of do this outreach, right, to
4 ensure that underrepresented communities are included
5 in their programs? I'm wondering what DCLA does
6 specifically. Do you do any outreach, like social
7 media, how to draw people in that might not
8 necessarily typically have access? So are you
9 dependent on the SCI Network? Are you dependent on
10 CUNY to bring in-- to tap into their own student
11 base? I'm just wondering about outreach and how DCLA
12 has participated in the past.

13 COUNSEL POLIVY: One way that we ensure that that
14 outreach is truly equitable is through the CDF
15 Program. And so through the 2023 reforms to CDF, we
16 have made every effort to bring new voices into the
17 CDF with over 100 new organizations represented and
18 more groups of color being a part of the CDF Program.
19 We're so proud of the work that we've been able to
20 achieve over the last three years through CDF.

21 And so, that then amplifies all of the work that
22 we're trying to do. So those then become partners
23 that are speaking to their communities and are in
24 each borough and every corner of each borough. So
25 that's one of the best tools that we have to get this

1 information about programs that our agency is doing
2 into communities throughout New York City.

3
4 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: I'm going to take it one
5 step further, and I know my agency is going to jump
6 all over me after I say this, but just reading the
7 testimony, hearing the questions, seeing all of the
8 providers here, I would love for our agency to be
9 able to do a creative job workforce fair. And
10 something where we gather all of these great partners
11 in one room, we invite young people from all over New
12 York City to be able to meet and engage and talk with
13 so many of these cultural providers so that they can
14 really learn about these different programs. Because
15 like it was said, some are ballet programs, some are
16 STEAM programs, some are STEM programs, some are
17 focused on horticulture.

18 You know, and when you're 15, 16 years old, you
19 don't necessarily know where exactly you want to be.
20 For me, I was a student at Brooklyn Tech, and so that
21 opportunity to work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art
22 came through that particular school. And so, it's
23 important for us to partner with DOE to get the word
24 out.

1
2 But I would love to see something where young
3 people have the ability to actually talk with those
4 cultural institutions because, I don't know, maybe if
5 I had seen the ballet program, I would have been a
6 famous ballerina. That's just in my mind. My mom's
7 probably joking and laughing at home about that.

8 But I was happy that I was able to be at the Met.
9 But who knows? If I had been a part of the program
10 with STEAM, I might have been a scientist. But you
11 kind of go with what you're exposed to, and so it
12 would be great for them to see all of the different
13 kinds of institutions, from roundabout and seeing
14 about lighting and engineering and technical
15 experience. Our young people could do so many things
16 if they had the right connection and exposure.

17 So, when I get back and my agency asks me who's
18 going to do all the work to get that together, I'm
19 going to say I'm doing it in partnership with
20 Councilmember Carlina Rivera.

21 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Well, you know, I don't shy
22 away from work. I love that. But I'll tell you, I
23 think you just said something that's really
24 important, it's the stability I think that people are
25 also attracted to, especially in a city this

1 expensive. I think a creative job fair is a great
2 idea. I think a lot of groups, what they want to do
3 is they want to have as many people working for them
4 as possible.
5

6 And sometimes the issue is ensuring that the
7 people that exist within the organization itself are
8 being paid a living wage, right?

9 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: Right.

10 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So we want to get these
11 organizations stable. It's a very difficult time for
12 them right now. Private fundraising has proven to be
13 very, very difficult at the moment.

14 And so the public-private partnerships are so
15 important, as you mentioned, and we brought them into
16 a lot of these programs.

17 So, I think one thing that we want to do to start
18 is to hear, we're going to hear from these groups
19 today. I want to create another opportunity to hear
20 from you all again to really figure out, like, is
21 this creative job fair, like, is this a good idea?
22 What else can we do? Funding's always going to be at
23 the top of the list, there's no question.
24
25

1 And you should mention that every single time.
2
3 And they will, right? They always do. As you
4 should, because you are deserving.

5 But I love that. I would love for someone from a
6 very, like, working-class, even low-income
7 neighborhood to say, yeah, I could do an internship,
8 a paid internship at a museum, and then you never
9 know what could lead from that. You know, there's so
10 many different types of jobs, especially.

11 Are you providing education and resources? We
12 talked about museum operations, but there's also
13 things like copyright and licensing and protecting
14 intellectual property, especially for emerging
15 artists. Are you all providing education or
16 resources about that?

17 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: Our agency specifically does
18 not, but MoEM does provide that type of education and
19 internship opportunities. I would definitely look
20 into MoEM. Hopefully they can join us the next time
21 we participate in this, because the mayor's office,
22 they have a number of programs dedicated to pathways
23 into the city's creative workforce.

24 I'll just read off some of them. Their Made in
25 New York PA training program prepares New York City

1 residents ages 18 and up for entry-level positions in
2 the TV and film industry. Unemployed and low-income
3 New York City residents are eligible for the four-
4 week training and two years of job placement support
5 as production assistants on film, TV, commercial, and
6 music video sets.
7

8 A study released in 2023 found that over the 15
9 years of the program, there was a marked increase in
10 diversity within New York City's film and TV
11 industry, and a 128% increase in salaries over five
12 years of program graduates. MoEM's post-production
13 training program, Made in NY Animation Project, Media
14 MKRS programs provide additional career support for
15 people working across the city's creative sectors.
16 MoEM works with the Department of Small Business
17 Services and Brooklyn Workforce Innovations to run
18 these successful programs.

19 And so that's just one of the major programs that
20 they do. But I'd also like to suggest for many young
21 people, I went through or worked with them with
22 Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts, which was an
23 incredible program that helped me when I was founding
24 the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts.
25 They helped in tremendous ways in terms of providing

1 that level of support, and they do have internship
2 opportunities there as well.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Yeah, I agree. I used to
5 work for a similar group that provided non-profits
6 with business transaction services, so that was a
7 really interesting side to see. So I agree, it's
8 totally needed.

9 I do want to just ask you, and I agree, MoEM is
10 also a really valuable agency, and we welcome their
11 contribution and their partnership always, as I know
12 so many people in the room do.

13 I just have a question that's more about some of
14 the rhetoric around DEI, right? Diversity, equity,
15 and inclusion, and this sort of-- I don't want to say
16 sort of, it's been pretty direct attack to roll back
17 civil rights protections and equal employment
18 opportunities from the federal administration. And
19 while a lot of that is very, very new in terms of
20 what's coming out of the White House, it's just
21 something that I know you are so passionate about,
22 and you've been such an incredible advocate, and how
23 is DCLA responding to some of these, I guess,
24 attacks? What would the agency do if the federal
25

1 government ordered an end to DEI programs in New York
2 City? Have you all discussed that at all?

3
4 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: Well, DEI is at the
5 foundation of New York City. There's no way that New
6 York City could exist, function, without the creative
7 voices from all over New York City that make it what
8 it is. This is-- DEI can't be dismantled here in
9 New York City. The level of diversity here is
10 incredible. It's why people come from all over the
11 world to visit New York City. It's why people choose
12 to live here. And the creative energy that is here
13 in New York City simply can't be dismantled.

14 And we see that all across New York City. I just
15 did a hard hat walking tour of the new Studio Museum
16 in Harlem building. I just went to the Three Kings
17 Day celebration at El Museo. I travel all across
18 this city. I was just looking at pictures that I
19 attended of the Chinese New Year, Year of the Snake
20 at MOCA.

21 I mean, this is the heart of diversity, equity,
22 and inclusion. This is really essentially the
23 birthplace. What we do here as second nature or the
24 air that we breathe, in other parts of the nation,
25 it's something that they've had to work harder at.

1
2 But we are essentially the boilerplate, the blueprint
3 for how diverse communities can work together.

4 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I agree with that. I knew
5 you would give us hope in your answer when I decided
6 to ask that. It's just we've created specific
7 programs and even positions within this building to
8 ensure that we're on track and that we're exceeding
9 our goals.

10 So, I know for many organizations it's a bit
11 intimidating to hear. But I think hearing from us
12 that it's something that we intend to champion rather
13 than ever cower to.

14 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: I think something that we
15 can look at also, which is a strong indicator, is
16 that Mayor Eric Adams has prided himself on being the
17 MWBE champion, and he has worked incredibly hard to
18 infuse MWBE in all lines of communication here,
19 because he understands that MWBE wealth and
20 contributions are what's going to take so many low
21 income communities out of that particular situation.

22 When people have good paying jobs, when people
23 are able to start their own businesses, when people
24 are able to thrive and to be able to start a
25 business, to start a company, to be able to start a

1 not-for-profit, those are critical ways to lift
2 people up out of poverty. That is essentially the
3 work that I've been doing every single day here, but
4 on that level of being a cultural leader in New York
5 City.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: We thank you for your
8 service.

9 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Those are all the questions
11 that I have for you today. I just want to thank you
12 for bringing the information and the data. We look
13 forward to that being utilized or publicized in any
14 way that I feel is appropriate or helpful to the
15 groups that are here. I hope you'll enjoy hearing
16 from them. I know you see them all the time.

17 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: That's right.

18 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: They're here and they're
19 fantastic and I'm looking forward to their testimony.

20 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: Thank you so much. I just
21 wanted to add, we are going to make this information
22 more publicly available. Now that we've compiled this
23 information, We want to share it with our broader
24 community. But also, I do always stay until the very
25 end of the hearings, but unfortunately, because this

1 hearing came on a little bit at the last moment, we
2 have interviews at our agency that I have to
3 participate in, but I will stay for as long as I
4 possibly can.

5
6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: We're here for hiring.

8 COMMISSIONER CUMBO: Right.

9 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: We love to hear that.

10 Okay. So, we are going to now move on to public
11 testimony.

12 I now open the hearing for public testimony. I
13 want to remind members of the public this is a formal
14 government proceeding and that decorum shall be
15 observed at all times. As such, members of the
16 public shall remain silent at all times.

17 The witness table is reserved for people who wish
18 to testify. No video recording or photography is
19 allowed from the witness table. Further, members of
20 the public may not present audio or video recordings
21 as testimony, but may submit transcripts of such
22 recordings to the Sergeant-at-Arms for inclusion in
23 the hearing record.

24 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please
25 fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant-at-Arms

1 and wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will
2 have two minutes to speak on today's hearing topic,
3 Pathways Into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New
4 Yorkers. If you have a written statement or
5 additional written testimony you wish to submit for
6 the record, please provide a copy of that testimony
7 to the Sergeant-at-Arms.
8

9 And I will now call the first panel. Jamel
10 Burgess Carnegie Hall, David Freudenthal from
11 Carnegie Hall. Oh, he's taking a pic. All right.
12 You heard your name. Oh, we have quite the Carnegie
13 Hall panel. Fabulous. I think it's Dimitri, Ian Su,
14 Ayanna Cole.

15 MR. BURGESS: Good morning.

16 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Good morning. Thank you for
17 being here.

18 MR. BURGESS: Good morning, Chair Rivera, members
19 of the committee. My name is Jamel Burgess. I am
20 the Assistant Director of Social Impact Programs at
21 Carnegie Hall. With me here today is Ayanna, David,
22 Ian, and Dimitri, who you'll get to hear from
23 shortly.

24 We are glad that Carnegie is prioritizing-- Or
25 that the Council is prioritizing the workforce

1 development and grateful for the opportunity to
2 testify about Carnegie's whole youth program, the B-
3 Side. And also thanks to the Chair and to the
4 Commissioner for highlighting the B-Side earlier.
5

6 The purpose of the B-Side is to promote careers
7 in arts and culture in New York and to foster the
8 next generation of innovative music industry leaders
9 by helping New Yorkers ages 14 to 22 achieve the
10 following: developing an understanding of the music
11 business and the roles of music labels, cultivating
12 decision-making and navigating professional
13 scenarios, gaining hands-on experience to
14 understanding how the music industry operates, and
15 build a network of industry professionals and their
16 peers and applying the knowledge gained in their
17 careers.

18 Over the course of this year's season, the B-Side
19 will work with 65 participants from across New York
20 City. They will engage in week-long, intensive
21 seminars followed by bi-weekly workshops implemented
22 by Carnegie Hall team, our teaching artists, and
23 guest faculty experts from the field.

24 Students learn different career paths throughout
25 the music industry, engage in conversations with

1 experts, take field trips to recording studios,
2 record labels, and other professional settings, and
3 of course, attend concerts at Carnegie Hall.

4
5 The B-Side aims to address the lack of diversity
6 in the business side of the music industry by
7 encouraging participants from young people that
8 traditionally are underrepresented in the field,
9 particularly BIPOC youth. We are proud to say that
10 B-Side is a part of Speaker Adams' Innovative
11 Criminal Justice Initiative and outreach prioritizes
12 communities that are impacted by the justice system.

13 In addition, our collaborations with partners
14 like ACS and community board organizations that work
15 with youth that are justice impacted. To promote
16 access to this program, the B-Side is free to
17 participants and Carnegie Hall provides stipends,
18 food, and MetroCards for all young people who are
19 participating in our program.

20 In B-Side, we acknowledge that the business
21 learning opportunities are few and far between and
22 usually costly, and these programs are usually not
23 represented by young people from the communities we
24 serve.

1
2 The B-Side seeks to open the door for the
3 creative economy for youth who are often denied these
4 career paths. We thank the committee for your
5 interest and investment in these programs, and we
6 encourage the council to continue to support the
7 important work that other programs by our cultural
8 colleagues across the city are doing.

9 Thank you for allowing me to testify today.

10 MR. SU: Good morning, and thank you to the
11 committee for listening to our testimony. My name is
12 Ian Su. It's an honor to be here.

13 I'm 19 years old. I'm from Queens, and I'm an
14 artist, I'm a producer, I'm an audio engineer, I love
15 to play guitar, and I play live shows with my band.

