



**New York City Council
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations**

**Oversight Hearing: Fiscal Year 2023 DCLA Preliminary Budget, Capital
Commitments, and Mayor's Management Report**

Tuesday, March 8, 2022, 2:00PM – Virtual Hearing

**Testimony Presented by New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Deputy
Commissioner Sheelah Feinberg**

Good afternoon, Chair Ossé and members of the committee. I am Sheelah Feinberg, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs. I am here to testify in regard to the Mayor's proposed Fiscal Year 2023 preliminary budget. I am joined by several of my colleagues from the agency including Chief of Staff Shirley Levy, General Counsel Pranita Raghavan, and Finance Director Phillipa Shao.

To begin, let me say I'm thrilled to see so many new faces on the Council's Cultural Affairs committee. Our cultural community deserves dedicated, energetic advocates in City government. I am looking forward to working with you to do everything we can to support this essential aspect of what makes our city great.

With this in mind, I'd like to start with a quick overview of the Department of Cultural Affairs' work and mission. We are the largest municipal supporter of culture in the United States, providing funding and technical assistance to over 1,000 cultural nonprofits each year. We distribute annual grants to support cultural programming through the Cultural Development Fund. We provide operating and energy subsidies to organizations on DCLA-owned property, including the 34 members of the Cultural Institutions Group. We provide capital funding to support equipment and construction projects at hundreds of organizations. Our public art unit is dedicated to both permanent and temporary installations on City property. And our Materials for the Arts program, based in Long Island City, provides free supplies to cultural organizations, artists, City agencies with arts programming, and public schools.

We do all of this with a small but passionate team of nearly 50 public servants dedicated to working with our constituents in all five boroughs. In recent years, our staff has found far-reaching ways to build greater equity into our programs and services. Not only have we sought to encourage and foster a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive cultural workforce, but we've also worked to ensure the agency's funding and services are reaching historically underserved communities around the city. As we've witnessed the damage the pandemic has caused to our most vulnerable neighbors – particularly in communities of color – we've strived to take this work even further. We believe that art

and culture have the power to connect with and uplift every New Yorker, and we're committed to working with partners across the cultural community – including you – to continue building on the progress we've made.

With that brief context for our work, I'll now provide an overview of Mayor Adams' FY23 preliminary budget for DCLA. The total expense funding allocated to the agency is \$145.2 million, which includes:

- \$28.5 million for the Cultural Development Fund
- \$107.1 million for the Cultural Institutions Group
- \$1.25 million for energy subsidies to groups on DCLA property
- \$6.2 million for agency operations
- A little over \$2 million for additional agency programs and initiatives

Please note that at this stage in the process, these figures don't include any one-time allocations typically added at budget adoption.

In the Mayor's preliminary budget proposal, the Department of Cultural Affairs continues to invest in our city's cultural community while finding savings and efficiencies along with our colleagues across City government. There is no recovery for New York City without culture, and we look forward to working with partners on the collaborative budget process in the months ahead.

Now, I'd like to provide a few recent and upcoming highlights from the agency.

- Our amazing team at Materials for the Arts recently launched The Great Dance Shoe Giveaway, offering 11,000 pairs of free dance shoes to schools, dancers, and dance groups. Since we cut the "golden shoe string" just two weeks ago, so far roughly 9,000 shoes have gone to 250 schools and arts organizations across the five boroughs. This has brought a welcome boost to performing artists around the city as stages and studios continue to return to life. If you know of anyone who could use the shoes, visit nyc.gov/mfta to schedule an appointment.
- As part of the agency's FY22 Cultural Development Fund, we partnered for the second year with the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable to offer \$1,000 unrestricted relief grants to arts educators around the city. Our COVID-19 impact surveys of the cultural field found that arts educators – who are an essential link between our city's cultural riches and our young people – were particularly hard hit by pandemic layoffs and furloughs. The application period for the third round of the relief fund opened yesterday and closes on March 21. So please help us spread the word to anyone who could benefit.
- The CUNY Cultural Corps, a program we helped create several years ago to open up a stronger jobs pipeline into the cultural community from CUNY's diverse pool of talent. The Cultural Corps is now accepting applications from students for the next term. These are paid opportunities for eligible CUNY

students to gain hands-on experience at some of our city's amazing cultural groups. Places like the Laundromat Project in Brooklyn, Alice Austen House in Staten Island, the Bronx Council on the Arts, New York City Ballet in Manhattan, the Queens County Farm Museum, and dozens more host Cultural Corps members each year. Students should apply by March 31. The program is always looking for new cultural partners, too. So anyone who wants to host one of the amazing students that come through this program should visit CUNY's website to learn more.

- Finally, our CDF team has moved mountains these last two years – via Zoom, of course - to keep City funds flowing to cultural groups as they faced some of the most difficult times we hope we'll ever see. While struggling through the same professional and personal upheavals we've all faced, our Programs unit quickly implemented reforms to make accessing funds easier and more equitable for all grantees. These changes included streamlining applications and expanding eligibility for multiyear awards to all groups.

Now, we're preparing to embark on the next phase of these efforts for the FY23 Cultural Development Fund, bringing every eligible group back for a competitive panel review for the first time in three years. As part of this, we are also making reforms to the panel review process itself – notably, expanding the number of panelists, increasing stipends, and making a dedicated effort to have panels of cultural community members who reflect our city's breadth and diversity. In short, we want to make sure the people reviewing applications and making funding recommendations bring a wide range of views, perspectives, and experiences, to the table. We plan to open panel nomination process in the coming weeks. We need your support to recruit people with deep roots in your districts to serve on panels and help us steward these public funds.

Again, we believe that there is no recovery for New York City without culture. From bringing tourist dollars back to our city, to the social and educational value the arts bring to every New Yorker – the power of the arts to heal and inspire is unrivalled. As I said earlier in testimony, the new energy and enthusiasm on the City Council is incredibly exciting as we continue the difficult work of supporting our cultural recovery while making sure City funds reach those who need it most. We look forward to working toward a City budget with you while investing in these priorities and also finding ways to work smarter and more efficiently.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT
ANTONIO REYNOSO
Brooklyn Borough President

**Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Group Relations
Preliminary Budget Hearing, March 8, 2022**

Good afternoon, and thank you to the City Council and Chair Chi Ossé for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I am Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso, and I am here to ask the Mayor and the Council to support the cultural institutions that serve a vital role in our communities and to ask that you consider equity in these funding allocations.

Though all the city's cultural institutions provide critical arts, cultural, and historical education and programming, not all of these cultural institutions are created equal. The pandemic hasn't been easy on any institution. Yet the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan has a \$3.3 billion endowment, and even as the pandemic raged, had \$50 million set aside to purchase art. Meanwhile, Weeksville Heritage Center in Brooklyn, which celebrates one of the largest free Black communities in pre-Civil War America, was struggling just to keep its doors open.

Now, Weeksville is part of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), along with five other amazing cultural institutions in Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Brooklyn Children's Museum, and the New York Aquarium. Of these, the Brooklyn Museum has the largest endowment, which even before the pandemic was only about 5% of the Met's. Today I ask that the Council work with the Mayor to restore all proposed cuts to the CIGs, and that DCLA develop an methodology for allocating these funds equitably that considers not only organization size, but also populations served.

I also want to call your attention to a recent report from HueArts NYC, which researched the impacts and needs of arts organizations in NYC led by people of color. In contrast to the larger CIGs, these small organizations tend to have less stable funding sources, and they often rely on DCLA's Cultural Development Fund (CDF). HueArts NYC found that these small, POC-run organizations often provide much more than just arts programming in communities of color, for example, many have pivoted to community service during the pandemic. Additionally, these organizations often lack stable space, face chronic underinvestment, and are less able to call upon individual donors for support due to the lack of disposable income in communities of color. Meanwhile, there is a lack of transparency in the allocation of CDF funding, and no clear priority placed on addressing these disparities.

Even with the supposed “one-time” supplemental funding allocation made last fiscal year, DCLA’s budget still represents less than 1% of the City’s total budget. And yet, now cuts are being proposed, cuts our communities simply cannot afford.

So, I am calling on the Mayor to not only restore the proposed cuts and add new funding to our cultural institutions, but also to implement new systems to ensure that arts and cultural funding is allocated equitably and with transparency. The City doesn’t need to give an organization with a \$3.3 billion endowment and billionaires on its board more money. It does need to lift up organizations that share the history of communities of color, educate Black and Brown youth, and serve as community anchors in underinvested neighborhoods. Thank you, and I look forward to working on this alongside DCLA, Mayor Adams, and Chair Ossé.



**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
FISCAL YEAR 2023 PRELIMINARY BUDGET OVERSIGHT HEARING**

**CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES & INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS
COMMITTEE**

March 8, 2022

Good afternoon, my name is Tony Marx and I am the president of The New York Public Library (NYPL). Founded in 1895, NYPL is our country's largest public library system. We operate 88 neighborhood branches across three boroughs: The Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island, as well as four world-class research centers: The Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Thomas Yoseloff Business Center at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library, and the Library for the Performing Arts. I would like to thank City Council Speaker Adams, Committee Chair Ossé and the members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today on the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget. I also want to extend a warm welcome and congratulations to our new council members. You have joined a committee whose work is critical to the well-being of all New Yorkers.

As we all prepare to move forward into a new chapter of recovery and renewal, it is important to acknowledge that public libraries are uniquely positioned to support all of the city's diverse communities with a wide range of free programs, services, materials, and more. We were there for New Yorkers during the pandemic—most recently at the end of 2021 with the rise of the Omicron variant, when, thanks to our library staff, we managed to operate with minimal closures and continue serving New Yorkers who needed us during yet another difficult stage in this crisis—and we will be there for what comes afterward.

To do so, we rely on the City's ongoing strong support. We are pleased to see that the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget does not include a cut to libraries, underscoring their importance to supporting city initiatives (libraries, for example, have been on the front lines in the battle against COVID-19, providing space for pediatric vaccines and testing, as well as distributing free at-home test kits) and to New Yorkers in general. Still, with the current economic climate and City Council non-baselined funds potentially at risk, there are concerns about the ability to serve New Yorkers and to continue growing key programs and services that are needed now more than ever. We are hoping that City Council funds received last year will be restored and baselined, and that the new needs requests made by each system will be met. In NYPL's case this request includes expenses for library materials, non-capitally eligible infrastructure costs, and funding for the operation of the new Polonsky Exhibition of the New York Public Library's Treasures, which supports educational enrichment for teachers and students across the city

While we offer a full slate of programs—job search assistance, technology training courses, ESOL and citizenship classes, book clubs, author talks, financial literacy and small business assistance, etc.—we are currently focused on several specific areas to best support New Yorkers as we move forward. One such area is that of youth and education initiatives. As the city emerges from this crisis, we know that teens and youth have been disproportionately impacted by pandemic, widening learning gaps that already existed between high and low needs communities. A series of new initiatives launched in 2021 have been designed specifically to address inequalities in access to education and provide better spaces for teens to learn, grow, and develop. In the fall of 2021, we launched our new drop-in after school program, which allows us to serve more children at each branch than any previous after school model, and focuses on homework help, tutoring, and career exploration. We have also made a firm commitment to expand services for teens, including the establishment of new teen centers

across our system. Our flagship teen center is at our newly-transformed central circulating library, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library (SNFL), which opened last year. On any given weekday you can easily find over 50 teens from across the city there utilizing books, computers, programs, staff expertise, or a state-of-the-art recording studio. The need is clear. From the relatively short period between July 12 to November 16, 2021, 141 programs and events were held in the center with over 800 attendees, including teen led programs. The goal of these centers and their programmatic offerings is to provide teens with the foundation and support that they need to succeed in an increasingly digital and competitive workforce, and give them safe, welcoming spaces to gather, talk, and learn. Another aspect of our commitment to the education space is our focus on early literacy, kindergarten preparedness, and support for students and educators. Our MyLibraryNYC program gets class sets of books into schools while our recently-launched Center for Educators and Schools makes library materials and services accessible to educators and easy-to-employ in classrooms (curricula using primary sources, educational projects tied to our Polonsky Exhibition of The New York Public Library's Treasures, etc). We are now in the planning stages of another initiative to get books into New Yorkers' homes to keep. Studies make it clear that being surrounded by books and a culture of learning at home correlates to improved early literacy rates, so while we continue to provide books to borrow, we also want to ensure children—particularly those 0-5—have home libraries, and that their caregivers have resources and tools to help maximize the impact of those libraries. In addition to giving away books—creating an immediate connection between the recipients and libraries, reading, and learning—the Library will also provide resources to caregivers to maximize their impact: tips for reading to children, book recommendations, and so on. All told, the goal of this “books in the home” initiative is to spark a lifelong love of reading in our youngest patrons and position them for success in school and the rest of their careers.

Another aspect of our commitment to children and teens is the citywide elimination of late fines on books and other circulating materials, announced last fall. This removed a significant barrier to access for our most vulnerable neighbors and had an outsized impact on kids and teens. In October 2021, almost 113,000 library cards belonging to kids and teens would have been blocked because of fine accruals, meaning that children and teens essentially could not access ideas, knowledge, and information because of something out of their control. As we evaluate the results of fine elimination, we have already seen increases in visits and circulation immediately following this policy shift, and expect those numbers to continue to grow. This work eliminates any obstacle between our children and access to the tools they need to learn outside the classroom, solidifying a strong ecosystem of learning in New York City, and supporting the city's educational efforts.

Another key aspect of NYPL's current priorities is our capital program. If one thing is clear following the isolation of the pandemic, it's the value of open, free, public spaces for people to gather and be with others. Even amid the challenges of the pandemic and the current environment of strained resources, the Library has maintained its commitment to investing in the physical infrastructure of our branches to ensure that they are best positioned to meet the needs of our communities. We know that when we are able to renovate our spaces or build new ones to better accommodate the needs of New Yorkers, they are used more. Woodstock Library in the Bronx completed a major renovation in 2018. In its first full year post-renovation versus its last full year pre-renovation, the branch saw an 8% increase in visits and a 20% increase in circulation. Washington Heights Library in Manhattan similarly saw a 47% increase in visits, a 45% increase in circulation, and a 105% increase in program attendance in its first year post renovation in 2014. The same trends were observed at Stapleton Library in Staten Island and Kingsbridge Library in the Bronx following their renovation and expansion into a new location in 2013 and 2011, respectively. While the pandemic disrupted service, making comparisons

difficult, we expect similar increases at our new Van Cortlandt Library in the Bronx and Macomb's Bridge Library in Harlem, as well as our completely transformed central circulating library, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library (SNFL), built with \$150M in city funds. These spaces contribute to vital social infrastructure, and important centers for communities, making their renovations critical. This is why, almost immediately after the March 2020 closure, we advocated for the ability to safely continue ongoing capital projects, such as the construction of a new branch in Staten Island (Charleston, opening on March 16), a new Roosevelt Island Library (opened), a renovated New Amsterdam Library (opened) and Bloomingdale Library (opened), and renovations of five 100-plus year-old Carnegie branches in high-needs areas: Melrose and Hunts Point in the Bronx, Fort Washington and 125th Street in Manhattan, and Port Richmond in Staten Island. These locations have been in dire need of capital upgrades for decades; their top-to-bottom renovation—made possible with funding committed by the City under the 10-year capital plan—allows us to meet community needs for improvements such as ADA accessibility, dedicated spaces for teens and children, and facade restoration, among others. While all of this work is exciting and valuable, much more is needed; NYPL recently identified \$277.4M in systemwide capital needs. Priorities identified include: complete renovations of the Hudson Park, Edenwald, West New Brighton, Francis Martin, Spuyten Duyvil, and Countee Cullen branches; state of good repair projects such as HVAC, Boilers and ADA accessibility; technology upgrades; and funding of project shortfalls. We cannot overstate the importance of including libraries in the City's 10-year capital plan, which only happened once, in 2015 (FY16 Executive Plan). The only way to appropriately plan for and address the systemwide capital needs of the city's 217 public library buildings is through consistent, long-term capital funding and planning. And this can only happen if the City regularly funds libraries in the 10-year capital plan, as is customary for other city infrastructure and agencies.

Additionally, we are open to innovative ways to improve our spaces: for example, last year we broke ground, along with the City, on a project that will bring the Inwood community a new, much-needed, state of the art library, as well as 100 percent affordable housing and other amenities. This innovative model, utilizing a combination of public and private funds, allows us to provide the City with improved library spaces, reducing the need for coveted capital funds. Looking ahead, we are open to discussing other projects of this nature, as the ultimate goal is to best serve New Yorkers now and in the future.

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented New Yorkers with protracted, unpredictable challenges for nearly two years now. But whether it was our historic pivot to digital and virtual services, our ability to safely and quickly restore our in-person presence, or provide innovative initiatives like outdoor programming, the Library has fully maintained its commitment to equal access to books, knowledge, and education for all, regardless of this crisis' twists and turns. As we look to brighter days ahead, we stand prepared to adjust to a new normal that requires us to do more than we ever have. The Library is poised to both maintain new initiatives while also restoring and preserving existing programs and services as we proceed with our focus on youth, education, and our capital agenda. But it is only with your continued support that we can meet this moment.

Thank you for your time, I am happy to take any questions.



Statement by Nick Buron, Chief Librarian & SVP, Queens Public Library

New York City Council's Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing

March 8, 2022

Good afternoon. I am Nick Buron, Chief Librarian and Senior Vice President at Queens Public Library (QPL, Library). On behalf of the Library and our President & CEO Dennis Walcott, it is a pleasure to be here.

Thank you, Chair Ossé, Speaker Adams, and the members of this esteemed committee for the opportunity to speak with you today about our budget priorities for the next fiscal year. QPL is excited to begin its partnership with our new chair, new Speaker, a new class of Council Members and a new Mayor. We are filled with tremendous optimism regarding the future of this great city and are eager to work together as we do our part to ensure a full recovery for New York City.

The City Council provides significant support to New York City's public libraries. It would be impossible for us to meet the needs of our customers without it. Therefore, on behalf of every person who works at and is served by Queens Public Library, thank you.

To characterize the last two years as challenging would be an understatement. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every individual, organization, and government in the world. It has changed the way we interact with one another and has forced us to reconsider what "a new normal" means. March 16 will mark two years since the unprecedented closure of all of our physical locations to the public because of the rapid proliferation of the coronavirus disease in our city.

I am happy to say that despite all the difficulties we have faced as a borough and city, QPL has been robustly reemerging, safely reintroducing in-person activities and playing an integral role in New York's recovery.

On February 28, after a pause in response to Omicron, QPL resumed indoor programming, which will gradually expand as long as public health conditions continue to improve. We will also continue our virtual programming, which has been an outstanding resource throughout the pandemic, providing customers with vital information and services and opportunities to learn, especially critical during the mass quarantine phase of the pandemic. We have conducted over 29,100 virtual and in-person programs, grab and go activities, and outreach activities from March 2020 through the end of January 2022. In that same period, we circulated over 3.9 million e-books, e-magazines and other e-materials, and added over 123,000 items to our digital collections in order to meet the demand of our customers in an evolving remote world. Our live and archived programs, such as Hip-Hop DJ sessions with

Ralph McDaniels and our 24-hour Black Health and Healing Virtual Summit, were viewed nearly 1.1 million times.

The Library provides a vast array of services to the communities we serve. While there is not time to name everything we do, I would like to highlight a few things.

Our Adult Learner Program (ALP) provides services, resources, and lifelong learning opportunities to the diverse communities of Queens. We operate seven Adult Learning Centers with full-time professional staff and volunteers who tutor literacy groups and facilitate ESOL conversation groups. Centers also offer Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes, video groups, writing groups, technology-assisted instruction, and ongoing tutor training provided by professional staff.

QPL's Job & Business Academy (JBA) provides specialized training and learning opportunities, with an emphasis on technology training, to job seekers, aspiring entrepreneurs, and business owners. Helping new Americans and the formerly incarcerated prepare resumes and practice interview skills and helping new business owners grow their business are just a few of the services JBA provides.

QPL operates a Mail-a-Book program. Mail-A-Book service offers homebound customers the convenience of having library materials delivered to their door free of charge. During the past fiscal year, we lent over 17,600 items to homebound individuals. The Library also offers interactive virtual programming for the homebound so they can connect to and learn with others.

QPL is committed to the education and development of children and teens. Our Toddler Learning Center (TLC), open to young children ages 18 – 38 months, is a special program where parents learn about nutrition, speech development, early literacy, and parenting skills, while toddlers become familiar with social environments at a young age.

Our Kick Off to Kindergarten (K2K) program is for children ages 3 and 5. To prepare children to read, K2K develops knowledge of early literacy skills with guided activities and story times for families, while promoting at-home literacy and conflict analysis strategies for adults. This past fiscal year, 164 families took part in 70 program sessions.

QPL's Children's Library Discovery Center, located at our Central Library, has hands-on interactive exhibits and learning labs led by a dedicated Discovery Team. They enable children ages 3-12 to find information and inspire interest in books, reading, and learning.

QPL developed the STACKS program, which is a free enrichment program for children in grades K-5. It is designed to enhance a child's learning experiences through age-appropriate activities in a safe and welcoming environment. The program's goals are to help build their social, emotional, and academic skills. During this past fiscal year, we held 275 program sessions, serving nearly 1,200 children.

QPL operates two dedicated Teen Centers that serve as safe spaces for middle school and high school students to complete homework assignments, do research, participate in programs and leadership initiatives, and explore their creativity. Our Teen Centers host a wide variety of programs, including, but not limited to: test prep, college and career

readiness; health and recreation programs that focus on awareness, self-advocacy, and education; and technology programs such as STEM presentations, video game clubs, and a dedicated recording studio with audio equipment.

Our Summer Reading program remains very popular. Nearly 15,000 young people participated in over 2,200 program sessions this past summer.

QPL has worked closely with the City in the effort to combat COVID-19 and to engage our communities during these challenging times. Whether it was providing host sites for H+H COVID-19 Test & Trace, vaccination sites, or NYC Department of Education Learning Labs, polling locations for early voting, Primary Day and Election Day for the Board of Elections, or conducting 2020 Census outreach to ensure an accurate count, Queens Public Library has been there serving the people of the borough.

Most recently, we have been working with the Adams Administration on several initiatives that include increasing civic awareness and engagement in the policy process and supporting the ongoing battle against the pandemic.

Three of our locations – East Elmhurst, Peninsula and Laurelton – served as COVID-19 vaccination sites for children aged 5-11, from December 2021 to February 2022. Over that period, 100 children were inoculated from this disease.

Ten of our locations — Arverne, Central, East Elmhurst, Far Rockaway, Kew Gardens Hills, Long Island City, McGoldrick, Peninsula, Richmond Hill and Rego Park —began distributing COVID-19 test kits to the public on February 14. As a result of our staff's enthusiasm and commitment to the health and well-being of our communities, over 10,000 kits were given away that first week. Given the high demand and success of this initiative, eight more of our locations — Bayside, Glen Oaks, Glendale, Jackson Heights, Lefferts, Rochdale Village, South Ozone Park and Steinway — began distributing test kits on Tuesday, February 22. To date, we have distributed more than 23,000 coronavirus test kits to the public, and we plan to expand the effort.

Mayor Adams' Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget instituted a 3 percent cut to our operating budget this fiscal year, but rescinded a proposed Fiscal Year 2023 funding cut of 3 percent to QPL. Fortunately, we have found ways to absorb the reductions for this year without affecting hiring or service levels. **However, if things change in the Mayor's Executive Budget and cuts are re-proposed for Fiscal Year 2023, staffing levels, public service hours and our collections would likely be impacted.**

With 66 locations in every neighborhood and more than one million square feet of library space, QPL has a large capital program with a variety of needs. Maintaining our physical spaces is no small feat, and requires the city to invest in our libraries so they are the modern, inspiring spaces the public deserves. **In our Ten-Year Capital Plan submitted to the City, we have identified a need of \$270 million over the next 10 years. Of this, we need \$98.6 million in Fiscal Year 2023 to address projected funding deficits, as well as to begin the process of initiating tier one priority capital projects in need of immediate attention. An additional amount of \$13.3 million is needed to launch those same tier one projects.**

The Mayor's and City Council's capital investments in libraries over the last several years have had a significant and positive impact on the state of our facilities. However, it is clear that needs remain, and your continued support is crucial.

When the Library is forced to make emergency critical infrastructure repairs, we do not have the luxury of waiting for the capital procurement and construction process to play out. In order to prevent our buildings from being closed to our customers for months on end, the Library finds itself in an unfortunate position where operating funds – funds that should be used to serve our customers through programming and other services – must be used for capital repairs. **Therefore, it is important that the City Council continue to advocate for New York's library systems to receive dedicated funding in the Mayor's Ten-Year Capital Plan.** The current process of piecemeal fundraising is inefficient as it often takes several budget cycles before a project is adequately funded. Being able to have a dedicated capital budget will allow the Library to effectively plan and maintain its capital portfolio.

Equally important, we respectfully request that the City Council, at minimum, reauthorize its \$14 million Library Initiative, of which QPL receives \$3.9 million. This funding is vital as it allows us to address non-capitally eligible and critical maintenance projects, as well as support staffing levels, programs and materials.