16 This year, we are going to Governor's Ball Music
17 Festival 2025.

18 And I didn't really know what to expect with the
19 B-Side when I first entered the program and I got
20 accepted. I had nothing at that point in my life.
21 It was in 2023, maybe about two years ago. I was
22 finishing my senior year of high school, and the idea
23 of being a musician and pursuing a career as a
24 professional one was, it was always a dream, but it
25 always seemed out of reach.

1 The first thing, when I entered the program, that
2
3 I found was that Carnegie Hall wasn't playing around.
4 On the first day, we got to hear from artist
5 management in Columbia Records. Over the course of
6 the next week, Sony Music, Alamo Records, RCA
7 Records, people who worked with some of the musicians
8 that I myself idolize.

9 I respected and still respect the B-Side
10 extremely highly, because from day one, they made me
11 feel like I was a professional, even though I may not
12 have had the footing that I do now. They gave me
13 tools and knowledge that I could immediately start
14 applying to my life, no matter where in the timeline
15 of the career I was in.

16 As an independent artist without a team of any
17 kind, I really have to be my own manager. I have to
18 handle my distribution, my marketing, my press
19 releases. I have to reach out for my own interviews.
20 I have to make my own documentaries if I want
21 documentaries about myself. I have to book my own
22 venues for shows and work with the organizers. This
23 is kind of a double-edged sword in that I get to
24 control everything, but if I lose track of stuff,
25 that stuff begins to control me.

1
2 But because I got to learn about all this stuff
3 through this incredible program, I never found it
4 overwhelming or scary. B-Side taught me to be humble
5 in every conversation, no matter who I was talking
6 to, and be eager to learn about their lives, but also
7 carry confidence in me so that they would take me
8 seriously.

9 Ultimately, B-Side set something in me, not just
10 with information, but with the inspiration to work
11 hard.

12 And to close, I don't want to make it look like
13 the B-Side is something that gives you answers or a
14 playbook. There is no playbook or formula in the
15 music industry to achieving your dream in that, but
16 it was the people who facilitated this program,
17 people like Dr. Donald Garner and Ms. Alexis
18 Atkinson, and the people that I got to meet through
19 this program that showed me that it was possible.

20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Just to make sure that my--
22 Wait, I have to know. You didn't even say your band's
23 name.

24 MR. SU: The one-- I'm in three bands right now.
25 I have my main project-- I have my main project,

1 which is just Ian Su, and the band I'm going to
2 Governor's Ball with is a band called the Kids Rock
3 for Kids House Band, which is an incredible band of
4 young-but-established musicians.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Great. Awesome.
7 Congratulations.

8 MR. JACKSON: Thank you. Good morning, everyone.
9 Thank you, again, for having us here. My name is
10 Dimitri Jackson. I'm 22. I completed the B-Side
11 last year in 2024.

12 I'm a songwriter, I play piano, I sing, also go
13 to BMCC, which is right across the road from here.

14 So, I first moved to New York City in August of
15 2023 to pursue school in music. And of course when I
16 got here, the ability, the desire to be an artist was
17 something that was growing inside of me, but I
18 realized that passion without a sense of direction
19 sometimes feels like a shot in the dark. And I first
20 heard about the B-Side through a fellow classmate,
21 great singer, former BMCC student named Andre, who
22 attended this program the year before me.

23 A short while later, Andre now goes to Berklee
24 College of Music on a full scholarship -wow --and we
25

1 are both members of the Youth Alumni Council here at
2 the B-Side.
3

4 As an international student, balancing academics
5 with the career and the social life can be extremely
6 difficult, not to mention living so far away from
7 close friends and family. But like Ian said, the
8 community at the B-Side really welcomed me with
9 warmth and acceptance from the very first day.

10 And this is something that I really wanted to
11 stress the importance of because as something that
12 most people in their early adolescence or early 20s
13 struggle with is finding a sense of identity, and in
14 somewhere like New York, it's hard to. But I have to
15 say that Carnegie Hall has made me realize that I'm
16 on the right path.

17 We all know the importance of music in our
18 community, especially the impact it can have on young
19 people. As a young artist and musician myself,
20 navigating the waters of the music industry was very
21 overwhelming and daunting without the right
22 environment. But the B-Side has provided me and
23 people like Ian with the space to grow and learn from
24 some of the best in the industry, and it has really
25 been a phenomenal experience.

1
2 At first, I was worried that maybe I was, you
3 know, biting off more than I could chew or perhaps
4 underqualified, but like one of our great
5 facilitators, Ms. Alexis, said, there's a space in
6 the room for all of you, and to this day it's
7 something that really sticks with me.

8 So thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you so much, and
10 congratulations on your success as well.

11 MR. JACKSON: Thank you.

12 MS. COLE: Good morning, my name is Ayanna Cole,
13 I'm the Director of Social Impact Programs at
14 Carnegie Hall's Wild Music Institute, and we are
15 complete. We'll take any questions you have.

16 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Oh, okay, great. So how is
17 the B-Side program funded? Do you have any-- Do you
18 have financial needs that aren't being met?

19 MR. FREUDENTHAL: I'm David Freudenthal, I'm the
20 Government Relations Director. I'm going to take
21 that one.

22 Thank you for the question, Madam Chair. So as
23 Jamel referenced, we're grateful for the support the
24 City Council has provided us through the Innovative
25

1 Criminal Justice Initiative, which is a portion of
2 the, you know, important funding toward this program.

3 Our direct program costs for the B-Side are about
4 \$330,000. Then you can double that when you look at
5 the staff costs and kind of all, you know, the whole
6 thing.

7 And right now, I am-- we are challenged, as much
8 of the cultural field is, with some structural
9 deficits, and everything-- So there's about two-
10 thirds of this program that is not directly funded.

11 And I would say that for our organization, and
12 I'm sure we're not alone in this, everything that is-
13 - where there's not committed funding is on the
14 tables at risk.

15 Carnegie Hall has a deep commitment to its
16 support to New Yorkers in school service and
17 community service, with work in juvenile justice and
18 at-risk youth, a huge amount of work in early
19 childhood and mental health and mental well-being.
20 All of this work is unfortunately on the table in the
21 year ahead.

22 And we are grateful for the Council's
23 consideration of the-- in order to continue and
24

1 expand this work that we take so seriously. And, you
2 know, you heard from my colleagues.
3

4 Oh, just sorry. And I want to acknowledge,
5 talking about the staff, we've got Lisa and Bianca
6 and Steve. It takes a village to do this work. And
7 I'll just add in that, you know, what's different
8 from this between what you heard about and why this
9 is so expensive to do, it's not like a-- you know,
10 it's not an exposure program.

11 This is deep, ongoing work with the participants.
12 You know, you get out of this what you put into it.
13 And so just recognizing that, you know, Carnegie Hall
14 is committed in that way to spending the money to do
15 this work correctly, to get to these outcomes and
16 opportunities for the participants.

17 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Do you have to promote the
18 program or do people find you? And how do you
19 connect also with individuals who aren't in high
20 school? Maybe those with a GED or other high school
21 equivalency program.

22 MS. COLE: Yeah, we promote the program. Thank
23 you for the question. We promote the program and
24 invest pretty significantly in social media and try
25 to talk to young people where they are and where

1 they're getting information. We do pay particular
2 interest to zip codes because we are looking to make
3 sure that we are really recruiting deeply in New York
4 City to young people who may be disconnected from
5 school or work, in addition to, of course, being open
6 to young people who hear about it because of their
7 own resources or their parents' resources.
8

9 But for young people who are not in high school
10 or in high school equivalency programs, we do partner
11 with the DOE's District 79 programs where they're
12 working with young people who are either overage and
13 undercredited, or working, excuse me, at night and
14 going to school, as well as community-based
15 organizations.

16 So we do a lot of community outreach in terms of
17 learning what organizations are doing already and
18 then partnering with them to either table at their
19 events, go to programming, and talk to students and
20 families in the communities where they are.

21 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you for that. I, you
22 know, because obviously I can see Ian and Dimitri are
23 here and I will call you success stories.

24 I hope you never feel underqualified again,
25 because you're working out of Carnegie Hall. But

1
2 besides that, I think you've worked really hard to
3 get where you're at. And so I think many people in
4 this room are proud of you.

5 So there are clear examples here. Amazing.

6 What about data? Do you have data to show that
7 B-Side is reaching its goals?

8 MS. COLE: Yeah, we have. So, for the pilot year
9 and the two years that followed, we did evaluation
10 and continued tracking of our participants. And we
11 also continue meeting with our participants after
12 they've completed the beginner level of B-Side. So
13 we have close to 90% of our young people are either
14 in school or working.

15 For example, a young woman, Maya, who couldn't be
16 here with us today. She got a job recently at ASCAP
17 and couldn't get off of work today. So, a very good
18 reason.

19 Ella, who was one of our participants who
20 connected with one of our guest faculty members from
21 Roc Nation. She did apply and successfully get an
22 internship at Roc Nation. We have Dimori, who's at
23 the College of Staten Island, who is currently
24 majoring in communications.

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And then we have students like Sean, who is still trying to figure out his way and comes and meets with us each month, along with the support of our other staff with our alumni.

And you mentioned earlier, you know, looking for affordable rehearsal space. Once our participants complete the B-Side and are part of this community, they have free rehearsal space at Carnegie Hall that they can use at any time.

So we really try to create a community where we continue support. And this season, we are developing new evaluation and tracking as the cohorts continue to grow, to make sure that we are tracking and supporting understanding where young people are. And then looking at how we scaffold our programming to support our alum.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: That's incredible. So you-- I know you're, you want to ensure that that two-thirds of funding is coming in. Would you, I guess, do you have plans for expanding the program? Are you just trying to maintain what it is? And I'd also like to hear just from-- would you call yourselves alumni?

1 All right. So from the alumni, you know, what
2 you'd like to see the program do, like maybe expand.
3 I'm sure you, maybe you tell friends or other artists
4 about it. And how competitive it is to get in,
5 considering, you know, it's not, it's an expensive
6 program to run, for good purpose, of course.

7 MS. COLE: I'll start with the last one first.
8 We-- It is a business program and it's not a music
9 program. So I want to make sure that we're
10 representing it in a way that a young person can have
11 no experience, zero experience, still apply for the
12 program.

13 We're looking for young people who are curious.
14 We happen to have amazing musicians who apply and
15 we're totally welcoming them as well. But you do not
16 have to have any music experience to apply.

17 You just need to be curious about careers in the
18 business side of the music industry. Yes, we are
19 looking and in the current plans to expand. We're
20 scaffolding.

21 So right now, both gentlemen sitting next to me
22 completed our beginner level programming. So, we are
23 in the process of planning an intermediate level
24 program where we can focus more on specific career
25

1 tracks or paths and build on what they've already
2 learned and begin to have direct paths into
3 internships, apprenticeships, and job shadowing
4 opportunities. So, we're working on that currently.
5

6 And we are partnering with, in the process of
7 collaborating and partnering with an independent
8 music publishing organization that's very interested
9 in working with us and providing those type of
10 internship spaces and helping us to prepare young
11 people for internships.

12 I think you said one more thing that I've
13 forgotten now.

14 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I'll just check in with
15 alumni, see if they had any further feedback.

16 MS. COLE: Oh, sorry. One last thing. Thank
17 you. Cold medicine. I can't remember stuff. So,
18 one last thing that we are committed to and have been
19 doing this season is having very strategic
20 conversations with our partners at ACS as well as
21 Correctional Health Services so that we are tapping
22 into young people who are justice impacted.

23 So, it's happening right now and as we picked
24 this cohort of young people. So, any young person
25 who is justice impacted, we're creating a pathway for

1 them to be able to apply even if they're in the
2 process of transitioning out of ACS detention. So,
3 we're currently creating concrete steps for them to
4 be able to participate. So that's another part of
5 our expansion.
6

7 MR. JACKSON: So I think something that I've
8 actually mentioned this to one of the coordinators,
9 Miss Lisa, in the back is I think it would be great
10 to see almost some form of like a final project at
11 the end of the B-side in terms of, you know, you have
12 great musicians, you have great artists, you have
13 people that want to be A&Rs, you have people that
14 want to work in H&R.

15 So, I think it would be amazing to do some kind
16 of like almost benefit festival-slash-concert where
17 you take the talents that you have with the music and
18 you take these people that are interested in the
19 behind the scenes and the technical and every aspect
20 of it is covered.

21 And I think it would be great to show this is all
22 for something and show how everyone can delegate
23 roles to each other.

24 MR. SU: I think it's always hard to answer this
25 question because I always have ideas for how they

1
2 could expand and then they do it without me even
3 asking. For example, after I finished my program, it
4 was like a week long, I wished that I could reconnect
5 with some of these people and they started a council
6 or committee of alumni who would meet together once a
7 week and talk about how the program is going. I got
8 to reconnect with some of the people that I met
9 through this program. So, I had a really great
10 experience in that and I'm glad I'm still connected
11 to the B-side in that way.

12 They're really good at making sure that if you've
13 been through this program, you stay connected. But
14 definitely the B-side is something that I hope
15 everybody who is even interested just a little bit
16 interested in the music industry and business, I hope
17 that they can experience that. And with extended
18 funding, with all that, I hope that we can expand to
19 more and more people and have the program be even
20 larger scale.

21 For example, my program was a week long. It's
22 since moved on to once a week for an extended period
23 of months. And I hope that that can continue to be
24 something that keeps growing and reaches more people.

25 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you.

1
2 MR. JACKSON: Is it okay if I just add one more
3 thing to that? I'm sorry. I just, I just want to
4 say again, like, I think this is a great program and
5 it feels like something where obviously you need
6 funding, obviously, to make things happen.

7 But the most power of this program is kind of
8 just in it, in itself. Like, for me, it was my first
9 time ever stepping foot at Carnegie Hall. So it kind
10 of does something to you and you think to yourself,
11 wow, I am just a part of something so much bigger
12 than me.

13 And I think that really speaks for itself. Like,
14 when more and more people join the program, it's like
15 your first day there, you just already feel like, you
16 know, you're doing the right thing. So, I hope it
17 continues.