As the pandemic moved us to an increasingly digital world, it laid bare the disparities that exist concerning broadband connectivity in the local communities we serve. Libraries have been at the forefront of bridging the digital divide, and in order for us to continue to work towards closing it, we need City Hall's support. We have secured over 2,200 hot spots to lend our customers, but we know more are needed. As we serve people virtually, we need help from the Administration to maintain a robust level of e-content and e-material for our customers. As we emerge from this pandemic and transition to a new, post-COVID-19 world, demand for our services will rival the Great Recession. **We have communicated to the Administration a need of \$7.9 million in new operating funds in Fiscal Year 2023 in order to meet this anticipated demand.**

Every day, we transform lives by cultivating intellectual and personal growth. As the center of community life, we build strong neighborhoods through the multitude of free programs and services we provide. For the Library to meet the needs of our customers, especially our most vulnerable populations, we respectfully ask for your continued financial support and ask that you prioritize QPL and New York City's libraries in the Adopted Fiscal Year 2023 Budget.

Chair Ossé, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING TESTIMONY

Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries & International Intergroup Relations

March 8, 2022

Good afternoon. I am Linda Johnson, President & CEO of Brooklyn Public Library. Thank you, Speaker Adams, Chairs Osse and Brannan, and the committee members for the opportunity to testify on the preliminary budget, and to our Brooklyn delegation and the entire City Council for supporting New York City's libraries.

Today we ask that you continue that support and restore the Council's \$14 million Libraries Initiative—essential operational funding which was not carried through in the Fiscal Year 2023 preliminary budget. We also ask the City for a sorely needed capital allocation of \$85 million.

In the wake of the pandemic, libraries are poised to help rebuild a more equitable New York, but we need functional buildings and adequate staffing in order to remain open to the public six or seven days a week.

With 217 branches across all three boroughs, including 61 in Brooklyn, libraries provide a safe, dignified and absolutely free public space to every New Yorker in every neighborhood. Our librarians, technology resource specialists and other staff build longstanding relationships with the communities they serve, giving them the ability to assess the needs of those communities and meet them, whether with ESOL and High School Equivalency classes, homework help, or Storytime in Spanish, Kreyol, Urdu or eight other languages.

This is what makes the Library the most deeply trusted, democratic, and far-reaching institution in our city.

Prior to the pandemic, Brooklyn Public Library welcomed over 9 million visits in a single year, with more than 15 million books checked out and 1 million program attendees. In March 2020, forced to shut our doors for the first time in our 125-year history, we adapted many of those programs to digital platforms with huge success, producing over 7,000 virtual programs in the first year for 1 million attendees, from personalized job assistance to grief support groups.

We began reopening in the summer of 2020 with grab-and-go lobby service and by the summer of 2021 had welcomed patrons back into all available branches to browse the collection and use computers, printers and other critical technology.

Brooklynites continue to return to their local libraries and venture in for the first time. So far, in fiscal year 2023, more than 35,000 people have signed up for new library cards at their local library. We've seen over 600,000 WiFi sessions and physical checkouts are climbing toward pre-pandemic levels. As Omicron is receding, we have been able to resume indoor in-person programming once again, including a concert last week with the Harlem Chamber Players that was at capacity.

At the same time, the demand for virtual programs and services continues to be robust. Last week, more than 600 people tuned into a panel about Lenape history via Zoom; we have seen more than 40,000 new e-card holders; and e-book checkouts have soared, with a record-breaking 350,000 checkouts in January alone.

As ever, online or in person, libraries are centers of literacy. We equip New Yorkers with the reading skills they need to learn about the world, succeed in their lives and participate fully in our society.

We also believe everyone in our city should be digitally literate. In the world of libraries, we've long known how many New Yorkers live on the wrong side of the digital divide: 800,000 in Brooklyn alone. The pandemic farther widened that divide and made it visible to all. New Yorkers need broadband and digital skills in order to access city benefits, search and apply for jobs, connect with healthcare providers, complete homework and much more.

That's why, when we were forced to close our doors, we installed antennas on the roofs of 50 branches to amplify WiFi beyond our walls and worked with the Department of Transportation to create outdoor library spaces. We published a guide to accessing the FCC's Emergency Broadband Benefit—a monthly subsidy for home broadband—and trained librarians to help patrons complete the application which is, ironically, online. We loaned hotspots to Adult Learning students and our Older Adult Literacy Navigator helped our patrons interact via Zoom. We recently outfitted a new Techmobile with WiFi, laptops, and more to take tech workshops on the road to high schools and senior centers.

In addition to being the largest provider of free WiFi and tech access in New York, libraries are the largest hub for career services and aspiring entrepreneurs. We're the sole public hub for jobseekers in 64 percent of the city's neighborhoods and the only local, public resources for small business owners in 67 percent—including many places where minority and immigrant owned businesses are still reeling from the pandemic.

Our Business and Career services include personalized resume and career coaching, as well as financial literacy workshops. Our annual PowerUp! competition provides intensive mentorship, classes and seed funding for aspiring entrepreneurs. This year, 70 percent of participants had never before owned a business; 68 percent were women; and 56 percent were Black. All of them are now better equipped to achieve their goals and enrich their communities.

Civic literacy is also of utmost importance to libraries. At the Civic Commons at Central Library, Brooklynites can apply for a passport or IDNYC card. They can also meet with immigration attorneys for free, join study groups for the citizenship exam, or get help preparing their taxes.

Health literacy is paramount to libraries, too. We continue to partner with the City's Test and Trace Corps, distributing free at-home Covid test kits at 23 branches. We recently offered walk-in vaccines at five branches so children could get their shots in a familiar, friendly environment and leave with a reward: their own copy of *Where The Wild Things Are*. Beyond COVID, we offer nutrition education, support navigating Medicare and other health coverage, meditation classes and more.

To ensure everyone in Brooklyn has access to these and other resources, we also deliver library services beyond our own walls. In lockdown, our Older Adult Services team regularly called to check in on dozens of homebound patrons in our Books by Mail program. Throughout the crises at Rikers, BPL lent books to incarcerated patrons virtually and via mail, and we're working to resume in-person service there. Each week, our redesigned bookmobiles visit shelters for families experiencing homelessness, and we hope to soon reconnect with schools and senior centers.

At this moment, our city faces widespread learning loss, disproportionate unemployment among communities of color, and the effects of extreme social isolation and fragmentation. Thankfully, libraries have the experience and expertise to address these challenges. With our partners at Queens and New York Public Libraries and within the Adams administration, we are working to design new programs—and also adapt and scale ones that have succeeded before.

But again, we can only do this work with functional buildings and adequate staffing, which is why our fiscal year 2023 preliminary budget request prioritizes restoration of the Council's Libraries Initiative: \$14 million across the three systems, including \$3.9 million for Brooklyn. This funding allowed us to continue providing service throughout the pandemic and without its restoration, we risk having to cut our already insufficient branch repair budget, cut our collections budget, and eliminate positions.

Like other agencies, Brooklyn Public Library was asked to absorb a PEG in the current fiscal year, which we can withstand if we forego hiring for existing vacancies. But operating without full staffing is challenging. With the Omicron surge, we endured numerous closures throughout the system and therefore had to reduce hours. Resuming in-person programs, in addition to Sunday service, is pushing us to the limit of our capacity to operate.

Apart from staffing, the other cause of library closures is failing infrastructure: long outdated HVAC systems, leaking roofs and broken boilers. In Brooklyn alone, we have over 1 million square feet of city-owned buildings to maintain with \$250 million in deferred maintenance and no recurring unallocated capital funds to depend on. It means that year after year we're forced to respond to emergencies rather than perform preventative maintenance; to choose which projects make piecemeal progress while others stall; and all too often, to dip into our operating budget.

Ultimately, this problem needs long term attention and we will look for your assistance in advocating for libraries in next year's ten-year capital plan. For now, we ask that you do all that you can to support increased capital funds for libraries in this year's budget.

We've proven that with adequate funding, we are capable of creating inspiring public spaces. In October, we opened Adams Street Library, the first new Brooklyn Public Library branch in four decades, to serve the communities of DUMBO, Farragut, and Vinegar Hill. The building is a model for 21st century library design and it shows: it's bustling with activity every day.

This year, we look forward to opening new libraries in Crown Heights, Brooklyn Heights, and East Flatbush—not to mention the new Center for Brooklyn History, the largest archive of Brooklyn history in the world, now housed at the former Brooklyn Historical Society building on Pierrepont Street.

Every community deserves an inspiring library with services tailored to its needs—and there are profound needs across the city in this moment. In order for New York to recover from the pandemic—all the suffering it has wrought and the inequities it's laid bare—our city must invest in public space and public services for all New Yorkers. Located in every neighborhood and trusted by every generation, libraries are uniquely positioned to help New Yorkers rebuild a more democratic, more cohesive city. I urge you to invest in your communities by investing in public libraries. Thank you.

Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations
92nd Street Y
March 8, 2022

Thank you to the New York City Council and this Committee for the opportunity to submit this written testimony on behalf of arts education. **My name is Elizabeth Costa, and I am the Vice President of Government and Community Relations at the 92nd Street Y, a nonprofit cultural and community center located in Manhattan.**

The 92nd Street Y serves thousands of NYC public school students and teachers through our Center for Arts Learning & Leadership (CALL). CALL connects students with artists of the highest caliber through school-based instruction and live and virtual events at 92Y.

Over the past two years, 92Y quickly adapted and pivoted successfully to online community engagement and events. Through virtual and hybrid platforms – and this year through a return to some in-person programming, our **Young Leaders Series, Teen Producers, Teen Gems, The LessLonely Project, CASA, and SU-CASA programs** are connecting people in and out of the classroom to both one another and the arts. The pandemic has afforded us the unlikely opportunity to further deepen our commitment to connect students of all ages to arts education in new ways by creating, adapting, and growing our programming to meet the needs of NYC youth, their teachers, and schools.

As we start to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and students continue to traverse this brave new world, my request is for your continued strong support.

We have not only fortified but also expanded our youth programming, including the **Young Leaders Series, reaching 33+ schools Citywide; The LessLonely Project, a mental health initiative led by youth to destigmatize and combat loneliness; and Teen Producers and Teen Gems, two workforce readiness programs that provide a pipeline to creative industries.** Through these programs, we help young people engage in the world around them through the arts and set our future leaders up for success.

Young Leaders Series

Piloted as a fully virtual, humanities-focused curriculum featuring virtual “field trips” with renowned speakers, writers, and performers, we now have a proven program model capable of fluidly integrating into an in-person or hybrid classroom setting. Students in grades 2-12 learn about literature, music, dance, and current events through in-class workshops and presentations by leading figures, such as US Poet Laureate Joy Harjo, 2021 MacArthur Fellow Hanif Abdurraqib, and world-renowned dance ensemble Jazz as Movement. Through Young Leaders, students discover and ignite their artistic and intellectual passions, and create and produce their own original works.

“As we navigate the budget struggles, we are still trying to provide students with engaging, real-world opportunities. Our students had such a wonderful experience [with the Young Leaders Series] last year, and I look forward to building on our school's partnership with 92Y.”

Sandra Begley, Classroom ELA Teacher at Bronx Arena High School

Teen Producers

Launched in FY18, Teen Producers is 92Y's two-year paid internship that prepares NYC public high school students from groups historically underrepresented for careers in upper-level leadership positions in the arts and culture sector. We continued Teen Producers throughout the pandemic, with teens back on site this school year and interning in departments throughout 92Y. The program has built community among the teens themselves (now from four of five boroughs) and continues to help each teen cultivate their own artistic voice and potential. As one Teen Producer said:

"I use my art for action because I am more than what I thought I was."

Teen Gems

Launched in September 2021 with 9 public HS students, Teen Gems provides weekly technical skill development in 92Y's Jewelry Center, with materials and tuition included at no cost to teens. The program aims to help fill a trade school vacuum that requires students like ours to pursue expensive art and design BFAs, when what they truly need are trade skills, networks, and mentorship.

Through both Teen Producers and Teen Gems, teens not only gain technical, communication, networking, and team-building skills, but also gain tangible tools for real-world application through hands-on, tactile learning — which is also vitally important for mental health, particularly for students preparing to transition to work life or college during a global pandemic.

The LessLonely Project

Launched in 2021, this project aims to destigmatize loneliness utilizing content created by 92Y's Teen Producers honing their graphic design skills. Through collaborations with grassroots organizations and other outreach, we will create a virtual, citywide network that engages youth in The LessLonely Project, both as content creators and amplifiers of campaign content through the hashtag #LessLonely.

CASA and SU-CASA

92Y works with 10 schools and 2 senior centers through CASA and SU-CASA, creating a diverse range of arts programs tailored to the individual needs of each collaborator. We hope this vital funding continues for arts education programs for both children and older adults throughout NYC.

By June, we will reach 6,000+ students at 46+ schools across five boroughs. Many students are from longtime partner schools with Title 1 status. In addition, we anticipate virtually connecting countless more students and community members through our citywide LessLonely network.

We thank you for the support you have already provided, and we urge you to continue to support NYC's cultural community and its youth in FY23.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Costa

Vice President, Government and Community Relations

Cheryl Warfield
ADVANCE/MORE Opera
255 West 75th Street
New York, NY 10021

Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Group Relations

Budget Hearing

Submitted by

Cheryl Warfield, Professional Opera Singer, Teaching Artist, Producer and Founder of ADVANCE/MORE Opera

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair Osse', and committee members for hearing my testimony. I am Cheryl Warfield, a union opera singer, independent producer of work that reflects who I am and my identity, and founder of ADVANCE/MORE Opera, a community based nonprofit that presents concerts and educational and cultural outreach to youth and families. I speak today to remind you that arts and culture has and continues to provide a guiding light towards the city's recovery and that small BIPOC organizations like mine strive to provide needed services in the trenches where most needed. I testify in solidarity with NY4 Culture and Arts, NY's Cultural Institution Groups, the Coalition for Theatres of Color, and community based arts and culture organizations. I entreat the council to mobilize and support arts and culture with substantial investment in historically under-resourced neighborhoods.

The neighborhoods with the least access to culture (and its benefits) are the ones that have been systematically left out of overall funding. Creating a fund to target neighborhoods most in need would bring the benefits of cultural assets where they are most needed. Investing in cultural centers in these neighborhoods would improve the vitality, safety, and strength of these communities and their families. Such investment will strengthen New York overall.

To that end

We would like to see the FY22 PEG (Program for eliminating the gap) Cuts to the Cultural Development Fund restored.

Regarding Council priorities for FY 2023, we also ask for a restoration of all Council Initiatives, and a restoration of \$35M of FY22 Funding. An additional \$50 million is needed for the cultural community. Cultural equity is central to every part of this ask as we envision an equitable and thriving culture and city that benefits all.

Let's continue the conversation in the coming weeks regarding these asks and to elaborate on the benefits for all New Yorkers that equitable and appropriate funding will provide.

Thank you for this important hearing and the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Cheryl Warfield Singer, Educator, Producer and Founder, ADVANCE/MORE Opera 255 West 75th Street,
#3-I, New York, NY 10023 212-595-7084

www.moreopera.com

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MW2yGc7iTkq>

To the council members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations, and to Committee Chair Councilmember Osse,

My name is Dr. Carolyn Renée Pautz and I am providing testimony on behalf of Arts Business Collaborative in favor of establishing funding for learning and technical assistance for small business cooperatives through the DCLA's CreateNYC initiative.

From June of 2020 to November of 2021 ABC's research department, the Rising Tides Research Institute, surveyed and interview more than 125 artists and arts business owners and administrators, more than 90% of whom identified as people of color. In our deep talks with participants, all spoke to the need for more equitable distribution of funding and technical knowledge from both the public and private sector as a key factor in whether or not their business would survive, revive and thrive during and after COVID. More than half of our participants did not take salaries in 2020 in order to pay staff, in several cases because the city had not paid their contracts, and the majority expressed a need to strategically re-envision their organizations to fit budgetary and programmatic delivery demands. Furthermore, throughout 2020 and 2021, many opened their doors to the public to become food pantries, to provide safe harbor during protests, and to function as sites for vaccination information and reception. They shared their spaces and precious resources, in most cases without compensation, to support their local communities and to keep New York City going during some of its darkest hours.

More than half of the artists and arts business leaders we interviewed expressed a strong desire for more shared resources that extended beyond financial capital to include legal, marketing and communications, product delivery, human resources and cooperative hiring support. Furthermore, there is ample research evidence from peer research groups, such as Democracy at Work and Art.Coop, examining cooperative and worker owned frameworks to suggest these types of critical services could achieve rapid and effective distribution through cooperative frameworks. Additionally, reports from both of these research groups show that small business cooperatives and worker-owned cooperatives fared better during Covid-19 than small businesses that did not engage in any sort of cooperative framework. Small businesses that utilized cooperative support were more resilient, better positioned to invest in their communities and furloughed or dismissed fewer staff.¹ However, in order to experience the benefits of these structures arts business administrators and owners need knowledge and technical assistance support to create either worker-owned or small business cooperative frameworks.

Hence, based on our research and supporting evidence from other institutions, ABC believes two particular items ought to be addressed in future DCLA budgeting considerations. These include:

¹ Democracy at Work Institute (2020). "Worker Co-ops: Weathering the Storm of Covid-19 and Beyond".

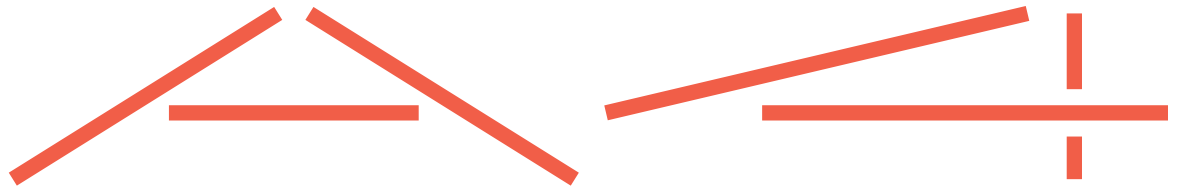
technical assistance for applying for discretionary funding which would expand more equitable access to nonprofits that delivery outstanding services with limited administrative budget and staff capacity; and funding for learning and technical assistance for developing arts business cooperatives which would support the revitalization of the creative economy in New York City. I would like to note here that we are aware that the mayor has organized a joint task force to facilitate better working relationships with nonprofits and has recommended technical assistance in the city's funding and contractor application process, as well as a restructuring of the Passport system.

We are suggesting 1% of the CreateNYC budget provide funding for learning and technical assistance about/for cooperative frameworks. Furthermore, we strongly argue against further budget cuts for the DCLA's CreateNYC Initiative as diversity, equity and inclusion are issues that remain paramount to revitalizing New York City post-COVID.

Sincerely,

Dr. Carolyn Renée Pautz

Director of Research and Strategy
Arts Business Collaborative



Testimony to the City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations, Chaired by Council Member Chi Ossé

March 8, 2022

Good afternoon Committee Members and Chair Ossé. Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony.

My name is Lisa Gold and I'm the Executive Director of the Asian American Arts Alliance (A4), a 39-year-old, Brooklyn-based service organization that works to ensure greater equity, representation, and opportunities for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) artists and arts organizations. We work with artists and arts administrators throughout the 5 boroughs and across artistic disciplines.

Today, I would like to ask each of you to name your favorite AAPI musician, author, dancer, actor, or visual artist. And if you can't, I'd like you to consider why not.

I might suggest it's partly because our community's cultural contributions haven't been sufficiently valued and that AAPI artists and arts organizations have been grossly underfunded for decades, resulting in a lack of visibility and opportunities for our artists. AAPI-led and -serving organizations receive less than 4% of the DCLA discretionary budget and there are **ZERO** AAPI-led CIGs. So, despite comprising almost 18% of the New York City population and a growing force in the electorate, we receive a significantly disproportionate amount of cultural funding—closer to 2%! And that gap isn't closed by the philanthropic or private sector. A recent report by Asian American/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP) showed that for every \$100 awarded by foundations, only 20 cents was designated for Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.¹

We know that the arts are critical to the city's economic recovery and our community's health and well-being. Art heals, it provides respite, it spreads ideas and concepts that are emotionally, intellectually, and ideologically complex. It creates bridges and allows us share our humanity. Art helps people work through trauma and build resilience. There is a growing body of scientific evidence² that suggests that creative arts expression is a powerful tool in reducing emotional isolation. And right now, after multiple attacks on AAPI women, our community is feeling isolated and fearful. A report released last week by the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum³ noted that nearly 75% of AAPI women report experiencing racism and/or discrimination over the past twelve months.

Continued...

The AAPI community and our cultural organizations need increased support. We and other POC organizations have been under-resourced and underfunded for too long. We need to have our voices heard; our stories told.

We support the findings of the HueArts NYC *Brown Paper*⁴ and corresponding request for a \$100 million fund for POC arts and cultural entities. Additionally, we request the restoration of PEG cuts to the Cultural Development Fund and ask that the City Council and Department of Cultural Affairs ensure that our city's cultural funding is distributed transparently and *truly* equitably.

Thank you all for your leadership and support of arts and culture during what has been and continues to be a very challenging time for our city.

###

- 1) Seeking to Soar: Foundation Funding for Asian American & Pacific Islander Communities (2021, March). Asian American/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy. (https://aapip.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/seeking_to_soar_foundation_funding_for_aapi_communities_1.pdf)
- 2) Kaimal, G (2020). How Art Can Heal. *American Scientist*, Volume 108, Number 4 (July – August 2020), 228-230. (<https://www.americanscientist.org/article/how-art-can-heal>)
- 3) The State of Safety for Asian American and Pacific Islander Women (2022, March 3). National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum. (<https://www.napawf.org/our-work/march-2022/state-of-safety>)
- 4) HueArts NYC: Mapping a Future for Arts Entities Founded and Led By Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and All People of Color in New York City (2022, February). HueArts NYC. (<https://www.hueartsnyc.org/brown-paper/>)



167 W 89th St, New York, NY
10024, United States
+1 212-362-6710
ballethispanico.org

Ballet Hispánico
City Council Testimony
Preliminary Budget Hearing: Cultural Affairs, Libraries & Intl. Intergroup Relations
March 8, 2022

On behalf of Ballet Hispánico (BH) *familia*, we would like to thank the members of the New York City Council and Department of Cultural Affairs for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. At this critical juncture, support for cultural organizations like Ballet Hispánico as they work to expand access to arts resources for underserved BIPOC youth and communities is more important than ever. As the nation's largest Latinx cultural organization and one of America's Cultural Treasures, Ballet Hispánico depends on the City Council's continued support in order to fulfill its mission of service to BIPOC communities. We appreciate this opportunity to advocate for expanded resources to organizations and cultural institutions like ours which provided crucial artistic resources.

For fifty years Ballet Hispánico has been the leading voice intersecting artistic excellence and advocacy. Ballet Hispánico brings communities together to celebrate and explore Latino cultures through innovative dance productions, transformative dance training, and enduring community engagement experiences. Ballet Hispánico provides the physical home and cultural heart for Latinx dance in the United States. Ballet Hispánico has developed a robust public presence across its three main programs: its Company, School of Dance, and Community Arts Partnerships.

National Medal of Arts recipient Tina Ramirez founded Ballet Hispánico in 1970, at the height of the post-war civil rights movements. From its inception Ballet Hispánico focused on providing a haven for Black and Brown Latinx youth and families seeking artistic place and cultural sanctuary. By providing the space for Latinx dance and dancers to flourish, Ballet Hispánico uplifted marginalized emerging and working artists, which combined with the training, authenticity of voice, and power of representation, fueled the organization's roots and trajectory. In 2009, Ballet Hispánico welcomed Eduardo Vilaro as its Artistic Director, ushering in a new era by inserting fresh energy to the company's founding values and leading Ballet Hispánico into an artistically vibrant future. Today, Ballet Hispánico's New York City headquarters house a School of Dance and state-of-the-art dance studios for its programs and the arts community. From its grassroots origins as a dance school and community-based performing arts troupe, for fifty years Ballet Hispánico has stood as a catalyst for social change.

Through its exemplary artistry, distinguished training program, and deep-rooted community engagement efforts Ballet Hispánico champions and amplifies underrepresented voices in the field. For fifty years Ballet Hispánico has provided a place of honor for the omitted, overlooked, and oppressed. As it looks to the next fifty years and



beyond, Ballet Hispánico seeks to empower, and give agency to, the Latinx experience and those individuals within it.

Approximately 27% of all New Yorkers identify as Latinx; more than half of all children born in NYC are born to immigrant families. Yet research shows that immigrants and Latinx individuals in particular are grossly underrepresented in popular culture. Latinx individuals rarely see themselves or their families' stories reflected on stage or screen, a reality reflected in the fact that in 2019, only 7% of films featured a Latinx/Hispanic lead. Through Ballet Hispánico's public programming, many not only have access to excellent artistic programming and instruction, but through Ballet Hispánico see themselves and their stories reflected in culture for the first time: the ripple effect across these New Yorkers' lives is profound. Ballet Hispánico community programs feature not only culturally relevant pedagogy, but culturally sustaining educational practices as lived experiences are fortified, identities are strengthened, and voices are encouraged. Thanks to City Council support and initiatives, through Ballet Hispánico communities programs we can continue uplifting New Yorkers of all backgrounds and breaking down barriers to the field of dance.

COVID-19: Impact & Recovery

The current crisis has had a negative impact on all creative and educational initiatives, in particular BIPOC-led cultural organizations such as Ballet Hispánico, which have often borne a disproportionate economic and humanitarian burden reflecting that of the communities they serve. The full financial ramifications continue to threaten the survival of these cultural institutions. Yet throughout the pandemic, the digital doors of Ballet Hispánico remained open to the public and welcomed new audiences through our virtual educational and community programming featuring classes, performances, behind-the-scenes artist takeovers, inspirational messages, and more. Thanks to the resolute support of the City of New York, and enforcement of local health mandates along with the rollout of vaccines, Ballet Hispánico began welcoming dancers, students, and audiences back in-person gradually over the course of 2021, and continues to take a measured approach to in-person gatherings per the recommendations of local health guidelines.