18 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Yeah. It's like a culture
19 shock in the best way possible.

20 MR. JACKSON: Yeah.

21 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Right. All right. Well,
22 thank you to both of you for sharing what you're up
23 to. And of course, to your amazing support team at
24 Carnegie Hall. And thank you so much for your
25 testimony.

1 All right. Next panel. La-Tia Morris from AMNH.
2
3 Erin Hatzithomas-- Hatzithomas, right-- Okay, from
4 the Botanical Garden.

5 Laura Monges-Velazquez from the New York Hall of
6 Science. Erin Prada from WCS. Yandel Ramirez from
7 WCS. And Albeliza Perez from AMNH.

8 Who'd like to start?

9 Is the light on?

10 MS. PRADA: Okay, now it's working.

11 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Yeah. Thank you so much.

12 MS. PRADA: Hi. Thank you, Chairwoman Rivera and
13 members of the committee. My name is Erin Prada, and
14 I serve as the Assistant Director of Youth
15 Development at the Wildlife Conservation Society.
16 WCS manages the Bronx Zoo, the New York Aquarium, the
17 Central Park Zoo, the Prospect Park Zoo, and the
18 Queen Zoo. And I'm also very excited to be here as I
19 support the administration of the SCI Network NYC
20 collaboration partnership.

21 So, thank you for your opportunity to let us
22 address the committee today.

23 Our five parks here in New York City not only
24 rank among the city's most popular tourist
25 destinations and family attractions but also function

1 as vital educational resources and employment hubs
2 within their boroughs. Partially funded by the City
3 of New York, these parks contribute to preserving
4 endangered species while offering environmental
5 education to thousands of educators and children.
6 Additionally, they enable us to deliver diverse
7 programming and interactive educational experiences.
8

9 In New York City alone, WCS employs over 2,000
10 individuals and is one of the city's largest
11 employers of youth. In 2018, with funding from the
12 New York City Council and the Speaker, we developed
13 the WCS career lattice to support the 1,900 young
14 people ages 14 to 24 who participate in volunteer
15 positions, internships, and part-time jobs at our
16 five parks.

17 This integrated career pathways initiative
18 ensures that youth from historically excluded groups
19 gain expanded access to opportunities at our
20 institutions, along with training, case management,
21 and access to a rich network of professionals.

22 Earlier, Commissioner Cumbo was mentioning,
23 talking about the idea of a job fair. For anyone
24 listening between the ages of 14 and 24, this
25 Saturday at the Bronx Zoo is WCS's annual WCS Youth

1 Jive. It is an interactive job fair for young people
2 to not only learn how to enter into the pipeline at
3 WCS, but to learn about all the volunteer internship
4 and job opportunities.
5

6 Building on the success of the WCS career lattice
7 in 2022, we created SciNetworkNYC, a partnership of
8 eight science-based cultural institutions who support
9 New York City youth in building the confidence,
10 skills, and social capital to advance in STEM fields.

11 In 2024, collectively, our organizations hosted
12 1,100 interns who gained hands-on experience in
13 fields such as animal care, horticulture, science
14 communication, science research.

15 Our youth earned more than \$2.4 million in
16 stipends and wages. And additionally (this is very
17 important) 84% of our interns identify as people of
18 color, as compared to 69% of New York City residents.

19 Historically, internships have been accessible
20 primarily to those with financial resources and
21 social capital. Through SciNetworkNYC, we strive to
22 ensure that youth from all backgrounds can
23 participate in science internships and benefit from
24 these transformative opportunities. This is why a
25 collaborative partnership like SciNetworkNYC is

1 vital. When you compare our statistics to the
2 national statistics, in 2021, a quarter of the U.S.
3 workforce worked in STEM occupations. That's 36.8
4 million workers. Black or African-American workers
5 comprised only 8% of workers in STEM occupations,
6 which is lower than their percentage of the total
7 workforce. The percentage of STEM workers that were
8 Hispanic was 15% in STEM, compared with 18% of all
9 workers.
10

11 So having collaborations like SciNetworkNYC to
12 focus on the impact of our internships and recruiting
13 young people from historically excluded backgrounds
14 has a lot of impact. 77% of participants in 2024
15 reported that their internship helped them identify
16 an interest in working or interning at cultural
17 institutions in the future. And for many, these
18 experiences have provided new perspectives on
19 science, inspiring transformative career aspirations.

20 And then just to wrap up, the SciNetworkNYC
21 program is the first of its kind in New York City,
22 offering paid internships with wraparound services to
23 over 1,000 youth annually. We look forward to
24 continued partnership and support from the council.
25 With your continued support of \$2 million in the FY26

1 budget, cultural institutions like WCS can continue
2 empowering a diverse cohort of young New Yorkers with
3 the skills and experiences needed to build
4 meaningful, lifelong careers in STEM.
5

6 I'd like to pass... Yes, I'd like to introduce
7 Yandel Ramirez, who was a high school intern at the
8 Bronx Zoo.

9 MR. RAMIREZ: Thank you, Chairwoman Rivera and
10 the members of the committee for the opportunity to
11 provide testimony today. My name is Yandel Ramirez
12 and I am 17 years old.

13 I live in the Bronx and I am a junior at the
14 International Baccalaureate World School. In the
15 summer and fall of 2024, I had the opportunity to
16 join Project TRUE, Teens Researching Urban Ecology,
17 an internship at the Bronx Zoo that connected me with
18 an amazing team of mentors and the chance to conduct
19 hands-on scientific research in the Bronx.

20 During the program, I worked with a team of
21 fellow high school students and my undergraduate
22 mentor to study the American eel at the Bronx River
23 Dams.

1 We collected water moths, examined
2 macroinvertebrates, and monitored water quality, all
3 while learning the ins and outs of ecological
4 research. We spent weeks building our skills,
5 learning about ecology, analyzing scientific
6 articles, conducting literature review, developing
7 communication and speaking skills, and designing
8 research posters.
9

10 Our findings were showcased at multiple research
11 symposiums, providing a rewarding opportunity to
12 share our work with others.

13 The Project TRUE team also supported me in
14 applying for the Summer Youth Employment Program,
15 allowing me to receive hourly wages for my summer
16 Project TRUE internship. Beyond the research,
17 Project TRUE was filled with transformative
18 experiences. We went on trips across New York City,
19 meeting other organizations and young people,
20 exploring natural environments and discovering
21 various career pathways.

22 College preparation and other workshops taught me
23 how to build a strong resume, prepare for interviews,
24 and apply for scholarships, equipping me with the
25 tools for my academic and professional future. More

1
2 importantly, this internship instilled practical
3 skills like team management, scientific writing, and
4 teamwork while showing me how science and research
5 can contribute to the understanding and protecting
6 the environment.

7 What truly made Project TRUE special, however,
8 was a sense of community. The mentors and my peers
9 felt like family, creating an environment of trust
10 and support that will remain for me for years to
11 come. I am deeply grateful for this experience and
12 for the relationships I built with the mentors who I
13 know will provide guidance in the future.

14 Thank you for your time.

15 MS. MORRIS: Good morning-- or I don't think
16 it's afternoon yet. Okay. My name is La-Tia Morris
17 and I'm here today to provide my testimony of my
18 experience at the American Museum of Natural History.

19 My journey at the museum began when I was in high
20 school, and I completed my first internship by
21 participating in their high school intern program
22 centered on science communication. The program
23 focused on facilitating conversations with the public
24 in the halls of the museum and discovering ways to
25 relay information to a variety of audiences while

1 ensuring their experience is both dynamic and
2 engaging.
3

4 At the time, I was a girl from Far Rockaway who
5 knew next to nothing about anthropology.

6 While completing the internship, I gained
7 confidence in myself by becoming a public education
8 professional in the museum by the age of 16. I had
9 the badge, the uniform, everything. And I was using
10 the resources provided to me to research and discuss
11 complex topics like colonialization and cultural
12 differences to visitors across all demographics.

13 Emotionally, I was able to grasp concepts and
14 perspectives that I normally wouldn't encounter in my
15 usual environment. At 16, I was able to appreciate
16 that successfully getting any point across to anybody
17 requires a particular set of skills that I was able
18 to develop through this program.

19 It was extremely empowering being able to bridge
20 the gap between the perspective of the curators and
21 our visitors, strengthening my listening skills and
22 empathy to truly understand the perspective of our
23 visitors.

24 The program was so valuable to me that I spent my
25 summers with my aunt in Co-op City to continue coming

1 to the museum even after my family moved to Suffolk
2 County.

3
4 Through the programs, I found mentors who
5 inspired me to pursue a bachelor's degree in
6 anthropology. And while I was attending Stonybrook
7 University, I came back to the museum, this time
8 completing the museum education internship program
9 designed for undergraduate college students.

10 Now, I sit before you at 22 as a museum's youth
11 initiatives coordinator, where I use my ability to
12 understand the perspectives of others, as well as my
13 own experience to advocate for New York City youth in
14 our programs.

15 At 16, I was inspired. I saw my future here.
16 Since then, I have maintained a relationship with the
17 museum for over six years and receiving unwavering
18 support throughout the entire time.

19 Thank you.

20 MS PEREZ: Good morning. My name is Albeliza
21 Perez, and I serve my community as a Senior Manager
22 of Youth and Workforce Development at the American
23 Museum of Natural History. My colleague, Doheny
24 Sampora, has submitted a comprehensive testimony
25 detailing the museum's workforce programs for the

1 record today. I'm here to testify as a former
2 participant of these programs and as someone who now
3 manages the programs at the American Museum of
4 Natural History.
5

6 When I reflect on my journey, I think about the
7 girl from the Bronx who commuted into Manhattan to go
8 to El Museo del Barrio, to go to the International
9 Center of Photography, to go to AMNH.

10 At the time that I was participating in these
11 programs, they were unpaid. Um, what has shifted is,
12 across the sector, is the importance of making these
13 opportunities paid for the young people who
14 participate in them, because we understand that there
15 is an economic crisis for a lot of our young people
16 who are facing, you know, hurdles in terms of their
17 housing, in terms of their ability to provide for
18 their family units. And so this is incredibly
19 important for us, and I think important for the
20 sector at large.

21 The SIGN Network NYC fosters STEM and cultural
22 career development opportunities across all five
23 boroughs. So we are in every single borough.

24 In fiscal 25, the funding for the network that we
25 received at AMNH supported two of our programs, the

1 Science Research Mentoring Program for high school
2 students, and the Museum Education Experience Program
3 for our undergraduate students.
4

5 The research program enables young people to join
6 world-renowned scientists at AMNH and engage in
7 authentic research opportunities. They are asking
8 questions about the natural world, about urban
9 ecology, about climate change, and they are producing
10 genuine research that oftentimes gets published in
11 academic peer-reviewed articles, launching them into
12 their careers in STEM.

13 The Museum Education Experience Program develops
14 skills in public speaking, scientific communication,
15 group facilitation, and obviously these are not just
16 foundational skills for the workforce. They're very
17 much adaptable skills to any career.

18 We're so fortunate to have alumni of our programs
19 working across the sector in our city already giving
20 back. Nick Martinez, who is VP of Education and
21 Public Engagement at the Museum of the City of New
22 York, is an alumni of the Museum Education Experience
23 Program. Jonatul Ahmed, who is currently working in
24 global business development at AMNH, is an alumni of
25 our Science Research Mentoring Program. But there are

1 scores of others who are working in such varied roles
2 as media communications and animal husbandry and live
3 exhibits and working across the city in both the
4 formal and informal sector as educators. So, we also
5 make teachers.
6

7 So thank you so much for listening to our
8 testimony today. I hope to continue to expand on
9 this great work.

10 MS. VELAZQUEZ: All right, awesome. Good
11 morning, Chairperson Rivera and members of the City
12 Council Culture Committee. Thank you for the
13 opportunity to share my story today.

14 My name is Laura Velazquez, and I am the STEM
15 Engagement Coordinator at the New York Hall of
16 Science. Before this, I served as the Youth
17 Engagement Assistant Coordinator at the Queen's Zoo.
18 Prior to that, I held roles as Visitor Engagement
19 Associate at Prospect Park Zoo, Visitor Experience
20 Associate at the New York Hall of Science, and
21 Conservation Educator at Alley Pond Environmental
22 Center, three titles I proudly balanced
23 simultaneously as I pursued my passion for STEM
24 education.
25

1
2 But it all began as a Discovery Guide at the New
3 York Aquarium, an opportunity that would go on to
4 shape the rest of my life.

5 I first discovered the Discovery Guide Volunteer
6 Program as a teen through WCS's Job Internship and
7 Volunteering Expo, also known as JIVE, an event that
8 sparked my passion for STEM education. At the time,
9 JIVE was a small event on the Coney Island Boardwalk.

10 Now in its ninth year, it has grown into a large-
11 scale event at the Bronx Zoo, reaching hundreds of
12 NYC youth with workshops, resources, and resume help.

13 During my time in youth development at WCS, I had
14 the privilege of helping facilitate this event,
15 inspiring the next generation, a truly full-circle
16 moment in my career. From that point on, I sought
17 out every opportunity that would allow me to continue
18 down this path.

19 I've had the privilege of working at incredible
20 institutions, with each role building upon the last
21 and propelling me further in my career. I owe much
22 of this growth to the opportunities provided by the
23 SCI Network, opportunities I might never have
24 accessed otherwise.

1
2 As STEM Engagement Coordinator at NYSCI's
3 Friedman Center, I plan and execute STEM-focused
4 events and professional development workshops for NYC
5 high school and college-aged youth, covering topics
6 like climate change and sustainability to career
7 expos and college essay boot camps.

8 They provide vital opportunities for the
9 community and open doors for hundreds of students
10 each year. Helping young people explore the
11 inspiring world of STEM has been one of the most
12 rewarding parts of my career.