Thanks to this rapid growth in digital programs, Ballet Hispánico grew its social media following of 28.4K Facebook followers (representing a 12% increase over 2021); 14.5K+ Instagram followers (23% increase) and 9.7K followers on Twitter. Continuing its efforts to engage Latinx communities and reflect their voices and stories for posterity, Ballet Hispánico maintains active collaborations with Google Arts & Culture as part of the Latinx Cultures in the U.S Exhibit, and with the New York Public Library's Library for the Performing Arts. Prior to COVID-19, the annual viewership of BH was approximately 75,000. In FY21, thanks to the expansion and quality content of our virtual programming, we reached over 314,000. Ballet Hispánico's media and PR plan looking forward will continue to promote virtual programming as complementary to the return to in-person programs for the Company, Community Arts Partnerships, and the School of Dance September registration. Programs will be advertised through e-newsletters, NY MetroParents/Big Apple, New York Family and Dance/NYC and weekly e-blasts, and distribution of flyers, and posters displayed outside of Ballet Hispánico.



New Initiatives

Thanks in large part to the stability Ballet Hispanico managed to maintain throughout the pandemic thanks to City Council support, leadership was able to launch and grow several new programs in recent months:

Pa'lante Scholars

In fall 2021 Ballet Hispanico launched the Pa'lante Scholars program, a tuition-free, career-centered professional studies program for emerging young adult dancers age 18-25. Pa'lante Scholars immerses dancers in a professional intensive focusing on artistry development through full-day, comprehensive curriculum including: daily ballet/contemporary technique, Spanish dance, screen, Latin rhythms, floor work, modern dance, acting, voice, and professional development seminars (topics include nutrition, personal advocacy, financial planning/literacy, other life/work skills coaching). BIPOC dancers are underrepresented on American professional dance stages, with nearly 70% of professional classical dancers identifying as white (Data USA). With its tuition-free model, Pa'lante Scholars embodies the Ballet Hispanico vision of uplifting young dancers of color, ensuring a pipeline of dance training toward successful careers in the field.

Latinx Dance Institute

The newly formed Latinx Dance Institute encompasses the "Diálogos" conversation series, the "Instituto Coreográfico," and the Latinx Leaders Summit. "Diálogos" explores the interconnections of the arts, social justice and Latinx culture. Several events held each year are open free to the public. A panel of leaders in the field participate in a moderated discussion and Q&A. Recent topics have included "Colorism in the Arts and anti-Blackness within Latinx communities" and "The Stereotypes of Machismo in Dance." "Instituto Coreográfico" is a residency program for emerging Latinx choreographers. Each year, two under-recognized Latinx choreographers spend two weeks at Ballet Hispanico, working with the Ballet Hispanico Company on creating, developing, and/or strengthening new work. At the conclusion of the residency, the work-in-progress is presented during a free showing open to the public. A panel of dance leaders discuss the work and audience members participate in a Q&A session. The Latinx Leaders Summit likewise brings together dance leaders for an annual conference aimed at strengthening representation and recognition of dancers of color.

Bienvenidos Ticket Program

In spring 2022 for its return NYC Season Ballet Hispanico leadership offered, for the first time, the Bienvenidos Ticket Program to provide free and nominal cost tickets to underrepresented members of the Ballet Hispanico community, including and especially members of the NYC immigrant community. As the nation's largest Latinx cultural organization, reflecting the diversity of lived immigrant experiences, Ballet Hispanico is proud to ensure access across the socioeconomic spectrum to its artistic programming. Ballet Hispanico artistic programs celebrate immigrant narratives, stories from Latinx cultures, and provide a prominent platform for voices which are too often ignored in mainstream American culture. In FY23 the Bienvenidos program will be central to ensuring accessibility to the Ballet Hispanico Company's NYC Season artistic programs.



Existing & Proposed City Council Support

For the past five years Ballet Hispánico has received City Council support for CASA programs, in FY22 serving 13 schools across as many districts. Ballet Hispánico has also been honored to receive support under the Coalition Theatres of Color initiative. In FY21 all CASA programs were conducted online. In FY22 CASA activities were initially conducted virtually and gradually transitioned to in-person classes as schools reopened. In FY22 the Ballet Hispánico School of Dance launched its tuition-free professional studies program, Pa'lante Scholars:: Ballet Hispánico currently has twelve Teaching Artists (TAs) on its roster, and additionally anticipates twelve new TAs will join its ranks thanks to the launch of the Pa'lante Scholars professional studies program, who each teach 2-3 dance classes. Thanks to our dramatically increased capacity in teaching artist staff, Ballet Hispánico is thrilled to be expanding its CASA programming in FY23.

FY23 CASA support, and other City Council support for BIPOC-led cultural organizations such as the Coalition Theatres of Color and Cultural Immigrant Initiative programs, will enable Ballet Hispánico and organizations like it to reach a larger number of communities of color throughout the City than ever. For Ballet Hispánico's part, continued and expanded City Council cultural support will allow us to administer critical artistic programs from our W. 89th St. space, helping to fulfill our goal of reaching underserved New York City communities of color.

Looking Forward

Through City Council cultural initiatives like CASA, Coalition Theatres of Color, the Cultural Immigrant Initiative, the Open Culture Program, and more, the City has indicated that it deeply values a thriving arts ecosystem. Furthermore, programs like these have allowed Ballet Hispánico to successfully navigate and thrive despite the many ramifications of the pandemic over the last two years. The ability of our organization and other BIPOC-led cultural institutions to survive and thrive in a post-pandemic ecosystem will be dependent on continued city support: **More than ever, organizations like Ballet Hispánico will need robust public support in order to continue championing and amplifying underrepresented voices in the field.** The expansion of critical city-funded cultural programs ensures our ability to continue to provide crucial arts access and education to communities of color. And in an era of stark division the voices of BIPOC-led cultural organizations like Ballet Hispánico, founded on the principles of bringing people together through art, are essential to our city. As a community of dancers, artists, and human beings, we have adapted time and again to incredible challenges. Ballet Hispánico was founded upon and has always believed in the importance of reaching and servicing our community through dance and culture. We thank the City of New York for making that possible.

*For more information contact:
Emily Mathis Corona
Assistant Director of Institutional Relations
ecorona@ballethispanico.org*

CARNEGIE HALL

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2022
March 8, 2022

Preliminary Budget Hearing: Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

Chairman Ossé and Members of the Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations:

My name is David Freudenthal, and I am the Director of Government Relations at Carnegie Hall. Thanks for the opportunity to testify about the robust partnerships between Carnegie Hall and the City of New York in service to our communities.

Carnegie Hall's mission is to present extraordinary music and musicians on the three stages of this legendary hall, to bring the transformative power of music to the widest possible audience, to provide visionary education programs, and to foster the future of music through the cultivation of new works, artists, and audiences.

For over 130 years, Carnegie Hall has represented the democratic ideals of freedom of expression and artistic excellence, with music as a universal language to foster awareness of cultural diversity, to bridge divides among peoples, and to promote individual expression. Since its opening in 1891, the Hall has been an important showcase for America's diverse cultural development with a history that reflects the rich and varied story of our country. Launched by Andrew Carnegie's aspiration that "all causes may here find a place," Carnegie Hall has been a site for both artistic excellence and civic engagement—the place to experience the best in almost every genre of music as well as a prominent public forum for causes ranging from women's suffrage, labor, and civil rights to AIDS activism and criminal justice system reform.

Carnegie Hall welcomes over 750,000 attendees each season to the 170 concerts it produces, and some 500 events presented by outside producers, in three halls as well as in community venues throughout the five boroughs. This season, Carnegie Hall reopened its doors following 18 months of connecting with our audiences solely through virtual programming, and we are grateful to be contributing to the revival of NYC as we emerge from the height of the pandemic.

In 1960, the iconic building was saved from demolition by a citizen's campaign led by violinist Isaac Stern. An act of the New York State Legislature allowed the City of New York to purchase the building and establish the nonprofit, The Carnegie Hall Corporation, to operate the facility in service to all New Yorkers. Today, Carnegie Hall is a leader in creating far-reaching music education and social impact programs that inspire the next generation of music lovers, nurture musical talent, contribute to the evolution of music education, and explore how music can play a meaningful role in people's lives. Each year, these programs reach nearly 800,000 people in NYC, across the US and around the globe in schools, orchestras, arts organizations, homeless shelters, correctional facilities, refugee camps, hospitals, and more, supporting music learning at all levels.

Carnegie Hall is also a proud member of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), a collective of 34 nonprofit museums, performing arts centers, historical societies, zoos, and botanical gardens across all five boroughs with a distinct private-public partnership with the City of New York and a commitment to serving all New Yorkers. In keeping with our public service mission, over the last two years we leaned in to support New Yorkers with high quality free digital programming,

as well as to advocate for essential help from government to sustain our sector during the crisis. In the context of that advocacy, **Carnegie Hall endorses the field's following requests:**

- Restoration of the FY22 PEG Cut to the Cultural Development Fund
- Restoration of all Council Initiatives in FY23
- Restoration of \$35 million FY22 Funding in FY23
- \$50 million for the cultural community in FY23

A commitment to funding culture will bring economic resiliency and growth, kickstart a return of tourism, and lay the foundation for an equitable, educated, and safe city—resilient enough to withstand the shocks of future disasters and downturns. **Culture is the comeback of New York City, and we urge culture's outsize impact to be acknowledged and duly supported.**

In addition to our advocacy on behalf of NYC's cultural field, I'm glad to share information about the Hall's direct service to New Yorkers, including constituents in each of your Council Districts: Carnegie Hall partnerships with City's human services agencies, some supported by the City Council, to ensure that our programs intentionally prioritize those who otherwise may not have access to these opportunities. I'm glad to share some examples:

- [NeON Arts](#) is a program of the Department of Probation in partnership with Carnegie Hall that integrates free arts programming into seven Neighborhood Opportunity Networks (NeONs)—community centers across the city—supporting young people, ages 16–24, in exploring the arts, establishing positive peer relationships, and developing important social and career skills. Carnegie Hall manages the grant-making process for NeON Arts, coordinating events and working with arts organizations and stakeholders. Workshop cycles typically occur three times throughout the year—the next cycle kicks off in early April over Zoom.
- Carnegie Hall's early childhood programs encourage connection, well-being, and creativity for families, most of whom are facing challenging personal circumstances. Workshops have been operating continuously throughout the pandemic via online sessions. The [Lullaby Project](#) pairs new and expectant parents and caregivers with professional artists to write and sing personal lullabies for their babies, supporting maternal health, aiding child development, and strengthening the bond between parent and child. Since the launch at Jacobi Medical Center in 2011, nearly 1,800 families have written original songs for their children through city agency partnerships including the NYC Departments of Homeless Services (DHS), Correction (DOC), Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), and Education (DOE's LYFE program), the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), Health + Hospitals (H+H), and the Housing Authority (NYCHA). [Big Note, Little Note](#), is a music class for NYC families that offers a range of experiences for families and caregivers to engage with their babies through musical play, singing, instrument exploration, and more. The program—in partnership with Harlem Children's Zone—is centered around community, and supports family well-being, early childhood development, and parent-child connection.
- Regarded by DOE's Office of Arts and Special Projects as a lead partner in music education, Carnegie Hall's school programs have effectively delivered the agency's standards for music education, providing high quality, fundamental music instruction and best practices by amplifying and celebrating the cultural richness of our city

for over a decade. Our learning and engagement programs inspire the next generation of music lovers in NYC's K-12 classrooms and support local teachers in refining their skills.

- [Musical Explorers](#) connects students in grades K–2 to NYC's rich and diverse musical community as they build fundamental music skills through listening, singing, and moving to songs from all over the world. Each season, students meet six NYC-based artists who each represent a different musical genre and cultural tradition. Teachers have access to a free curriculum, professional development, and a culminating interactive concert for their students. Musical Explorers partnered with THIRTEEN/WNET for its second season of Camp TV in summer 2021, which aimed to recreate the day-camp experience from home broadcast on public television stations nationwide.
- [Link Up](#)—Carnegie Hall's longest running education program—introduces the orchestra to children in grades 3-5, inviting them to sing and play an instrument in the classroom and perform with a professional orchestra from their seats at a culminating concert at Carnegie Hall. Both programs continue to expand with digital platforms that provide teachers with free online resources, including lesson plans, artist-led videos, and virtual concert experiences.
- [Music Educators Workshop](#) provides on average more than 450 NYC K–12 music teachers monthly professional development each year, in a vital space for teachers to recognize their shared experiences and receive support, community, and professional growth. Leading artists and educators join as faculty to lead curriculum tracks pertinent to this season's theme for NYC teachers, "Moving Forward in Joy: Healing, Connection, and Creative Imagination in the Music Classroom." The program leverages teachers as catalysts to enhance the quality of instruction for almost 30,000 NYC students each year.
- [Ensemble Connect](#) is a program of Carnegie Hall and The Juilliard School in partnership with DOE. Ensemble Connect places extraordinary young classical musicians for a two-year fellowship in NYC public schools (15 this year). Fellows partner with DOE music teachers to bring insight, creativity, and artistry to classrooms; and create interactive performances in schools and at community sites.

As NYC navigates a full reopening, programs like these will be critical components of the city's strategy to meet people directly, effectively, and safely where they are. The Council's continued investment in these partnerships will be absolutely essential in the year ahead. We respectfully share with the Committee the key capital and expense requests submitted to Council Speaker Adams in FY23 to ensure that these essential services for our city's youth to continue. We would be grateful for your support for these requests:

- **Renewal of \$200,000 for NeON Arts** will underwrite the return of place-based, in-person programming at all seven NeON locations—pending the rules regarding public gathering during the ongoing pandemic—in alignment with the Department of Probation's plan to return to fully in-person programming and services. The Council's FY22 \$200,000 investment was vital for serving and supporting residents who are most severely impacted by the effects of the pandemic, and we urge continuation of the program in next year's budget. NeON Arts supports the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of our city's young people by creatively and constructively engaging them online during these times of great uncertainty. NeON Arts will be more essential than ever in the days ahead in serving and supporting these communities, especially as the city recovers and fully reopens.

- **Renewal of \$25,000 for youth programs** will support the pilot of The B Side, a new free summer intensive program for twenty New Yorkers ages 16-24 interested in the business of music, with a focus on those from under-resourced communities. The B Side will provide participants an interactive space to learn about the inner workings of the music industry. Curriculum designed and facilitated by teaching artists, guest speaker panels, and field trips will guide participants through the many roles and career opportunities across the industry. Participants, experienced youth development facilitators, and guests will be encouraged to co-create a learning community that supports the development of aspiring artists and future music industry leaders. In launching The B-Side, Carnegie Hall will draw upon our experience creating meaningful youth development programs in order to deepen our impact and provide young people with the tools they need to thrive, lead, and transform the music industry.
- **Capital Request: Carnegie Hall asks the Council for \$9M in FY23 to complete an urgent \$43M restoration of its historic façade.** In accordance with our public charge to program in service to New Yorkers, Carnegie Hall is mandated by the city to provide regular care for and capital improvements to the building. This façade project, underway and ongoing through FY25, is necessary to ensure the continued stability and safety of this landmark. This work is essential to the public safety of areas surrounding the building where many of our mission-centric operations take place, including: free education and social impact programming; public tours; the administrative offices; box offices for all three performance halls; and load-ins for concerts and rental events. Additionally, more than ever before, the areas surrounding the Hall provide space for audience members to wait as Hall Operations staff perform COVID and vaccination screening procedures for all guests. This project is essential for the safety of the public so audiences may continue to enjoy the Hall's artistic offerings and education programs for generations to come.

We thank the Committee for their interest in these programs, and we encourage the Council to support NeON Arts, The B Side, and other programs by our cultural colleagues across the city.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you individually to discuss Carnegie Hall's programming partnerships in your district. Thank you for your support for and consideration of our requests, and thanks to our public partners, artists and arts organizations, teachers, stakeholders, and the talented young people involved in these programs for being a part of truly transformational changes.

The Center for Fiction
City Council Testimony 3.8.22

The Center for Fiction is a 200-year-old literary and cultural organization that relocated from Manhattan to Fort Greene in 2019. We're excited to build upon the literary history of our neighborhood, which has been home to giants like Richard Wright and Walt Whitman and, more recently, Colson Whitehead, Jacqueline Woodson, and Jason Reynolds. Through our programming, we continue to spotlight local authors, like Brooklyn-based author Rumaan Alam. We also host events about cultural and social issues, such as our recent event with Ian Manuel and Yusef Salaam about the carceral system and racial justice, during which the two activists discussed their experiences of incarceration and the role that literature played in helping them survive. In addition to public events, our programming includes Emerging Writer Fellowships, which launch literary careers by helping talented NYC writers publish debut novels, and adult writing workshops and reading groups.

The Center for Fiction's KidsRead/KidsWrite programming annually serves students from New York City Public Schools in grades 3 through 12 with author-led reading and writing events and workshops. The collaborative programming connects young people in our NYC partner public schools with dynamic writers who share their backgrounds and experiences. We provide students with free books, reading groups, and writing workshops to empower them to tell their own stories. Teachers have told us that KidsRead/KidsWrite programming draws out new voices and perspectives among students, and authors with whom we partner have called the experience "extraordinary." We have continued programming virtually while the schools have been closed and the Center has been unable to welcome students to its Brooklyn home, and we will resume offering in-person KidsRead/KidsWrite programming in April.

The Center believes that creating interest in telling stories for children and young people of all backgrounds who hunger to see their lives reflected in print has never been more important. To be able to tell their own stories and have their voices heard, young people need to read stories that evoke a shared humanity and help counter the divisiveness of fear. They need to read and engage with authors representing immigrants, queer and trans people, and people of color, who inspire them to act on their dreams of becoming and making a difference in this world. Fiction is an important means of creating empathy for children and young people, but to do so there must be programs like KidsRead/KidsWrite to spotlight authors and artists who work their magic on the Center for Fiction's stage.

As with so many of our peers in the cultural arena, The Center for Fiction sustained devastating losses from the COVID pandemic. As we begin to re-emerge from the pandemic it is only with ongoing support from government, foundations, and individual donors that we can look forward to becoming once again the lively cultural locus for our community. This support is vital to ensuring

that The Center for Fiction can continue its work to assure the strongest possible future for storytelling for readers and writers of all ages.



City's First Readers

An initiative of the New York City Council

**Public Housing Committee - Preliminary Budget Hearing on Public Housing
Written Testimony Submitted by City's First Readers
March 8, 2022**

**Prevention Beats Intervention
Early Literacy as a Solution for NYC Residents of Public Housing**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of the **New York City Council's *only* early literacy initiative, City's First Readers.**

There is a significant and solvable crisis for thousands of children experiencing systemic poverty, including those who reside in one of the New York City Public Housing Authorities' residences. The crisis, literacy. The solution, City's First Readers.

Children raised in public housing in New York City are by definition poor and a disproportionate number of them represent communities of color. Contributing to an equitable city begins with investments in children. To address the crisis and support families living in NYCHA, the New York City Council must focus on preventative approaches that mitigate the negative impact of poverty and make possible generations of learners that succeed academically and socially. City's First Readers is one of the most effective ways to accomplish this critical task.

Prevention beats intervention every time

Decades of research show that early literacy skills are key to building positive futures for children and breaking cycles of poverty. Yet, children who grow up in systemic poverty face a gap in opportunities to develop these crucial skills. This gap is greatest for children of color. Due to persistent structural and systemic racism, child poverty rates are higher for children of color compared to their white peers. Children raised in poverty enter school less equipped to thrive. There are over a half million children¹ under the age of five in NYC. **44.5% of them live in low-income households** (below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level - \$25,750 for a family of four), and **76% of children under the age of five are children of color.** Many of these children reside in NYCHA where the average family income is \$25,007².

Literacy levels are directly associated with improved health, economic, and social outcomes. People with low levels of literacy do not achieve economic self-sufficiency, are far less civically engaged, and have decisively poorer health outcomes than people who read proficiently. Left unaddressed, the literacy

¹ 2019 census and CCC data

² https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nycha/downloads/pdf/NYCHA-Fact-Sheet_2019_08-01.pdf

crisis drains our nation of \$225 billion a year in social costs and loss of productivity. **The path out of poverty, and the single most effective and economical way to ensure proficient adult literacy, is early literacy.**

The impact of COVID

It is impossible to address any social and public health crisis right now without considering the devastating impact that COVID has had on every community, particularly vulnerable populations. It is safe to say that the pandemic has made the literacy crisis worse and deeply impacted children birth-five. As if the rates of childhood poverty pre-COVID were not high enough, it is estimated that 325,000 additional children have been pushed into COVID related poverty³.

Young children have largely been spared serious illness because of COVID. This does not mean they have not suffered. More than 4,000 children in New York State have had a parent or caregiver die because of COVID, and 57% of these children live in New York City. Given that COVID infection and hospitalization rates were significantly higher in communities with public housing compared to others NYC neighborhoods⁴, we can safely infer that the children most impacted by the loss of family members are those children living in NYCHA.

Many children are also facing the excruciating trauma of housing insecurity. It is estimated that close to half of public housing households are behind on their rent, many due to pandemic related job losses. These families, including those with young children, face the fear of eviction. Unfortunately, rent relief programs created to respond to COVID are out of reach for NYCHA residents⁵.

Families with children who lack resources for their basic needs including food and shelter are also unable to access key educational resources, such as books and toys, that support children's foundational learning. **Considering that 90% of children's brain development takes place from birth-five the lack of high quality, age-appropriate learning supports has a profound impact on children's futures.**

City's First Readers closes opportunity gaps and contributes to equitable communities

There are proven and effective strategies that directly impact the early learning opportunity gaps that children living in systemic poverty experience and that protect them from the effects of trauma. These are the strategies that City's First Readers has *always* used to support children and their families.

Using a unique and highly effective approach modeled off the collective impact framework, City's First Reader's cross-sector engagement reaches approximately 1 million families annually across every council district in NYC. The core program elements include:

³ <https://uhfnyc.org/publications/publication/covid-19-ripple-effect-impact-covid-19-children-new-york-state/>

⁴

<https://www.thecity.nyc/2020/5/14/21270844/covid-sends-public-housing-zone-residents-to-hospitals-at-unusually-high-rates>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/08/nyregion/nycha-evictions-tenants.html>

- **Delivering free, high quality, and culturally relevant early literacy programming** that decades of research show position children for academic success and result in improved long-term outcomes that help break cycles of urban poverty.
- **Providing tools for parents to create safe, stable and nurturing relationships** – what the American Academy of Pediatrics coins relational health – that interrupt the experience of trauma and help children thrive.
- **Facilitating coaching and professional development** that increases the capacity of educators, librarians, medical providers, childcare workers, and other literacy support staff and builds cross-sector leaders and literacy advocates in neighborhoods across NYC.
- **Leading a city-wide public education campaign** that raises awareness of the importance of early literacy and motivates families to engage deeply with the City’s First Readers network.

The New York City Council recognized the power of early literacy when it initiated City’s First Readers in FY15. Eight years later, City’s First Readers is an impactful coalition of 17 partners. As a coalition, **City’s First Readers ensures New York City children have a solid foundation to start school successfully, thrive academically and succeed beyond their school years.**

Children birth-five living in NYCHA deserve a proven and effective long-term strategy that will ensure they enter school ready to learn and have the skills to succeed. We encourage the council to prioritize early literacy through ongoing investment and enhancement of City’s First Readers

***FY22 City’s First Readers partners include: Arab-American Family Support Center, Brooklyn Public Library, Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Hunts Point Alliance for Children, JCCA, Jumpstart, Literacy Inc, Literacy Partners, New Alternatives for Children, New York Public Library, ParentChild+ (delivered locally by Child Center of New York, Family Health Centers at NYU, and SCO Family of Services), Reach Out and Read of Greater New York, Queens Public Library, and Video Interaction Project.**



For more information about City’s First Readers visit our website or contact us by email or phone
citysfirstreaders.com | cfr@lincnyc.org | 212.620.5642 x147

New York City Dept. of Cultural Affairs March 4th 2022

Dear New York City Department of Cultural Affairs,
My name is Christina Perry, Director of Development of the Chain Theatre a 501c3 not for profit Off-Off Broadway Venue and member of the League of Independent Theater.

I am writing today to urge the city of New York to advocate for an increase in further funding for the arts in this time of continual recovery and support the bill for Commercial Rent Stabilization. The scale of support needed still has not come close to the levels of back-rent and other costs incurred during the government mandated shutdown and especially as surges continue to periodically disrupt the theatre.

Our venue was one of the very first to open in the summer of 2021 to a fully vaccinated, masked audience. Our organization has been working tirelessly to provide opportunities to artists and to regain our financial foot hold we once had before the pandemic.

We have paid over 50% of back rent owed from the 15 months of forced closure. Yet we still owe over 100k. **I write to you today in support of Commercial Rent Stabilization and the incredible sustainability and long lasting effects a bill such as this would have on artists and organizations for years to come.**

99-seat theatres such as ours are rarely found in New York City and the pandemic has made that number even less. Small theatres such as the Chain are crucial to the life-blood of theatre industry and key to sustaining individual artists, gig workers, is to support small theatres through legislative change such as Commercial Rent Stabilization.