13 The work we do is essential, yet we face
14 increasing budget cuts year after year. These cuts
15 limit our ability to expand our reach and provide
16 important services to the communities that need them
17 the most. While we've done our best to maximize the
18 resources we have, I'm concerned that as funding for
19 cornerstone institutions continues to decline, the
20 quality of these transformative experiences may also
21 be at risk.

22 Despite these challenges, I remain deeply
23 committed to the mission of NYSCI, the Friedman
24 Center, and the SCI Network.

1
2 As youth face growing challenges and the burden
3 of inheriting systems that often fail to prioritize
4 their needs, these programs are more important than
5 ever. Youth deserve the same opportunities that
6 shaped my journey, and I am determined to ensure they
7 have access to them. Thank you for the opportunity
8 to continue doing so.

9 MS. HATZITHOMAS: Hi, thank you. My name is Erin
10 Hatzithomas. I'm the Assistant Director of HR and
11 Engagement at the Queens Botanical Garden.

12 We're one of the eight cultural institutions part
13 of the SCI Network. We have 39 acres in Flushing,
14 Queens, and we're a stabilizing organization in our
15 community that offers environmental education,
16 engaging programming, and cultural activities. We
17 provide open space and trees and flowers and
18 resources for people, but also our most important
19 undertaking is to foster sustainable choices,
20 decisions that protect and nurture our environment
21 and our community.

22 We're a small but mighty organization, and
23 despite incredibly limited resources, thanks to
24 partnerships of NYSCI and other funding that comes
25 through us, we were able to host almost 200 youth

1 internships in 2024, and these interns participate in
2 things like horticulture, farm and compost, but also
3 public programming, visitor services, administration.
4

5 A lot of times, it's an opportunity for youth to
6 discover all the different ways they can contribute
7 to cultural organizations.

8 As a leader in environmental education, we also
9 started our Growing Justice Internship last year
10 where 30 high school students. We were able to reach
11 thousands of community members through food
12 production and distribution, peer education,
13 workshops on food justice and nutrition, and advocacy
14 on food policy and sustainability.

15 We also hosted over 50 summer interns where they
16 learned meaningful job skills that will help them
17 build sustainable careers in the future. The
18 partnership with SCI Network provides essential
19 training to our intern mentors that are able to
20 provide these opportunities and also educate youth
21 that they are part of something much bigger than even
22 the Queens Botanical Garden; that they are part of a
23 network in New York City and opens that up for them.

24 In order to reach every corner of Queens, we
25 partner with community organizations, with schools

1 and other organizations that help attract talent from
2 every corner of Queens to the garden to make sure
3 we're offering those opportunities.

4 This year, we were also able to increase our
5 opportunities with our farming compost project and
6 give people an opportunity to experience sustainable
7 agriculture community and education in the middle of
8 the city.

9 So we're committed to expanding this access to
10 STEM and environmentally focused internships in our
11 community and the continuing and new support from
12 elected officials to ensure that QBG remains a source
13 of environmental education and job skill building
14 opportunities for the youth of New York.

15 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Fabulous. Thank you so
16 much. And I just want to mention, I mean, some of
17 the work that you're doing, you're already like at a
18 master's level in terms of what you're collaborating
19 on and producing and researching. So, this is-- It's
20 incredible.

21 How do you track-- How does the program track
22 higher education enrollment or career placement in
23 STEM fields? If you do.

1 MS. PRADA: Yeah, sorry. Yes. Um, we would
2 track that through our alumni, alumni tracking
3 progress. And among our institutions, we're all at
4 different spaces with that.
5

6 Some of us are tracking progress within our
7 institutions. Some of us are doing longitudinal
8 studies of specific internship programs, which then
9 would include after those internship programs, where
10 are our young people going? What colleges and
11 universities are they going into? What degree
12 programs are they entering into? And are they
13 finishing those degree programs?

14 So just to give you an example of the SHRIMP
15 network and we have Project TRUE, Yandel spoke about
16 his experience in Project TRUE. We have studies that
17 show that in experience, real world, hands-on
18 experience in a STEM career is going to sustain a
19 young person's ability to actually complete a STEM
20 degree program. And that without those experiences,
21 there is data to support that young people do not
22 complete their STEM degree programs.

23 So, getting back to your original question about
24 are we tracking? We are, but we're all tracking in
25 different ways. And that's actually one of the

1 things that we really need additional support on
2 scaling is that to really be able to have transitions
3 of our interns from our organizations into the
4 cultural sector or into the New York City STEM
5 sector, we really need to have a unified
6 understanding of our alumni so that our alumni are
7 not just moving internally within our organizations,
8 but that we have the ability to move them across our
9 organizations. And collectively, that's where our
10 impact is for a young person.
11

12 Collectively, the amount of opportunities we have
13 is just at a whole other scale when you start to do
14 that.

15 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And what role does the
16 participants feedback-- their feedback play in
17 shaping future iterations of the program?

18 MS. PEREZ: So in the Museum Education Experience
19 Program, we have a lot of reflective activities that
20 happen with our young people as they complete the
21 program and throughout the program. So, the feedback
22 is ongoing.

23 We create what's called a community of practice,
24 and that's central to the way that we think about our
25 work in the space. And that means that we're

1 learning as much as they're learning from us. And so
2 that's embedded into the design and structure of the
3 program.
4

5 With what Erin had mentioned regarding the
6 longitudinal study, it's a 10-year longitudinal study
7 on persistence in STEM. That's NSF-funded, so that
8 is soon to be coming to a close. But we're hoping
9 to, again, take that learning from that longitudinal
10 study and apply it more broadly across the network,
11 because it does need a pretty robust infrastructure
12 in order to do that level of tracking and be able to
13 provide that level of analysis.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. Thank you all
16 for your testimony, and I'm very hopeful and excited
17 for you both and, of course, your peers and your
18 colleagues and your future.

19 And I thank all of you for supporting these
20 amazing leaders. Thank you for your testimony.

21 PANEL: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Okay. Next panel is Jacob
23 Smith from Roundabout, Jennifer DiBella, Manuel
24 Moroquin, and Hannah D'Amico from IATSE.

25 Start when you're ready.

1
2 MS. DIBELLA: Thank you, Chair Rivera and members
3 of the Cultural Affairs Committee for inviting me,
4 Jacob, Manny, and Hannah to testify this morning.
5 And thank you to Commissioner Cumbo for continuing
6 advocacy.

7 I'm Jennifer DiBella, the Director of Education
8 at Roundabout Theatre Company. Today's hearing
9 centers a topic I'm very passionate about, pathways
10 to meaningful careers for New Yorkers.

11 The Theatrical Workforce Development Program, or
12 TWDP, is a three-year vocational training fellowship
13 for New Yorkers ages 18 to 24. Roundabout created
14 TWDP in 2016 in partnership with the International
15 Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees.

16 TWDP addresses systemic inequities within the
17 arts workforce by supporting pathways for young
18 people who are underrepresented in technical theater.
19 It also addresses an urgent need within the theater
20 industry for trained technical theater workers.

21 Each year, TWDP trains up to 60 fellows for
22 careers in technical theater. They complete a
23 rigorous curriculum of progressive skills
24 development, along with job placements at a network
25 of over 50 partner organizations. They earn wages

1 through all three years of the program, and their
2 rates increase as they gain experience.
3

4 Based on the program's success, we expanded TWDP
5 this year to include five paid fellowships for early
6 career arts administrators like Jacob, who is with us
7 today.

8 The most important contributions to TWDP's
9 success come from the fellows themselves. Through
10 their hard work, talent, and passion, they have
11 turned TWDP into a nationally recognized incubator
12 for in-demand technicians. They have given the
13 American theater a boost during a time of precarity,
14 and put our industry on a path to greater equity and
15 sustainability.

16 Theater is essential to New York City's identity,
17 and TWDP connects our industry with the local talent
18 it needs to thrive.

19 With the city's partnership, TWDP has trained
20 over 100 fellows. I'm so grateful to be here today
21 celebrating that with you, and I'm excited to pass
22 the mic to Manny and Jacob and Hannah.

23 Thank you.

24 MR. MARROQUIN: Hello. I'm so happy to be here.
25

1
2 Um, thank you so much, Chair Rivera and council
3 members, for inviting me to speak today. My name is
4 Manuel Marroquín. I'm from Brooklyn, New York.

5 I'm an alumni of Roundabout's TWDP Technical
6 Fellowship. I joined TWDP in fall 2018 after
7 graduating from Juan Bueno School of the Arts in
8 Brooklyn, which is one of Roundabout's partner
9 schools. The staff there told me about TWDP,
10 recommended that I apply.

11 When I joined TWDP, I knew that I wanted to work
12 as a stagehand, but I didn't know much about
13 technical skills required, how to build a career, or
14 how to become a member of the union. My experience
15 at TWDP has been life-changing. I trained at
16 carpentry, lighting, and sound.

17 I got matched with an IATSE mentor, Chet Green,
18 who supports my career today. And I completed my
19 first internship at the Glimmerglass Festival in
20 Cooperstown, New York, and it was my first experience
21 working full-time crew position for a production run.

22 Since Glimmerglass, I've worked on and off
23 Broadway at a variety of venues, arts organizations
24 around the city.

1
2 For over two years, I worked staff as a stagehand
3 at City Center Stage 1, associated with Manhattan
4 Theater Club's off-Broadway stage. Where I helped
5 bring world premiere plays to life through my work on
6 those productions. I met entry-level requirements to
7 join the IATSE Local 1 Stagehand Union in fall of
8 2023.

9 I'm proud to be the first TWDP alum to join Local
10 1, and excited to help more alums on the way to
11 joining the union.

12 Today, I work on Broadway as the fly operator at
13 the Helen Hayes Theater, where I lower and raise
14 sets, curtains, and anything that requires lifting.
15 I also serve as a TWDP alumni mentor so that each
16 year, I can help connect fellows to jobs or working
17 alongside me on union contracts, which has been
18 really exciting.

19 One of the most important things to me about TWDP
20 is the way it creates a community among fellows,
21 alumni, and it means a lot to me that I can now
22 support the fellows who come after me.

23 Thank you so much for your time. I look forward
24 to your questions.

1 MR. SMITH: Hello, good morning. My name is
2
3 Jacob Smith, and I'm from the Bronx, New York. Thank
4 you, Chair Rivera and City Council members for
5 inviting me to speak today.

6 Approaching my last days as an undergrad, I had
7 theorized what my future would look like and dreaded
8 the unknown. I came across a job posting for the
9 TWDP Admin Fellowship, and my rumination was eased by
10 the idea of a paid opportunity to pursue my curiosity
11 and passion.

12 I've loved theater since I first saw Annie off-
13 Broadway as a child, but my desire to pursue a career
14 in the arts came from my semester abroad in London,
15 which is when I first learned about arts
16 administration, arts education, and all the work that
17 happens behind the scenes.

18 Reading the job description, I could see myself
19 operating open night parties, building support for
20 arts education through government and foundation
21 outreach, and project managing the online auction for
22 our annual gala.

23 I've always had a passion for relationship
24 building, so working in development felt right. I
25 have learned so much more than I expected in these

1 past four months about event planning, donor
2 research, and cultivation.
3

4 In addition to practical experience, we fellows
5 also receive professional development training that
6 includes financial literacy, emotional wellness, and
7 networking opportunities. These sessions have not
8 only diversified my skills as a professional but have
9 also provided me with the knowledge and resources
10 necessary for managing life as a young adult.

11 It has been extremely helpful to have multiple
12 sessions on financial literacy, during which I've
13 learned about credit, savings, and investment.

14 It's also been helpful to have the support from
15 Roundabout's social work supervisor, who has helped
16 me create a necessary balance.

17 I'm thrilled to be in the first cohort of the
18 TWDP Admin Fellowship program at Roundabout for the
19 next eight months, working with such a supportive
20 team, many who are here today, and experiencing the
21 camaraderie of four other fellows across the
22 organization.

23 As time moves forward, I foresee myself working
24 my way up to soliciting major gifts from generous
25

1 constituents that I will get to know through our
2 shared love of the performing arts.

3
4 Thank you.

5 MS. D'AMICO: Good morning. Thank you, Chair
6 Rivera and members of the Cultural Affairs Committee
7 for inviting me to testify this morning.

8 My name is Hannah D'Amico, and I am an
9 international representative with the IETSC Education
10 and Training Department. The skilled tradespeople
11 who construct sets, operate lights, and make scenery
12 fly onto the stage at just the right moment are
13 unseen. As an audience member, this is part of what
14 makes going to the theater magical.

15 As a student, the invisibility of this workforce
16 makes it hard to imagine yourself as one of them.
17 The first step to finding a career, after all, is
18 knowing it exists. As a representative of the IETSC
19 at New York City career fairs, on more than one
20 occasion, guidance counselors have expressed surprise
21 on discovering not only that these jobs exist, but
22 that they are good careers. Exposure matters.

23 In 2012, the IETSC and the Roundabout Theater
24 Company partnered to create Hidden Career Path Days.
25 Together with Roundabout Theater Education's program,

1 we present four Hidden Career Path Days throughout
2 each school year, each showcasing a different behind-
3 the-scenes career.
4

5 At every event, volunteer IETSC members present
6 interactive demonstrations of their craft, guiding
7 students as they learn how to focus a spotlight, tie
8 a clove hitch knot, conduct a fast costume change, or
9 curl a wig, to name just a handful of the activities.

10 At the end of each day, the students go on tours
11 of Broadway theaters and New York City cultural
12 institutions, such as the Metropolitan Opera and
13 Radio City Music Hall, all led by IETSC members who
14 speak not only of their theaters and technical
15 skills, but also of their own career path.

16 The impact of this program has been made evident
17 by the students themselves. We recently received an
18 email from an IETSC lighting technician. She was
19 participating in a talk pack for the Broadway show,
20 Ann Juliet. A student approached her after the Q&A
21 to excitedly tell her that she remembered her from
22 Hidden Career Path Day and that hearing her stories
23 about climbing around on the catwalks had inspired
24 her, telling the member, you're the reason I decided
25 to want to do this for a living.