As a venue owner I can tell you from personal experience that our rent accounts for sixty percent of our yearly budget. This statistic is true for not only myself, but hundreds of others. We are positive fixtures in your community. We serve the local residents on each block where we live by providing positive foot traffic, customers for restaurants, local hotels, stores, and public transportation. Thousands of students apply each year to further their education in the state of New York because they know what opportunities like my business can offer for their career.

We thank you for this opportunity to submit to have our voice and our need heard. We are dedicated to building back stronger than ever and we look to our leaders to make that possible through the passage of important legislation that protects small businesses such as ours.

Christina Perry
League of Independent Theatre, Member at Large
Director of Development, Chain Theatre
312 W. 36th Street, 4th Floor, NY 10018
www.chaintheatre.org
<https://www.litny.org/>
Christina@chaintheatre.org



THE JAZZ GALLERY

WHERE THE FUTURE IS PRESENT

AN INTERNATIONAL
JAZZ CULTURAL CENTER

Performance Address:
1160 B'way, 5th fl
New York, NY 10001

Mailing Address:
PO Box 153
Lenox Hill Station
New York, NY 10021
www.jazzgallery.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Hank O'Neal, *Chairman*
James Errol Browne
Jonathan Chimene
Matthew Coeny
Lezlie Harrison
Samuel Hagler
Ken Kimerling
Christopher D. Kirsten
John McCormick
Will Meyerhofer
Ron Scott
Donald Shire
Noel Silverman
Pavani Thagirisa
Paul J. Weinstein

Janet Luhrs, *Executive Director*
Rio Sakairi, *Artistic Director*
David Johnston,
Development Manager

FOUNDERS

Dale Fitzgerald
Roy Hargrove
Lezlie Harrison

ARTISTIC COUNCIL

Ambrose Akinmusire
Kenny Barron
Chris Brubeck
Steve Coleman
Ravi Coltrane
Tom Harrell
Vijay Iyer
Oliver Lake
Pat Metheny
Jason Moran
Dafnis Prieto
Esperanza Spalding
Henry Threadgill
Miguel Zenón

HONOREES

George Avakian
Todd Barkan
Arthur Barnes
Terri Lyne Carrington
Ron Carter
Bob Cranshaw
Michael Cuscuna
Jack DeJohnette
Manfred Eicher
Dale Fitzgerald
Bruce Gordon
Roy Hargrove
Lezlie Harrison
Roy Haynes
Dorthaan Kirk
Charles Lloyd
Junior Mance
Hank O'Neal
Wendy Oxenhorn
Eddie Palmieri
Chucho Valdes
Randy Weston
George Wein

New York City Council
Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations Committee
Council Chambers – City Hall
Preliminary Budget Hearing Testimony FY23
Tuesday March 8, 2022 12:30 PM

Organizational Background

The Jazz Gallery is America's premier performance venue for emerging artists who challenge convention, take creative risks and lead their field as performers, composers and thinkers. Through residencies, commissions, performances, and exhibitions, we provide a platform for artists to discover their unique voice and a home for established musicians to continue to experiment and grow. At The Jazz Gallery, artists and audiences come together from around the world to explore new creative ideas, collaborate and celebrate jazz as a dynamic art form that reflects our ever-changing world.

The Jazz Gallery continually highlights the diversity and vitality of jazz today by presenting both established artists and talented, younger artists in equal measure, emphasizing the importance of exchange across different generations and musical cultures for the continued renewal of the art form. Among our alumni are 6 MacArthur Fellows (most recently Mary Halvorson in 2019), 18 Thelonious Monk Competition finalists, numerous Doris Duke Artist Award recipients and GRAMMY Award-nominees, and many others who are now headlining international jazz festivals and topping annual "best-of" lists; they all cut their teeth on our stage. Even with such a network of successful alumni, The Jazz Gallery continually seeks out young artists who would benefit from the platform and community that we provide. Since 2002, we have commissioned 58 composers, 71% of them people of color.

THE PANDEMIC AND RESPONSE

In 2020, COVID-19 reduced our admission revenue by 74%. What did we do in response, to support our artists and audiences?

- We paid all artists for their cancelled performances.
- We acted swiftly to develop a suite of innovative online initiatives to connect and sustain artists and listeners during the pandemic.
- **TJG continued to employ artists through the pandemic. Artists are being compensated for livestream performances at the same rate we were paying before the lockdown.**

More than anything, we need public sector support that we can count on to continue paying our staff and artists until NYC is fully open again. Public funding was and is a lifeline for the cultural community and live music is a lifeline for the NYC



community. Cultural assets throughout the City can drive tourism as NYC reopens and the Key to NYC is suspended.

PRELIMINARY BUDGET

The arts & culture sector was one of the hardest hit, and every indicator says it will be among the last to recover.

As the Gotham Gazette noted last week: “The Independent Budget Office, a nonpartisan city agency...projected that **surplus revenues will be higher than OMB expects**. In an analysis of the preliminary budget, IBO stated that the city is on “a slow but sustained pathway toward economic recovery.”” <https://www.gothamgazette.com/city/11147-city-council-hearings-mayor-adams-fy23-preliminary-budget>

In response to the Mayor’s Preliminary Budget and proposed PEG cuts, **we do not believe this is the time for austerity measures**, especially as federal relief is soon to expire.

ACTION ITEMS

We must focus on the City and our citizens and how culture can lead the recovery.

Culture can lead recovery, but **the** cultural sector is still experiencing unique harm from the pandemic. Federal relief is expiring. Cultural orgs and artists----in particular BIPOC-led/serving----received least relief and are most in danger now.

- **Create a Cultural Equity stabilization fund.** This would be an investment in historically under funded BIPOC-led/serving cultural orgs so they can grow into robust self sustaining cultural assets
- **Increase capacity for the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.** If DCLA lacks staff and resources, funding delays increase. These are devastating for smaller, often BIPOC orgs, who do not have resources to float expenses and wait for reimbursement. We need a new Commissioner, new leadership at this crucial time. The administration needs to send a signal that *this is a priority*.
- **Take PEG cuts off the table.** We need the City Council to *at the very least* restore and baseline cultural spending at this time.

This sector is just emerging from one of the most challenging times in our history. This is not the time for short-sighted budgets cuts which will only prolong an already protracted recovery.



Cultural Institutions Group Live Testimony
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Tuesday, March 8th at 12:30pm
Coco Killingsworth, Co-Interim President, Brooklyn Academy of Music
Executive Vice Chair, Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)

Good afternoon, Chair Osse and members of the Committee. I am Coco Killingsworth, Co-Interim President at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and Vice Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG). I am here today to provide testimony on behalf of the CIGs – a diverse coalition of 34 cultural organizations who share a public-private partnership with the City of New York and are located in all five boroughs, including zoos, gardens, museums, and performing arts organizations.

We are grateful for the Council’s vital support for culture and the arts in New York City and are especially grateful to have this conversation in a moment where the City is looking beyond recovery. We know that our sector of culture and arts is critical to signaling to the world that the city’s vibrancy is restored and fundamental for supporting communities as they heal and build a more equitable city.

The CIGs have a distinct relationship with the City, based in partnership, and we welcome the opportunity to work with the Council to address New York’s most pressing needs. Through this closeness with city government - in the last two years alone, CIGs have continued to deliver world-class cultural programming, provided virtual and in person experiences, embraced ‘open culture,’ held vaccination and COVID test distribution sites, hosted food pantries and so much more. CIGs annually employ over 12,000 people with over 8,265 additional volunteers across the city. Each year 2.5M children, many of which are New York City schoolchildren, visit the CIG of which 762,000 attend on-site programs. In 2021, the CIG’s virtual programming reached over 10 million individuals, many of them seniors and schoolchildren.

Since March 2020 BAM has been a literal lifeline to Seniors and young people. Whether it was being able to pivot to virtual learning because of our existing distance learning program, keeping teaching artists employed and K-12 students engaged, or weekly check-in calls to isolated and at-risk Senior citizens, to incorporating mental health and wellness practices into our programs, to now two years later being for some, their first experience back in the world, BAM and Culture has become an essential part of the road to recovery.

One of the innovations and silver linings of the pandemic was how the Cultural Community came together, seen through ongoing Culture@3 calls. Last year we had the most unified, inclusive, and equity-driven ask that the NYC cultural community has ever had and hope to build on that this year. We would like to see the FY22 PEG Cut to the Cultural Development Fund restored. As the Council determines its budget priorities for FY23, we are here to ask for a restoration of all Council Initiatives, and a restoration of \$35M of FY22 Funding. We also request an additional \$50 million for the cultural



community. We look forward to being in dialogue with the Council and the Administration about that request in detail.

As a collective, the CIGs ask that the Council commit to a comeback and beyond. New York will be an example to the world of a new type of city, one that values every citizen and invests in every community. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

From: Alejandra Duque Cifuentes <aduque@dance.nyc>
Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 10:19 AM
To: Testimony; District36
Cc: Ariel Herrera; Sarah Cecilia Bukowski
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony: Dance/NYC re: March 8 Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations preliminary budget hearing
Attachments: TESTIMONY Dance_NYC Committee on Cultural Affairs preliminary budget hearing March 8, 2022.pdf

To Chair Ossé and members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs,

[Dance/NYC](#) is pleased to share the attached testimony to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations regarding the March 8th preliminary budget hearing. Priorities highlighted in Dance/NYC's testimony include:

1. The restoration of the FY2022 PEG cut to the Cultural Development Fund and \$35 million in FY22 funding to the Department of Cultural Affairs;
2. The establishment of a \$15 million Cultural Equity Fund within DCLA to advance equity across its programs and expand the Cultural Institutions Group;
3. \$780 million in total allocations for arts education through the Department of Education and Office of Arts and Special Projects, with a specific focus on equity;
4. \$100 million to support BIPOC-led and -serving cultural entities and address gaps in cultural equity through a Citywide Percent for Art initiative; and
5. The ongoing prioritization of all new and existing funding programs for small budget arts and cultural organizations—inclusive of profit enterprises, nonprofit organizations, and sole proprietorships—led by and primarily serving historically marginalized and underserved communities experiencing the highest levels of impact from the pandemic.

Dance/NYC thanks the committee for its consideration of the points outlined in this testimony.

You can learn more about [Dance/NYC's advocacy on our website](#). Please do not hesitate to contact me, Research & Advocacy Manager Ariel Herrera, and Research & Advocacy Coordinator Sarah Cecilia Bukowski, cc'd here, should you have questions or feedback on this or other issues concerning the arts and cultural sector. We look forward to further engagement with you and the Committee.

Best regards,

Alejandra

Alejandra Duque Cifuentes, *Executive Director*
Gender Pronouns: she, her, hers ([what's this?](#))
aduque@dance.nyc | O: 212.966.4452, ext. 1
[Dance.NYC](#) | @DanceNYC
Become a New Yorker for Dance: [Donate today!](#)

Upcoming:

- Register now! [Dance/NYC 2022 Symposium](#) | March 17-19
- Join [Dance/NYC's bi-weekly field-wide calls](#)



Testimony to City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations Preliminary Budget Hearing

Submitted to City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations on March 8, 2022

Prepared by Dance/NYC

Presented by Alejandra Duque Cifuentes, Executive Director

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony, submitted on behalf of Dance/NYC (dance.nyc), a service organization that reaches over 5,000 individual dance artists, 1,200 dance-making entities, 500 non-profit dance companies, and the many for-profit dance businesses based in the metropolitan New York City area. Its areas of service are of special benefit to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Color), immigrant, disabled, low-income and small budget dance workers. Dance/NYC is the only service organization for the dance sector in the metropolitan NYC area, and its action-oriented research and advocacy seek to represent and advance the interests of the dance field. It embeds the values of justice, equity, and inclusion into all aspects of its operations and frames the following requests through the lens of those values. Dance/NYC joins colleague advocates working across creative disciplines in thanking you for your leadership and requesting:

- 1. The restoration of the FY2022 PEG cut to the Cultural Development Fund and \$35 million in FY22 funding to the Department of Cultural Affairs;**
- 2. The establishment of a \$15 million Cultural Equity Fund within DCLA to advance equity across its programs and expand the Cultural Institutions Group;**
- 3. \$780 million in total allocations for arts education through the Department of Education and Office of Arts and Special Projects, with a specific focus on equity;**
- 4. \$100 million to support BIPOC-led and -serving cultural entities and address gaps in cultural equity through a Citywide Percent for Art initiative; and**
- 5. The ongoing prioritization of all new and existing funding programs for small budget arts and cultural organizations—inclusive of profit enterprises, nonprofit**



organizations, and sole proprietorships—led by and primarily serving historically marginalized and underserved communities experiencing the highest levels of impact from the pandemic.