1
2 For the workers in our crafts, being a union
3 member makes living a middle-class life in a
4 freelance business possible. In a unionized
5 workplace, progress on issues of diversity, equity,
6 and inclusion hinges on the relationship between
7 unions and employers and their ability to create
8 roadmaps for equitable opportunities for the workers
9 of the future. That is what this program and the
10 TWDP, which grew from Hidden Career Path Days, do.

11 The IETSC is very, very proud of this work and
12 continues to partner with Roundabout. We're really
13 proud of this program. And I think it's important to
14 say that my colleagues, Jennifer Halpern and Pat
15 White, who really spearhead this effort for the
16 union, they're not here today, but I'm here speaking
17 on their behalf. So I would like to mention them as
18 well.

19 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Well, thank you so much.
20 We're appreciative for their work. And of course,
21 everyone on this panel, fabulous testimony.

22 Can you talk a little bit about the wages? What
23 kind of support does Roundabout provide to fellows?
24 And how do you encourage retention in the program?

25

1
2 MS. DIBELLA: Absolutely. So this is an earn-to-
3 learn model. So fellows are paid minimum wage during
4 their first year in training. But what we do to
5 track impact is to really track wages. So, we see
6 that the end of the program, they're earning up to
7 \$35 an hour and up to \$75 an hour for overtime and
8 holiday pay.

9 So we really start to see income growth and wage
10 growth. And that's one of the big key indicators of
11 success. We're lucky that 75% of folks who have gone
12 through the program are now working in the industry.

13 And we have, I think, over 50 people on track to
14 join the union, like Manny, which is great. So we
15 can really see that transition into union middle
16 class jobs.

17 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And how are IATSE mentors
18 selected? What specific guidance do they provide
19 throughout the three years of the program? And is
20 there anything else you want to say about this very
21 interesting union partnership?

22 MS. D'AMICO: Yeah. So the Roundabout and the IA
23 partner to select the union mentors. Again, I wish
24 Jennifer Halpern was here. She really does the work
25 at partnering with Jen and everyone at the Roundabout

1
2 to select these mentors from just a group of IATSE
3 Local 1 and Local 764, which is the Wardrobe Union,
4 Local 798, which is the Hair and Makeup Union, to
5 connect these really, really dedicated volunteer
6 members with the Roundabout. And the Roundabout
7 helps pair them with students based on some type of
8 selection process.

9 MS. DIBELLA: I can add a little bit more.

10 MS. D'AMICO: Yes, please.

11 MS. DIBELLA: So the IATSE staff, education
12 staff, are actually at the table for the very first
13 interview. So they're meeting fellows from day one,
14 and they're starting to think about personality
15 matches, trade matches. You mentioned your mentor.

16 So they're looking sort of matchmaking,
17 essentially, for people who are in the same trade
18 area, if they're specializing in audio or electrics,
19 and also personality, sometimes borough, in terms of
20 location so that we can connect people based on
21 geographic location as well.

22 Do you want add anything?

23 MR. MARROQUIN: Absolutely. I just want to say
24 that education at Roundabout does a really good job
25 during this three-year process of learning what you

1 like, right? So they introduce you to these lovely
2 crafts. And as we all know, and we're all growing in
3 life, things change, right? You see one thing,
4 you're like, oh, this is really interesting. They
5 take note of that. And they say, OK, since you live
6 in Brooklyn, we actually have someone who works in
7 Brooklyn, and his profession is sound at Brooklyn
8 College.
9

10 So they do a really good job of pairing you
11 mentors who work in the business and who are in the
12 business till this day, guiding you to places that
13 you've never seen before. And you're like, wow, this
14 is really cool.

15 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Well, I think it's amazing,
16 also, the diversity of work. It's-- Because you
17 mentioned donor solicitation and event planning. And
18 that is just as important as funding and supporting
19 this ecosystem of amazing workers that make this city
20 what it is.

21 So, I just want to thank you for this program and
22 for all that you do and for your testimony.

23 Thank you.

24 PANEL: Thank you for the time. Thank you.

25 Thank you for the time.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: OK, Kimberly Olson from Arts and Education Roundtable, Lisa Gold, Francine Garber-Cohen, Stephanie Nantell, and Nicole Touzien from Dancewave. Hi.

MS. OLSEN: Thank you, Chair Rivera and the City Council for your support of the cultural workforce development in New York City.

My name is Kim Olsen, and I'm proud to be the Executive Director of the New York City Arts and Education Roundtable. We are an arts education service organization working to improve and advance arts ed in New York City through professional development, advocacy, regranting, and community building.

I'm writing as part of the It Starts With The Arts Coalition to testify in the importance of workforce development opportunities in the arts and culture sector. According to the comptroller's most recent economic economy dashboard, together, New York City's creative industries employed an estimated 274,000 people in 2022, up 3.4% in 2017, and modestly exceeding the 2.2% increase in total employment in the city. A staggering 12.3% of our country's

1 creative workforce jobs are based here in New York
2 City alone.

3
4 That's a lot of creative workers and a lot of
5 creative jobs. We at the Roundtable consider
6 workforce development through the lens of continuing
7 professionalization from recruitment and training
8 into entry-level positions through leadership
9 development opportunities.

10 We don't want to just prepare folks to enter the
11 workforce. We want to support their development and
12 training into more senior-level positions so that
13 they can continue to grow and work in the sector.
14 For us, that takes the shape of partnering with CUNY
15 Cultural Corps to provide professional development to
16 their full cohort, as well as hosting an intern. And
17 also, we work with hundreds of organizations and
18 thousands of cultural workers each year, providing
19 professional development opportunities to support
20 growth at all points of the workforce.

21 These opportunities, including our New York State
22 Teaching Artist Mentorship Program, offer skills and
23 network building as vehicles for career advancement
24 and sustainability. We also host an annual job fair

1 featuring 50-plus arts and cultural organizations
2 each May at Hunter College.

3
4 When talking about arts and workforce
5 development, it would also be remiss if I didn't
6 mention how critical arts education opportunities are
7 to preparing our city's workforce of tomorrow.

8 Research shows arts education programs prepare
9 students for the 21st-century workforce by developing
10 the skills necessary to acquire and retain a job.

11 Such competencies develop through these arts
12 education opportunities, including problem-solving,
13 attention to nuance, adaptability, empathy,
14 visualization of goals and outcomes, decision-making,
15 and so much more.

16 In addition to supporting general workforce
17 competencies, arts competencies in and of themselves
18 can be highly marketable in today's economy.

19 It's for all these reasons that we recommend that
20 arts education be present in all New York City
21 schools and that our city works to facilitate more
22 intentional interaction between education, economic
23 development, and arts policy leaders.

1 Meaningful workforce development programs today
2
3 means a stronger cultural workforce tomorrow. Thank
4 you.

5 MS. GOLD: Good afternoon, Council Member Rivera.
6 Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'm Lisa
7 Gold. I'm the Executive Director of the Asian
8 American Arts Alliance. We are a 41-year-old
9 nonprofit service organization that works to ensure
10 greater representation, equity, and opportunities to
11 AAPI artists and arts organizations. And I also am a
12 member of the Mayor's Theater and Live Performance
13 Industry Council, and I participate on the Workforce
14 Accessibility Committee.

15 So, this is an issue that is very dear to my
16 heart. I want to thank you for raising the issue of
17 asking how cultural organizations can learn about
18 opportunities for workforce development. I don't
19 think I got a really good answer on that.

20 It is hard, as you noted. My community, 70% are
21 either first or second generation, and I am the only
22 one in my family that works in the arts. I have
23 doctors and lawyers and finance people.

24 I am the only one. So people don't recognize,
25 especially in the AAPI community and the immigrant

1 community, of the viability of these actual careers
2 of good-paying jobs. So it's really important to
3 fund the organizations like ours, small
4 organizations.
5

6 We need a separate funding initiative to support
7 these. We do professional development programs. We
8 do private-public partnerships. We hook up aspiring
9 artists with Disney to do live audition workshops.
10 We have fellowship programs, where I got one of my
11 fellows a job at MoMA working for his mentor.

12 We do that. We seed the pipeline. But we need
13 the funds. It can't come out of CDF funds. That is
14 not baselined. It's reduced every year. We have to
15 claw that money back. And we need a separate source
16 or stream of income to ensure that we can support the
17 workforce here. They need portable health care
18 benefits. They need housing. They need equitable
19 opportunities. And with DEI under fire, so many of
20 my resources now are being pulled away from the work
21 that I can do to actually protect my community. I'm
22 going to meetings on how to ensure the stability and
23 the health of my organization. I'm afraid that we
24 are under target.

1 So, we need financial support. We need that
2
3 baselined. And we need dedicated funding streams for
4 organizations like ours that make a huge difference
5 in our communities, especially immigrant and
6 underserved communities. So thank you.

7 MS. GARBER COHEN: Thank you. I'm Fran Garber-
8 Cohen of Regina Opera Company, located in Sunset
9 Park.

10 Regarding the pathways to careers in the arts in
11 New York City, I would like to stress the importance
12 of training which Regina Opera provides for its
13 musical artists to prepare them for future employment
14 in New York City. The following was sent to Regina
15 Opera by a debut artist, soprano Yeson June,
16 expressing her gratitude for the training at Regina
17 Opera. And I quote.

18 Participating as Nedda in Regina Opera's
19 production of Il Pagliacci represents an
20 extraordinary opportunity to challenge myself as a
21 vocalist and performer. My goals for this include
22 mastering the intricate musical and emotional nuances
23 of Nedda's character, refining my ability to convey
24 authentic emotion through my voice and movement, and
25 enhancing my overall stage presence. I also aim to

1
2 deepen my understanding of dramatic interpretation
3 and character development, ensuring that every aspect
4 of my performance is both vocally and theatrical
5 compelling.

6 The professional experience differs greatly from
7 my prior performances as a student. While student
8 performances are educational and often supported by a
9 forgiving environment, this role of Nedda requires me
10 to deliver a polished professional-level
11 interpretation in collaboration with experienced
12 artists and for an audience with high expectations.

13 Additionally, this experience provides a rare
14 opportunity to work in the competitive New York City
15 opera scene, which will undoubtedly push me to grow
16 and excel.

17 I aim to balance the technical aspects of my
18 singing with the expressive demands of the role,
19 maintaining a standard of excellence that aligns with
20 professional expectations.

21 Thank you.

22 NANTELL: Good afternoon. Thank you to Chair
23 Rivera and the City Council for the opportunity to
24 testify today. My name is Stephanie Nantell, and I
25 am the Senior Director of Programs at Education

1 Through Music, a nonprofit organization dedicated to
2 bringing music education to underserved students and
3 under-resourced schools in New York City.
4

5 For over 30 years, ETM has been committed to
6 improving the quality of education in New York City
7 public schools by integrating music education into
8 the core curriculum.

9 ETM partners with 55 schools to support 20,000
10 students each year in all five boroughs in almost
11 every community in New York City. We provide trained
12 teachers, instruments, a comprehensive music
13 curriculum, and 100 hours of teacher professional
14 development to ensure a thriving music program at all
15 of our partner schools.

16 Today, I am here to highlight our role in
17 workforce development for music teachers and our
18 efforts to help them achieve certification to teach
19 in New York City public school system.

20 The shortage of qualified music educators in New
21 York City schools is a significant barrier to
22 equitable access to arts education. According to the
23 most recent New York City Department of Education
24 Annual Arts and Schools Report, over 700 New York
25 City public schools still do not have a music

1 teacher. And sadly, the children at these schools
2 are overwhelmingly low-income and children of color.

3 ETM directly addresses this challenge by
4 providing quality teachers because of our robust
5 professional development programs, mentorship
6 opportunities, and a clear pathway for aspiring
7 teachers to achieve state certification. Through our
8 workforce development initiatives, we aim not only to
9 prepare exceptional music educators, but to create
10 stable, fulfilling career opportunities for
11 individuals passionate about teaching in the arts.

12 Our teacher training and certification programs
13 are designed to meet the needs of educators at
14 various stages of their careers. This includes
15 professional development. ETM offers extensive
16 training in music pedagogy, classroom management, and
17 culturally responsive teaching practices. Our
18 workshops and seminars are tailored to prepare
19 teachers for the unique challenges of working at
20 diverse, high-need schools.

21 Mentorship and support: Each teacher in our
22 program is paired with a dedicated mentor, an
23 experienced music educator who provides guidance,
24 feedback, and encouragement. The mentorship ensures
25

1 that our teachers are well equipped to inspire
2 engaged students.
3

4 Certification assistance: ETM collaborates with
5 higher education institutions and other stakeholders
6 to help teachers navigate the certification process,
7 including meeting New York State requirements and
8 passing necessary exams. Our support system includes
9 test preparation, coursework recommendations, and
10 financial assistance for all fees.

11 We thank City Council for prioritizing arts
12 education and continuing to support initiatives that
13 strengthen the workforce development and
14 opportunities for teachers. We look forward to
15 continuing our partnership with the City Council to
16 allow programs like ours to help provide more
17 teachers with the opportunity for training and
18 certification support, which will help expand access
19 to music education to more underserved schools.

20 Together, we can ensure that every child in New
21 York City has the transformative power of music
22 education while also building a strong and diverse
23 workforce of skilled educators.

24 Thank you.
25

1 MS. TOUZIEN: Good afternoon. My name is Nicole
2 Tuzan, and I'm the Executive Director of DanceWave.

3 Chair Rivera and members of the committee, thank
4 you for the opportunity to provide testimony on
5 behalf of DanceWave. DanceWave serves 6,200 people
6 each year from all 51 City Council districts and
7 beyond, and invests over \$1 million in employing
8 artists and arts workers each year, including hosting
9 interns from SYEP, CUNY Cultural Corps, and the New
10 York University.
11

12 Our service programs support pathways to careers
13 in arts and culture, especially for youth from
14 underrepresented communities. DanceWave Through
15 College and Beyond, or DTCB, is the nation's only
16 workforce development program for dance of its size
17 and scope. DTCB aims to ensure professional training
18 and collegiate dance programs reflect the breadth and
19 diversity of the field, providing year-round
20 education and resources to support high-school-aged
21 youth with their first steps towards careers in the
22 arts. DTCB has facilitated over 3,000 transitions
23 into higher education, with over \$16 million in
24 college scholarships awarded through our program over
25 the past decade.

1 DanceWave is uniquely positioned to provide
2 focused career development support, helping youth to
3 understand, prepare for, and navigate the vast career
4 options available to them. We intentionally
5 prioritize outreach to our wide network of over 50
6 New York City school partners, where we engage
7 thousands of students each year, as well as peer
8 organizations such as Jamel Gaines Creative Outlet,
9 MOVENYC, and Brooklyn Ballet. We provide free access
10 to DTCB for New York City youth who otherwise would
11 not have access to the program and who are often
12 first-generation college students.

14 With the arts sector fueling the workforce and
15 local economy, programs like DTCB will only help to
16 strengthen our city.

17 I encourage the committee to continue advocating
18 for funding and to consider how community-based
19 organizations like DanceWave can serve as a resource
20 to City Council, including but not limited to
21 informing and supporting proposed legislation like
22 the jointly sponsored Introduction No. 700, a local
23 law requiring DYCD to establish a college admissions
24 and counseling program to prospective college
25 students and their families.

1
2 These initiatives can and should be fully
3 inclusive of local programs like DTCB and all of ours
4 that support college preparation and career
5 development in the arts. Thank you so much.

6 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you so much to this
7 panel and for your honesty. I feel like the
8 percentage of schools without arts programs certainly
9 doesn't help people see the arts sector as a possible
10 career.

11 We want to make the arts as accessible as
12 possible, so thank you for paying attention to some
13 of the questions I try to ask on how we can actually
14 create something that's in addition to the funding
15 that's already very stretched thin-- stretched very
16 thin and very competitive.

17 I just want to thank this panel for your work.
18 I'm looking forward to getting together in the very
19 near future and hearing some feedback on how we can
20 just improve access and really just hear back from
21 you on what the City and the Council can be doing
22 specifically to really just support you.

23 Thank you so much.

24 PANEL: Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And thank you for the
3 stories you've shared as well.

4 All right. The next panel is Lindsay Buller-
5 Maliekel from New 42, Kate Madigan from The Public,
6 Rachel Neches from the Center for an Urban Future.
7 Oh, sorry, Rachel. Sorry. And Courtney French from
8 Jamaica Arts Center. All right.

9 Who'd like to start? Is your mic on?

10 Thank you. Appreciate it. Better.

11 MS. MALIEKEL: I'm Lindsay Maliekel, Vice
12 President of Education and Public Engagement at New
13 42 and New Victory Theatre, where our mission is to
14 make extraordinary performing arts a vital part of
15 everyone's life from the earliest years onward. And
16 since we opened the New Victory's doors in 1995, our
17 entire front-of-house department has always been
18 young New Yorkers in a paid workforce development
19 program called the New 42 Youth Corps.

20 It is important that we welcome our student and
21 family audiences into a theater with staff who
22 reflect New York City, but it has been a long uphill
23 battle to welcome those same Youth Corps staff
24 members into a cultural field that reflects them.

1
2 Recent research has shown that economic progress
3 can be drastically influenced by a few things. Early
4 mentorship, pursuing and completing a degree, and a
5 first job that has opportunities for advancement.

6 Commissioner Cumbo's introduction of her own
7 background was a perfect example of that research,
8 actually.

9 These kinds of programs that we have run for all
10 these years have a really proven track record, and if
11 we want the creative heart of New York City to beat
12 with the full spectrum of New Yorkers, we have to
13 support these pathway programs.

14 The over 1,500 young people who have taken part
15 in the New 42 Youth Corps since 1995 now work all
16 over the city, from Disney to Roundabout to St.
17 Anne's to New Group and beyond. And almost 20% of
18 our own current full-time staff started their first
19 cultural job in the Youth Corps program.

20 About 10 years ago, we expanded the program from
21 serving mostly high school students to creating a
22 dedicated partnership with CUNY. We hire community
23 college students and support their college success.
24 We also added a full-time fellowship for our own
25 alumni and alumni of the CUNY Cultural Corps.

1
2 We are committed to a creative economy filled
3 with all New Yorkers, and we hope that City Council
4 will continue to be a partner toward that goal. We
5 have lost a large portion of our dedicated funding
6 for these programs over the last few years.

7 We would love that cultural job fair, and we
8 would also love an impact study that helps all of us
9 understand where our young people grow and go in
10 their cultural careers. Thank you.

11 MS. MADIGAN: Good afternoon, Chair Rivera and
12 committee members and staff. Thank you for calling
13 this important hearing.

14 The Public Theater is pleased to share testimony
15 on our work concerning this topic. There are many
16 critical issues currently facing the entire culture
17 and arts community. One of these issues is the
18 cultivation of a skilled, diverse workforce for the
19 American theater.

20 It is no secret that choosing a career in theater
21 comes with taking risks, both artistically and
22 economically. A plethora of barriers preclude
23 countless artists from ever realizing their artistic
24 aspirations. These hurdles include low-paying or
25 unpaid internships and entry-level positions,

1 scarcity of said positions, and most prevalent, a
2 lack of institutional connections.
3

4 Other systemic roadblocks include racial and
5 educational prejudice. Due to these barriers, many
6 artists wait a lifetime for their breakthrough into
7 the industry. The Public Theater's mission is to
8 operate on the principles that theater is an
9 essential cultural force, and that art and culture
10 belongs to everyone.

11 The Public continues the life work of our
12 visionary founder, Joe Papp, as a civic institution
13 engaging both onstage and off with some of the most
14 important ideas for social issues today.

15 Our institution recognizes the systemic barriers
16 that prevent fresh and diverse talent to emerge
17 within the American theater, and we are committed to
18 offering not only justly compensated part-time
19 fellowships and full-time resident artist positions,
20 but also ensuring impartial and equitable selection
21 of individuals to these positions.

22 Each of our programs offer an encompassing
23 curriculum that ensures both administrative and
24 artistic development.
25

1
2 Currently, the Public Theater is host to six
3 part-time fellows in collaboration with CUNY with
4 support from the Miranda Family Foundation, the
5 Teresa Tive Family Foundation, and many other
6 generous donors that support this initiative, and we
7 also have three artists in residence.

8 Just to quickly summarize, our fellows started
9 this past September, and both are from Brooklyn
10 College and Hunter College, are inaugural partners to
11 the Robust Workforce Development Program, and our
12 three artists in residence are concluding their time
13 with the Public Theater, and we will offer a network
14 of resources, and we will stay in communication with
15 them after the residencies have ended.

16 Thank you so much for your time.

17 MS. NECHES: Hello. Good afternoon. My name is
18 Rachel Neches, and I am the Data Researcher at the
19 Center for an Urban Future, an independent research
20 organization focused on building a stronger and more
21 equitable New York City.

22 I'll be sharing today's testimony on behalf of
23 our editorial and policy director, Eli Dvorkin.
24 Thank you for the opportunity. I'd like to begin by
25 commending Chair Rivera and the committee for

1 highlighting the importance of strengthening the
2 city's creative economy and expanding pathways into
3 the arts and culture workforce for New Yorkers.
4

5 The creative economy, including advertising, film
6 and TV, fashion, architecture, design, and
7 independent artists, employs more than 300,000 New
8 Yorkers, has grown significantly over the past two
9 decades, and pays well above the citywide median
10 wage. But these industries have a long way to go
11 before they look like the rest of New York City.

12 Our recent report found that black workers hold
13 fewer than 8% of the city's advertising jobs, but
14 represent nearly 21% of the city's total workforce.

15 In fact, New Yorkers of color are
16 underrepresented across the creative economy.

17 There are a number of actions that the city
18 should take to help expand access to careers and
19 culture in the broader creative economy. One of the
20 most important next steps should be to launch a
21 creative economy talent pipeline initiative aimed at
22 boosting career pathways for underrepresented New
23 Yorkers into the city's creative sector.

24 This effort should incubate and expand
25 initiatives and partnerships with creative economy

1
2 employers and nonprofits, many of which receive
3 little if any city funding today. Replicate the
4 success of CUNY2xTech for the creative sector through
5 a CUNY2xCreative initiative, and build on innovative
6 partnerships developed by some of the city's career
7 and technical education high schools. The city also
8 has an opportunity to put artists to work by
9 addressing some of New York's biggest challenges,
10 harnessing their creativity to advance solutions in
11 housing, education, climate change, and more.

12 A renewed, ongoing version of the NYC Artist
13 Corps could help do just that.

14 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today
15 and for bringing attention to the importance of
16 expanding pathways to creative careers.

17 MR. FRENCH: Hello everyone, and thank you for
18 having us here, Chairperson Rivera.

19 My name is Courtney French. I'm the Artistic
20 Director for the Jamaica Center for Arts and
21 Learning. Hello.

22 I bring you greetings from the Jamaica Center for
23 Arts and Learning, located on Jamaica Avenue in
24 Southeast Queens. We are the only CIG in this part
25 of Queens. We operate out of two buildings, serving

1 our community in disciplines of dance, theater,
2 music, visual arts, and arts education.

3
4 Today I will avoid speaking of our mission or
5 glowingly about our freshly minted five-year
6 strategic plan. What I will tell you about is
7 Daniel. You might ask, who is Daniel? Well, Daniel
8 apprehensively asked to see the manager (at the time,
9 yours truly), and I saw a young black boy filled with
10 bewilderment. He had just graduated. He said his
11 name was Daniel. He lived with his three older
12 brothers and younger sister with their mom next to
13 the 40 Projects in Queens.

14 He says, "Can I work here?" He asked, while
15 admiring the lights in the grid. Can I volunteer?
16 He paused. I'll do it for free.

17 He left his number and promised to come back for
18 a visit. A week later, we hired Daniel as an usher.
19 He was affable, astute, inquisitive.

20 By sheer proximity and observation, he learned
21 how to set up and operate our mobile audio system.
22 He then learned how to actually, well, proficiently
23 to operate our space sound system. In six months, he
24 became proficient at these skills by sitting next to
25 our tech staff.

1 "I got skills, yo," Daniel would always say,
2
3 remarking after solving a problem. What happened
4 with Daniel was not planned or strategically thought
5 out. It was pure luck, but luck can be divine.

6 By happenstance, perhaps even providence, we had
7 the making of a workforce development initiative.

8 Where does it stand today after Daniel? Well, in
9 October 2023, J-Cal, in partnership with the Jamaica
10 YMCA, launched a new workforce development initiative
11 called Stage and Screen Technical Apprenticeship, or
12 SSTA.

13 The SSTA consists of two main components,
14 classroom instruction and practicum. During
15 classroom sessions, apprentices will receive more
16 intensive training on backstage, technical
17 requirements, front of the house duties such as box
18 office, management and ushering. They'll also have
19 an expanded opportunity throughout the busy spring
20 season to work at J-Cal, Queens College, and York
21 College, some of our partners.

22 For us, workforce development in arts and culture
23 teaches transferable skills. It fosters opportunity
24 and serves the interest of our local, global, and
25 multicultural community.

1
2 My name is Courtney French, and thank you for
3 having me.

4 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you so much to this
5 panel for, I mean, what you're doing.

6 I think the impact study is interesting of where
7 people grow and go, and certainly if we are to pursue
8 something like the creative job fair, I mean, you
9 found someone who's interested, and while it doesn't
10 happen all the time, you can call it luck, I do think
11 it's-- I just find that to be a testament to your
12 own work, like someone being in somewhere where
13 they're instantly inspired to want to give time and
14 energy to something that might not have been even
15 considered or in their realm of thought. I think
16 that's really cool and a really great story. Thank
17 you for sharing that.

18 And of course, the launching a program to build
19 on a lot of the things and the programs that are
20 working. So I'm looking forward to that feedback
21 from you all, probably in a smaller, more intimate
22 space, but I really do appreciate your testimony, and
23 thank you to this panel.

24 PANEL: Thank you.
25

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: We're going to hear from
Karen Jolicoeur, Ava Kinsey, Trevor New, Lindy
Werking-Yip. Nice. Okay.

MS. KINSEY: All right, good afternoon. Thank
you so much, Chair Rivera and the Council for
allowing us to be here today. Thank you also for
your intentionality and the time you've given to each
speaker. We really appreciate just your presence.

I'm Ava Kinsey. I'm the Director of Education at
the Brooklyn Academy of Music. BAM Education's work
happens on our stages, of course, also in our partner
schools' classrooms, and after school on-site at BAM.

I'm going to specifically talk about our two arts
administration after school programs, one for high
school seniors, the other for alumni of any of our
BAM education programs who are between the ages of 18
to 24.

Art is the conduit for what is possible, and the
community fostered in those places keeps our programs
full and engaged. I am reminded of a stellar young
person who matriculated through several facets of BAM
Education's programming. Her name is Patrice
Jackman.

1
2 Patrice started as an intern in BAM's Brooklyn
3 Interns for Arts and Culture program as a high school
4 senior. Back in 2016, the program prepared her for a
5 career in the arts through administration. It paired
6 her with a BAM staff member and supported her
7 workforce development skills through her appointment
8 as an intern in our president's office.

9 All 12 students in her cohort were placed in
10 various departments throughout BAM to cultivate their
11 exploration into arts administration careers.

12 Patrice then graduated from the program and began
13 her tenure as an education alumni intern. After her
14 internship contract ended, she was then hired as the
15 coordinator for the program, the very program that
16 piqued her interest in arts-based careers.

17 During her time in the program, she of course
18 made art, maintained tasks and responsibilities in
19 her departments that she was assigned, but it also
20 led to her improving and extending the reach of our
21 programs.

22 After hearing feedback from participants who had
23 graduated from the program, Patrice heard that
24 students wanted more. They wanted to be able to
25

1 build their portfolios and really deepen themselves
2 as artists at BAM.

3
4 So, in 2021, she pitched our Creative Career
5 Collective program for alumni of our programs. It
6 was approved and since 2022, we have matriculated
7 five cohorts through that program. It is a paid
8 program for young artists.

9 So, this is an example of how one young person in
10 our arts programming changed the landscape of arts
11 administration access for her peers, for people to
12 come after her. This proves that the arts is a place
13 where brilliance, learning, education and also
14 implementation can happen for young people and those
15 to come after. We hope that you will continue to
16 fund programs like this to several of our peer
17 organizations.

18 Thank you so much.

19 MS. JOLICOEUR: Good afternoon. I'm Karen
20 Jolicoeur, Executive Director of Creative Art Works
21 and it's my pleasure to speak with you today about
22 the vital need for and positive impacts of our
23 Creative Workforce Development programs.

24 CAW is a 39-year-old youth development non-profit
25 working in the visual and multimedia arts. Our long-

1 standing public art youth employment programs are
2 provided in direct alignment with our mission to
3 equip New York City's young people with essential
4 tools and skills to connect them to their
5 communities, academic lives and career opportunities
6 and to inspire new possibilities for the future.
7 Each year, among other things, we provide nearly 300
8 teens and young adults with apprenticeships in the
9 creation of large-scale public art and multimedia
10 like documentary film and character design.
11

12 These are offered in partnership with companies
13 commissioning youth-created art, city and state
14 agencies like DYCD and the Family Courts, Career and
15 Technical Education High Schools and more.

16 These programs, the most cost and labor intensive
17 that we run, with critical support from Cultural
18 Affairs, City Council and private foundations, not
19 only enhance art and design skills but also develop
20 collaboration, client, communication and leadership
21 skills, those coveted soft skills so sought by
22 employers. And they provide remuneration and real
23 work experience on a resume.

24 In New York City, it really does start with the
25 arts. Comptroller Lander's recent spotlight on our

1 creative economy here observed that it is a defining
2 economic sector for the city on par with finance,
3 real estate or law. And yet, these pathways can be
4 opaque or exclusionary to the young people we serve.
5

6 Programs like ours develop a pipeline for teens
7 and young adults to learn about and gain access to
8 creative and adjacent careers. They also provide
9 meaningful work for some of New York's fine teaching
10 artists. A former youth apprentice is our full-time
11 program coordinator and several have become teaching
12 artist assistants.

13 But the skills our youth apprentices learn serve
14 them well wherever they may go. This past summer,
15 90% of participants said they applied the skills they
16 learned to other parts of their lives. 100% felt
17 well prepared for their client pitch and 99% feel
18 their creative skills improved over the course of the
19 program.

20 We also saw a 41% increase in those professing
21 comfort with public speaking. So, it's encouraging
22 that these pathways have generated your attention
23 here today and we look forward to working together to
24 sustain and expand these essential opportunities for
25 New York City youth, our future workforce.

1
2 MS. WERKING-YIP: Thank you for the opportunity
3 to speak here today. My name is Lindsay Werking-Yip.
4 I am the Director of Development for the American
5 Composers Orchestra. ACO is a national accelerator
6 creating pathways for New Yorkers to pursue careers
7 in the arts.

8 We provide artists paid work in New York City.
9 Then we connect them to organizations across the
10 country for future employment. Our earshot
11 initiatives are the first ongoing systemic program
12 for building relationships between composers and
13 orchestras across the Americas.

14 Since 2020, we have tripled our national
15 footprint, increasing from 6 to 26 partners across 17
16 U.S. states and Canada. All of these partners are
17 providing jobs to our artists.

18 In 2024, we employed over 200 artists working in
19 New York City to fulfill roles as composers,
20 musicians, and teaching artists.

21 Our composer workforce reflects the New York City
22 population with 77% self-identifying as individuals
23 of color and 55% as women or non-binary. To make a
24 sustainable living, a freelance artist must cobble
25 together many different gigs as performers,

1 composers, and teaching artists. Just to get a job,
2 these artists are expected to function as
3 entrepreneurs, needing skills in pitching, marketing,
4 networking, and fundraising.
5

6 American Composers Orchestra provides training
7 that will advance every part of an artist's career,
8 gives them agency to direct the creative process, and
9 pays them a living wage. We begin this work at the
10 start of the talent pipeline in New York City public
11 schools. In the past decade, nearly 100 ACO students
12 have entered competitive post-secondary music
13 programs.

14 For emerging artists like Trevor New, who joins
15 me here today, we provide ongoing opportunities over
16 multiple years. Since his two-year residency with
17 ACO, we have connected him to dozens of career
18 opportunities, which he will share more about
19 shortly. We're going to be bold and respectfully
20 request \$50,000 to support ACO's work.

21 These funds would enable ACO to add five annual
22 composer residencies, providing paid opportunities to
23 over 100 New York artists, and transformative musical
24 experiences for many more New York City residents.

25 Thank you.

1 MR NEW: Hi, my name is Trevor New. I'm a
2 violist, composer, educator, and developer of music
3 technology, and thank you for having us here to
4 testify. I'm really grateful for that.

5
6 As an artist in New York City, I could choose a
7 career of primarily commercial work or where I
8 recreate music that has been around for centuries,
9 music of another time.

10 Orchestras are known for playing music that
11 speaks to a different time and place. As a composer,
12 I'm interested in writing music that speaks to who we
13 are now, and I encourage this committee to support
14 artists who are creating new work.

15 I create artistic experiences that connect
16 communities across the world in real time using
17 existing technologies and live performance.

18 The solution to distance and connection isn't a
19 technical one, but a creative one. In this case, the
20 solution is music. The American Composers Orchestra
21 has enabled me to do this work in a way that no other
22 organization has. Working with the ACO, I've become
23 more confident in myself as an artist. The ACO gave
24 me one mandate, which was "write what you want, and
25 we'll do our best to make it happen." They let me

1 take risks, and it was amazing to collaborate with
2 other artists who were being paid a living wage. It
3 makes a huge difference.
4

5 I came out of the program feeling more
6 experienced and empowered, and work I created was
7 introduced to many more other individuals in a
8 position to hire me.

9 As Lindsay mentioned, my ACO fellowship led to
10 many new opportunities in the past four years.

11 With ACO, I've continued to play with the
12 orchestra at Carnegie Hall, teach New York City music
13 students, have my work published with Boosey &
14 Hawkes, an international publisher, and have a
15 commercial recording planned for future release.

16 ACO's support has led to a \$10,000 NISCA
17 commission grant, residencies with University of
18 Tennessee Knoxville, Alfred University, a teaching
19 position at Drew University, and collaborative work
20 with Engine Arts, the non-profit I founded has led
21 to, among other opportunities, a multi-year NISCA
22 grant of \$15,000 each year.

23 I echo Lindsay's request for the Council to
24 support the American Composers Orchestra with a
25 \$50,000 grant.

1
2 These funds will enable the composers to pursue
3 different ways of making music, share creativity with
4 New York City residents, and secure future employment
5 across the country. This is an orchestra that truly
6 speaks to right now. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you, and
8 congratulations. That sounds awesome. I think
9 artists should be able to take risks. They should be
10 able to create and follow their vision. I'm glad you
11 were awarded that opportunity. I'm thankful for the
12 work that you've done.

13 I agree. It's that-- It's the soft skills that
14 are important. I do believe location's important,
15 too. I can't even imagine if I was in high school
16 and in an after-school program in BAM. It's iconic.

17 So, just want to thank you all for what you're
18 doing to reach people. I know how costly and labor-
19 intensive it is. So, we are really trying our best
20 to figure out how we can expand your capacity
21 appropriately and, of course, under your guidance.

22 Thank you. Thank you to this panel.

23 Our last in-person-- If you'd like to testify,
24 please fill out a white slip with a sergeant at arms

1 so we can make sure that we get on the dais before we
2 proceed to Zoom participants.
3

4 We have Christopher Leon Johnson.

5 MR. JOHNSON: Hi. Good afternoon, Chair Rivera.

6 My name is Christopher Leon Johnson, and I totally

7 support all the organizations that were here this

8 morning and this afternoon. I believe that every

9 organization needs grants, but I'll say this myself.

10 What we need to start doing more for the City Council

11 for 2025 and for FY26 budget, I know this is not the

12 budget talks, is that we need to start implementing

13 more financial incentives and directing more

14 discretionary funding and start having these art

15 institutions use that money to start recruiting more

16 people from the inner districts, saying from the ages

17 from 18 years old to 34 years old, more this year,

18 mostly African American men.

19 I believe that I know this year is a violent

20 January. It's a violent month. I hope that there's

21 no more violence this year, but I believe that we can

22 lower the violence rate in the city if we start

23 teaching these young black men, many 18 to 34,

24 different avenues, usually with the arts.
25

1 We need to start doing more and start educating
2 them with arts, more arts, instead of pushing drill
3 music and pushing, giving awards and proclamations to
4 Duggs, gangsta rappers and drill rappers and start
5 honoring more people like young African American men
6 that does great work for the community, real positive
7 work for the community because if we change their
8 mindsets, it will lower the crime rate in the city.

9 I know that there's a lot of bureaucratic red
10 tape to give organizations that really work with
11 young black men, 21 to 34, discretionary funding, but
12 I hope that this year that you as a chair, I know
13 it's your last term, you work with these non-profits,
14 especially the museums, to start giving more
15 initiatives to black men that are 21 to 34 in the
16 inner districts.

17 So, I know my time is up. I'm going to go-- to
18 leave your hearing and thank you. Enjoy your day.

19 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you very much.
20 Program, services, employment, I think it's very
21 important to reducing violence. Thank you.

22 Now we're going to move on to our Zoom panel.

23 Is it alright if I call a few folks on Zoom?
24 Okay, let's go.
25

1 Lucy Sexton. Oh, one by one.

2 Okay. Hold on, Lucy. This concludes the in-
3 person portion of our public testimony.
4

5 We'll now move to remote testimony. If you are
6 testifying remotely, please listen for your name to
7 be called. And once your name is called, a member of
8 our staff will unmute you.

9 You may start your testimony once the Sergeant at
10 Arms sets the clock and cues you to begin. So, Lucy,
11 you may begin once you are unmuted and the Sergeant
12 cues you.

13 MS. SEXTON: I'm unmuted. I don't know if I'm
14 going to be cued, but if you can hear me, I'll
15 proceed.

16 I am Lucy Sexton. I'm with New Yorkers for
17 Culture and Arts, a citywide coalition of artists and
18 cultural organizations.

19 Thank you, Chair Rivera and the Council's
20 Cultural Affairs Committee, for holding this
21 important hearing addressing the cultural workforce.

22 I also want to thank the Chair for your new bill
23 supporting the New York State Legislature's Artspace
24 Bill. Access to space at below market rate for long-
25 term leases is a critical first step in stemming the

1 tide of the loss of cultural spaces that do so much
2 to anchor our communities.

3
4 As far as workforce, we need to look at the
5 current state of those workers. The 2022 Portrait of
6 New York State Artists Survey by Creatives Rebuild
7 New York, who I know you're also going to hear from,
8 revealed stark data. 57% of respondents reported
9 income under \$25,000. 86% earned less than \$50,000.
10 60% characterized their financial circumstances as
11 unstable or extremely unstable.

12 Cultural organizations need stable funding to
13 hire more and pay more, particularly to young people
14 from disinvested communities.

15 A few ideas: We propose a new council initiative
16 for workforce development, specifically to help
17 cultural organizations attract, train, and retain a
18 diverse workforce. We're also advocating for a city-
19 backed health fund that would allow cultural workers
20 to access portable benefits in moving from job to job
21 and provide cultural organizations access to a more
22 affordable group health plan for their employees.

23 We know there is support for this in the
24 administration, and we'd love to share more details
25 with you.

1
2 Finally, the council, the administration, and our
3 state government need to do all they can to protect
4 immigrant artists struggling to stay in our city. We
5 must pass New York for All in Albany. We must
6 protect cultural funding, which is already under
7 attack by the right. And New York City must lead the
8 way in saying no to the shutdown of DEIA initiatives,
9 and yes to our wildly diverse and vibrant city of
10 culture and community.

11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. Psacoya Guinn
13 from New York Theatre Workshop.

14 MS. GUINN: Good afternoon. Thank you for this
15 opportunity to speak. My name is Sequoia Gwynn, and
16 I am the Interim Director of Education and Community
17 Engagement at New York Theatre Workshop, a leading
18 off-Broadway theater located in the East Village.

19 At New York Theatre Workshop, one of the ways we
20 prioritize equity and opportunity is through our
21 education programs, such as Mind the Gap, our
22 intergenerational playwriting program, Youth Artistic
23 Instigators, our in-house youth ensemble, and today
24 I'm here to talk about our 2050 Administrative and
25 Artistic Fellowships.

1
2 For years, I have had the privilege of overseeing
3 the 2050 Administrative Fellowship and witnessing its
4 transformative impact firsthand. This program is
5 more than just an introduction to arts
6 administration. It's a launchpad for emerging
7 leaders who bring fresh perspectives and innovative
8 ideas to our field.

9 Our fellows go on to be leaders at leading
10 institutions such as ArtsNova, the Drama League,
11 Pasadena Playhouse, and even New York Theatre
12 Workshop.

13 In addition, our Artistic Fellowship has had a
14 profound impact on the creative ecosystem. This
15 program nurtures visionary playwrights, directors,
16 and other theater makers, providing them with vital
17 resources such as personal and project stipends,
18 mentorship, and opportunities to develop their craft.

19 By investing in these artists, we not only foster
20 bold new works, but also ensure that the stories of
21 our stages are reflecting diversity and complexity of
22 our world.

23 Each year, I see fellows enter the program with
24 immense potential and leave equipped with the skills,
25

1 confidence, and network to deliver real change, not
2 just in the arts, but in their broader communities.

3
4 So, programs like the 2050 Administrative and
5 Artistic Fellowships must be prioritized within our
6 NYC cultural sector because they aren't just
7 investments in individuals, they're investments in
8 the future of the arts.

9 Thank you so much.

10 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. Melody Capote?
11 You may begin.

12 MS. CAPOTE: Madam Chair, members of the
13 committee, and members of the City Council, my name
14 is Melody Capote. I'm the Executive Director of the
15 Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute,
16 known to many as CADI, and we're marking our 50th
17 anniversary in 2026. I am very pleased to be here to
18 testify about what I hope will be new and innovative
19 pathways into the arts and cultural workforce, and I
20 congratulate Chairwoman Rivera for identifying and
21 highlighting this very important topic.

22 What we are talking about here are the various
23 new ways or innovations on old ways to create
24 pathways for community members to be part of the arts
25 and culture ecosystem with a particular emphasis on

1 communities that have been disenfranchised by reasons
2 of racial or social backgrounds.

3
4 I want to share with you what we have been doing
5 at CCCADI and what I consider, with both pride and
6 humility, to be a truly innovative pathway for
7 artists and members of our communities interested in
8 the arts and culture field.

9 Starting with a grant from the state, we were
10 able to visualize a center where artists and
11 community workers could upgrade or obtain
12 entrepreneurial skills, further their professional
13 development skills, and sharpen their artistic point
14 of view through continued technical assistance,
15 support, coaching, and financial stipends.

16 We were able to make this dream a reality right
17 up the street from our offices in East Harlem's El
18 Barrio.

19 We launched the first cohort of community workers
20 and artists as part of our Entrepreneurial Assistance
21 Center for Artists of Color that was completed in
22 early December and is presently undergoing
23 evaluation. What we note thus far is that our
24 artists, particularly those in communities of color,
25 are starving for the opportunities to compete on an

1
2 even playing field and to advance opportunities and
3 their skills as far as their talents will take them.

4 What is most important to note here is the need
5 to secure multi-year funding support that will allow
6 the scaffolding and growing of the artists and their
7 businesses, which is our promise that we will be
8 there for them for the long term.

9 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you so much, Ms.
10 Capote. Tony Mazzocchi. Sorry, Tony.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

12 MR. MAZZOCCHI: It's all right. It's never been
13 messed up anyway. Thank you, Chair Rivera and
14 members of the committee for addressing the critical
15 topic of Pathways in the Arts and Cultural Workforce
16 and for allowing me to testify. My name is Tony
17 Mazzocchi and I'm the Executive Director Designate at
18 Kauffman Music Center located in Lincoln Square.

19 Kauffman Music Center serves 50,000 community
20 members annually including 5,000 students of all ages
21 from across the five boroughs through programs like
22 our Concert Hall, Merkin Hall, Community Arts School,
23 Lucy Moses, and the K-12 Public School, Special Music
24 School.

1
2 As detailed in my written testimony which I
3 provided, musical training remains out of reach for
4 so many due to financial and structural barriers.
5 While community programs provide exposure, the
6 intensive personalized instruction necessary for
7 advanced study is often prohibitively expensive with
8 costs for lessons, instruments, and travel creating
9 additional obstacles, particularly for students from
10 underserved communities.

11 The challenges of access to music education are
12 compounded by a national music teacher shortage.
13 This shortage presents an urgent opportunity by
14 equipping young people, especially those from
15 underserved communities, with the tools to pursue
16 advanced musical training. We can fill that gap
17 while preparing them for stable and meaningful
18 careers. Music education not only develops technical
19 skills, but as you know, fosters creativity,
20 collaboration, resilience, etc., qualities really
21 critical to success in teaching and beyond.

22 Kauffman Music Center addresses these inequities
23 through innovative programs, Special Music School, in
24 partnership with New York City Public Schools,

1 provides free K-12 music education integrated with
2 academics for over 300 students.

3
4 Our new Pathways program identifies motivated
5 middle school students from low-income backgrounds,
6 providing free training, instruments, and
7 transportation stipends tailored to their needs.
8 This program has already shown great promise in its
9 pilot year and will expand in the future. So by
10 investing in initiatives like these, we can remove
11 barriers, nurture talent, and make it accessible to
12 all. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you so much for your
14 graciousness. Potrirankamanis Queano Nur?

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

16 MS. QUEANO NUR: As-Salaam-Alaikum. Good morning
17 everyone. Good afternoon everyone. I'm here today
18 to testify. Oh, I have to honor our council member,
19 Carlina Rivera. Thank you so much for all your
20 support for us in District 2.

21 I'm here to testify on behalf of Cultural and
22 Arts Creative Force, specifically emphasizing the
23 significance of Kinding Sindaw Heritage Foundation
24 incorporation as indigenous living traditions within
25 the diaspora. Kinding Sindaw is composed of

1 tradition bearers and New York creative workers. You
2 are 33 years old and has contributed to the vibrant
3 tapestry of New York City's cultural heritage.
4

5 Our work not only preserves intangible cultural
6 practices but also serves as a critical resource of
7 mental health and well-being and community self-
8 esteem.

9 Artists as facilitators of these traditions play
10 an essential role in fostering identity, connection
11 and healing in our communities. However, the
12 sustainability of our efforts require urgent support
13 and I respectfully urge our council to prioritize,
14 one, sustainable and equitable access to space.

15 This includes rehearsal spaces, storage for
16 invaluable indigenous instruments, indigenous hand-
17 woven and embroidered wardrobes and props essential
18 for teaching and performing, accessible venues for
19 teaching and performance, a dedicated facility to
20 pass on creative ancestral knowledge to learners and
21 future generations, equitable funding for salaries.
22 Artists are the backbone of cultural preservation and
23 should be compensated fairly for the work. Support
24 physical space facility as a secure, accessible and
25 long-term venue to house and sustain these practices.

1 This action will ensure that New York City remains a
2 beacon of diversity celebrating and preserving its
3 intangible cultural heritage.
4

5 Indigenous traditions like Kinding Sindaw are not
6 just performers. We are lifelines of communities to
7 connect with our roots. Thank you. And envision a
8 stronger, more inclusive future.

9 Thank you so much for your time.

10 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. Sara Calderón.
11 You may begin.

12 MS. CALDERÓN: Oh, hello. Good afternoon
13 Chairperson Rivera and members of the committee. My
14 name is Sara Calderón. I'm the Executive Director of
15 Creators Rebuild New York. Thank you for this
16 opportunity to testify today. CRNY is a three-year,
17 \$125 million statewide initiative funded by private
18 philanthropy to promote the financial stability of
19 New York artists and organizations that employ them.

20 We believe artists are workers who deserve
21 equitable, sustainable support structures and whose
22 well-being is vital to New York's social and economic
23 well-being. We provide a guaranteed income for 2,400
24 artists over 18 months across New York State and
25 worked with 100 community-based organizations to

1 provide artists employment a salary of \$65,000 per
2 year and benefits for 300 artists throughout the
3 state for two years.

4
5 I'll mention one key thing building on and
6 endorsing Lucy's call for portable benefits. We ran
7 this employment program in partnership with
8 TribeWorks, a portable benefits platform that
9 supported our artists who were at organizations who
10 did not have or were too small to have benefits and
11 the ability to employ artists. We have research
12 about this as well, and I'm happy to share the
13 positive results.

14 As Lucy reported, artists in New York are making-
15 - 60% of artists are making less than \$25,000 a year
16 and our CRNY survey conducted of more than 2,300
17 artists, more than half of respondents have no
18 financial safety net and carry unmanageable debt.

19 For our first proposal, we're interested in
20 supporting internships and apprenticeships. There
21 are significant barriers to employment and nonprofit
22 arts administration, specifically high educational
23 requirements, low pay and few opportunities for on-
24 the-job pay. We recommend advancing a set of
25 parallel efforts to expand accessible internships and

1
2 apprenticeship opportunities in New York cultural
3 institutions, beginning with growing the capacity of
4 the CUNY cultural core program.

5 Excuse me?

6 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Sarah, your time is up. If
7 you just want to wrap up the thought, and we'll be
8 sure to read your full testimony that's submitted.

9 MS. CALDERÓN: That's okay. You can just take my
10 full testimony. Thank you so much.

11 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. I appreciate you
12 very much. Now we'll hear from Terry Greiss.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin. My name is

14 MR. GEORGE D. GRICE III, M.D. SURGEON: Terry
15 Greiss. I'm the Executive Director of Irondale
16 Ensemble Project, a theater ensemble based in Fort
17 Greene, Brooklyn.

18 Our permanent ensemble of citizen artists has
19 been making theater and passing on the legacy of
20 theater making to students from 10 to 80 for over 42
21 years. Today I'd like to feature two of our
22 signature youth programs, Irondale's Tech Track
23 program and our science communication program, STEM
24 to STEAM.

1
2 STEM to STEAM reaches over 700 students in
3 science and technology programs at more than 20 of
4 the city's most prestigious institutions.

5 Each student receives approximately 10 hours of
6 improvisation training to learn how to communicate
7 their academic work with excitement and passion and
8 without jargon and tailor their research for each
9 audience they need to reach, from peers and potential
10 funders to academics and even their own families.

11 About 20 years ago, we were working on a drama
12 program at Fort Greene Prep funded by Casa when a
13 very visionary principal suggested we teach theater
14 to her robotics students. The work we did with them
15 catapulted them to taking first place in regional
16 competitions and launched Irondale in a new
17 direction.

18 From that single program, the project has grown
19 to reach 700 high school students throughout the city
20 in 22 institutions through the science research
21 mentoring program and an additional 100 plus at other
22 labs and academic institutions. We also offer the
23 same training to professional STEM professionals in
24 laboratories, hospitals, and universities.

1
2 Tech Track is currently a semester-long program
3 offered free to all students that enables students to
4 study and practice the craft and technologies of
5 theater production and all the elements that make the
6 onstage theatrical production come to life.

7 Here's an example: Howie is a 12-year-old
8 student who showed up one day looking like he'd been
9 sent to Tech Track as a punishment. He expressed no
10 interest whatsoever, but at least he stayed.

11 The next day I heard about Howie, who is very
12 vocally and very passionately expressing his vision
13 of stage design and letting others know what they
14 were doing wrong. He was heard to say about another
15 student's design, I don't get it. That's dumb.

16 You're building a set with four walls, but
17 there's an audience, right? How can they possibly
18 see through the fourth wall? Of course he was right.
19 He's still expressing himself and still thinking
20 critically about the work he's creating. I clearly
21 see his future as a professional theater craftsman.

22 Thank you for your time.

23 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you, Mr. Greiss.
24 Patricia McGregor?

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

1 MS. MCGREGOR: Thank you, Chairperson Rivera,
2 Commissioner Cumbo, the council members, and all of
3 the artistic leaders here. I've been very inspired
4 to hear about how all of your programs are helping
5 individuals and the ecosystem. My name is Patricia
6 McGregor, and I come here not only to advocate as an
7 arts leader, but also as a recipient of a
8 transformative fellowship myself.
9

10 In 2000, I moved to New York City to pursue a
11 career in the arts, but as many artists and students,
12 had to take a job bartending down the corner on
13 Avenue A and an executive assistant job at Polo Ralph
14 Lauren. I almost stayed in that job until I got a
15 fellowship at Second Stage, which for two years gave
16 me a home, a place, and launched my career.

17 I now come before you as the Artistic Director of
18 New York Theatre Workshop, a few blocks down the
19 street from where I used to bartend.

20 These fellowship programs are not just academic.
21 They are not abstract. They are very personal for
22 me.

23 You heard earlier from Psacoya Guinn, our
24 extraordinary Interim Director of Education
25 Engagement, speak about our range of programs. Our

1 programs begin with teens at the age of 13 through
2 our youth artistic instigator program and bridge all
3 the way up to folks in their 90s in our Mind the Gap
4 program.

5
6 Most importantly for the work today, our 2050
7 artistic and administrative fellows have been one of
8 the most successful programs in the field of off-
9 Broadway and Broadway theatre.

10 Many of the recipients of these fellowships over
11 the past 20 years have gone on to be household names.
12 This year, Donya Tamor and Brandon Jacob Jenkins,
13 former fellows, won Tony Awards. We have 6 to 10
14 fellowships in each artistic and administrative
15 track, from finance, development, artistic,
16 production, and marketing.

17 We have lost some dedicated funding, so this year
18 we went down from 10 administrative to 5 fellows.
19 And I will say, while I speak as a former fellow who
20 that fellowship transformed my life, and I sit now in
21 the big office at New York Theatre Workshop, there
22 are former fellows who are also on our board. I know
23 these fellowships make a huge difference, and
24 especially as a leader and with my incoming leader,
25 Maya Children, as two women of color leading an

1 organization, we know very personally that these
2 fellowships make a difference.
3

4 They matter. We'll do everything we can to
5 champion them, and we hope you join us so that this
6 invaluable work can be accessible to many, many more
7 people for generations to come. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you so much. The
9 following witnesses were also signed up to testify
10 remotely. Juan Castaño and Nia Abdullah. If any of
11 you are online or here in person, please raise your
12 hand.

13 If there is anyone else present in the room who
14 has not had the opportunity to testify but wishes to
15 do so, please raise your hand.

16 Seeing no one else who wishes to testify, I just
17 want to thank all of the participants in person and
18 on Zoom for your testimony and really your advocacy
19 to advance efforts for fellowships, internships, and
20 apprenticeships.

21 It's so, so important for our city, and I'm very
22 thankful to you.

23 With that, this hearing is adjourned. Thank you
24 to the staff here in the Council and on my team.

25 [GAVEL]

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date January 29, 2025