The City’s budget represents far more than a financial statement; it is a social contract that articulates to the public the values that the Council and administration place on specific constituencies and communities, including industries and workers. The growth and resilience of the cultural sector has long been impeded by historic underinvestment and underrepresentation in policymaking by the city government and agencies. Dance is consistently the least funded of all the performing arts, and dance workers face additional barriers to economic viability due to low levels of unionization in the field and a corresponding lack of wage standards and labor protections. Dance workers are a necessary and vital part of the City’s social and economic fabric: dance workers are neighbors, parents, educators, service providers, and community leaders whose work deserves increased visibility and sustained, long-term investments.

Historically underinvested communities, including BIPOC, disabled people, and immigrants, face persistent systemic barriers that have long perpetuated patterns of inequity in the field. Arts workers and small budget organizations led by and serving these communities face a lack of access to funding at the governmental and philanthropic levels. These barriers translate to gaps in representation in the organizations and businesses that make up and serve the dance sector, due in part to barriers to accessing the training and resources needed to integrate into the workforce pipeline. Low wages within the sector can also be a deterrent for historically marginalized workers to remain employed sustainably in the field, particularly in small budget organizations that operate within their communities. Taken together, these factors demonstrate to BIPOC, disabled, and immigrant arts workers that their work is undervalued and unsustainable, when the truth is that their work is essential. These systemic obstacles point to the overall impact of white supremacist structural perpetuation of longstanding, intentional underinvestment, extraction, and inequity that negatively impacts disinvested communities, workers, and businesses. **In order to move the dance field and the cultural sector as a whole from an economics of survival into**



a new era of thriving, the City must prioritize proportional investments in the sector to reflect its substantial economic contributions. These include:

- **\$110 billion in economic activity** generated by the creative sector, comprising nearly **13% of the city’s total economic output**;¹
- **\$300 million** contributed annually by the dance industry, not including fiscally sponsored organizations, for profit enterprises, sole proprietorships, and individual dance workers;
- **\$1.6 billion** generated by the expenditures of cultural tourists and the proceeds of touring companies as the number one driver of tourism to the City²;
- **293,000 people** employed and **\$30.4 billion in wages paid**, of which over **62,000 workers are self-employed**;³
- Over 1,000 theaters, venues, dance companies, and musical groups employing over **16,000 workers** and paying over **\$1 billion in total compensation**; and
- Interconnection with other industries and local economies: The average arts attendee spends approximately **\$31.47 per person per event beyond the cost of admission** on meals, retail, parking, lodging, local transportation, childcare, and souvenirs.⁴

These findings clearly indicate the scope of the cultural sector’s direct economic impact and demonstrate the scope of support that the City must provide to correspond to the cultural sector’s economic production.

Contributions of the cultural sector are essential to the City’s overall economic health, and the losses during the pandemic have been and remain devastating. Due to the pandemic:

¹ Office of the New York City Comptroller. *The Creative Economy: Art, Culture and Creativity in New York City*. 2019. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-creative-economy/>

² Americans for the Arts. *The Arts As an Industry: Their Economic Importance to the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan Region*. <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/naappd/the-arts-as-an-industry-their-economic-importance-to-the-new-york-new-jersey-metropolitan-region-0>

³ Office of the New York City Comptroller. *The Creative Economy: Art, Culture and Creativity in New York City*. 2019. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-creative-economy/>

⁴ Americans for the Arts. *Arts and Economic Prosperity 5*. https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/aep5/PDF_Files/ARTS_AEPsummary_loRes.pdf



- Cultural organizations have accrued **losses of over \$6.8 billion**⁵;
- **95% canceled programming**, 88% modified the delivery of their programs, and 11% had to stop providing products or services to their communities; and
- Dance organization, group, and project **budgets shrunk by 31%**, with the **smallest organizations losing an average of 52%**⁶; and
- Dance/NYC recognizes **at least 26 organizations and facilities that have permanently closed their doors due to the pandemic**; the majority of which includes studio facilities which are primarily small businesses and beacons in their communities.

These findings demonstrate the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on small-budget groups and individual dance makers, which make up the majority of the dance sector and have historically lacked access to resources and support. These challenges to organizational stability put dance workers and the creative sector as a whole at risk of losing capacity to provide programming and services to their communities and contribute to the City's economy.

Arts workers, who are often independent contractors, entrepreneurs, sole proprietors, and small business owner-operators, remain among the most severely affected segment of the nation's workforce by the COVID-19 pandemic. Long-term factors that have led to this impact include:

- High rates of self-employment and part-time employment;
- Irregular income streams; and
- Lack of access to worker benefits and union labor protections.

The effects of the pandemic and the ongoing affordability crisis is manifesting in a migration of arts workers from urban centers such as New York City. As of late 2020:

- 5% of the dance workforce had relocated permanently

⁵ SMU Data Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs' COVID-19 Impact on Nonprofit Arts and Culture in New York City.

<https://culturaldata.org/pages/covid-19-impact-on-nonprofit-arts-and-culture-in-new-york-city/>

⁶ Dance/NYC. *Coronavirus Dance Impact Study Informational Brief*. 2021.

<https://www.dance.nyc/uploads/Covid-Impact-Study-Brief-210316.pdf>



- 17% were considering permanent relocation
- 43% considering long-term career options outside of dance.⁷
- Nearly 50% of dance workers reported being unemployed, with 70% struggling to meet basic needs, such as food and housing, and 44% unable to access needed medical or mental health services.

This data demonstrates distressing evidence that dance workers themselves lack confidence in the economic viability of their work. Additionally, these impacts to organizations and individuals are felt most acutely by those who identify as BIPOC, immigrants, disabled, and with other communities with less access to capital reserves, which in turn stands to exacerbate historical inequities in the field.

The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) is the only City agency dedicated to supporting arts and culture. **The restoration of the PEG cuts to DCLA programs and \$35 million in agency funding from FY22 would bolster DCLA’s capacity to provide grants to organizations for operations and capital investments and put individual arts workers back to work through grants, employment programs, and placements within other City agencies.** DCLA programs such as the Cultural Development Fund, Coalition of Theatres of Color Initiative, Cultural Immigrant Initiative, CASA and SU-CASA have served as lifelines for arts and cultural organizations and individual creative workers to sustain their work and deepen their engagement with communities. In FY22, the Cultural Development Fund provided \$51.4 million in funding to 1,022 organizations⁸ and the City Artist Corps program, a relief program through the Mayor’s office, distributed \$25 million to 3,000 independent arts workers. Many City Artist Corps grantees were Dance/NYC constituents for whom the grants had immediate tangible impact on the sustainability of their artistic practice, financial viability, and personal well-being.⁹ **Funding for DCLA must be proportional to the economic impact of the arts and cultural sector and**

⁷ Dance/NYC. *Coronavirus Dance Impact Study Informational Brief*. 2021.

<https://www.dance.nyc/uploads/Covid-Impact-Study-Brief-210316.pdf>

⁸ Department of Cultural Affairs press release, December 9, 2021.

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dcla/about/pressrelease/PR-2021-12-09-DCLA-CDF-FY22-Announcement.page>

⁹ Department of Cultural Affairs press release, August 27, 2021.

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dcla/about/pressrelease/PR-2021-08-27-CAC-Awards.page>



reflect the need for adequate agency staffing to provide programs, resources, and technical assistance to the sector, with a focus on general operating support and direct support to individual workers.

The establishment of a \$15 million Cultural Equity Fund within DCLA can advance equity by securing dedicated baseline support for BIPOC-led and -serving organizations to overcome historic disinvestment and cultivate sustainable growth. As the sector continues to recover from the devastating effects of the pandemic, it is crucial that the FY23 DCLA budget reflects the ongoing needs of organizations and workers in order for the sector to thrive. There is still work to be done to make DCLA's programs accessible to the smallest, hardest-hit businesses that lack administrative and technical capacity to apply and comply with program requirements. This is particularly true for BIPOC-led and -serving organizations that suffer from historic underinvestment and lack of access to generational wealth and resources. Across its program areas, DCLA can advance equity and access through programmatic changes to application processes and fund distribution, such as increasing minimum award levels and disbursing grants in multi-year cycles to provide stability and reduce administrative burden on small BIPOC-led and -serving organizations and individual arts workers. Crucially, the provision of general operating support for cultural organizations can allow organizations the space to augment their programming and ensure the provision of living wages for their workers.

In addition to expanded access to DCLA's funding programs, **the expansion of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) to include more BIPOC-led entities can initiate and support greater agency and representation for BIPOC stewardship of City-owned facilities and parkland.** The CIG empowers organizations to steward city land and property, provide stable employment to community members, contribute meaningfully to the local economy by driving revenue to community businesses, and improve overall quality of life by revitalizing and enriching neighborhoods. Expanding BIPOC access to property ownership, land stewardship, and reparations can open opportunities for BIPOC-led organizations to expand capacity to provide sustainable programming from permanent homes anchored within their communities. By privately maintaining public facilities and land, BIPOC-led entities can partner directly with the



City to scale up their operations in lasting, meaningful ways. A focus on identifying and investing in facilities and land in BIPOC communities and cultural deserts can ensure equitable distribution of publicly-accessible cultural programming throughout the City.

Alongside DCLA's support of the cultural sector, the Department of Education and its Office of Arts and Special Projects (OASP) funds and administers arts programming and partnerships with community-based arts organizations. **A total investment of \$780 million in arts education can ensure that New York City schools lead the way by advancing the arts as a core component of every student's education.** This total includes:

- Continue 20% allocation of American Rescue Plan Act Academic Recovery Funding to expand standards-based arts instruction in order to promote academic recovery and social, emotional and academic support for all students, amounting to a ~\$44,000 allocation per school;
- \$115 million increase (total \$180 million) to the Arts Supplemental Funding thru the Fair Student Funding School Allocation Memorandum;
- \$24 million toward Arts Services, including Arts Partnership Grants that provide targeted opportunities for diverse groups of students, with a focus on English Language Learners (ELLs) and Students with Disabilities (SWD);
- \$40 million increase (\$451 million total for personnel) in the training and certification of arts teachers, with a particular focus on engaging BIPOC teachers and hiring certified arts teachers; and
- \$50 million for funding and hiring for the multi-year implementation of the Department of Education Office of Arts & Special Projects Strategic Arts Plan to close the equity gap and address high-quality arts instruction for all students.

Arts education encourages participation and enjoyment of arts and cultural programming, contributes to student well being, and advances essential contributions to the creative economy through arts partnerships. Particularly important during the pandemic, arts education supports social and emotional well being while fostering creativity, critical thinking, team-building,



self-reflection, and communication skills.¹⁰ Students are still recovering from the impacts of the pandemic on their learning, and arts education is key to strengthening student well-being and overall academic achievement and must continue through every student's future education. Even as arts instruction continued throughout the pandemic, cuts to arts education budgets have limited schools' capacity to deliver equitable, quality arts education and devastated partnerships with arts and cultural organizations, and funding must be restored and increased to recoup these losses. These pressing issues must remain at the forefront of the OASP's Strategic Arts Plan, with prioritized funding to support and execute the measures required to foster equity in the arts classroom, specifically in neighborhoods hit hardest by the pandemic. Teachers must also be supported with investments in training and certification for arts educators, with a particular focus on engaging BIPOC teachers through programs to encourage teachers to earn their arts content and supplementary certifications. **By providing universal access to arts education and championing equity in its planning and execution, the City sends the message that the arts are a viable pathway to success for all students, which supports the cultural diversity of the arts workforce and the economic health of the creative industry.**

In addition to the above agency-specific requests, **Dance/NYC requests the establishment of a \$100 million fund to establish and administer programs to support BIPOC-led and -serving cultural entities and address gaps in cultural equity through a Citywide Percent for Art initiative.** This measure would allocate 1% of the City's total budget toward arts and culture—a nominal ask for a sector that contributes 13% of the City's total economic output.¹¹ The equity gap remains distressingly wide for cultural organizations and workers struggling to survive in an increasingly unaffordable New York City, and this support can enable existing BIPOC-led and -serving organizations, their workers, and communities to thrive in meaningful ways. For cultural organizations specifically, gaining ownership of their facilities and land can provide stability to these organizations and the communities they serve. For BIPOC arts workers, these

¹⁰ New Victory Theater. *Spark Change: Investing in performing arts education for all* <https://bit.ly/NewVictorySparkChangeReport>

¹¹ Office of the New York City Comptroller. *The Creative Economy: Art, Culture and Creativity in New York City*. 2019. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-creative-economy/>



funds can help them meet the actual costs of living to remain in the City and contribute to the cultural legacies of their communities. A long-term investment from the City would go a long way towards supporting the cultural sector so that its organizations and workers can have the tools and resources they need to be better prepared to survive future pandemics, climate emergencies, and global economic shifts.

As a whole, funding and grant programs administered by the DCLA, Small Business Services, and other City agencies must adapt to the needs of the cultural sector. **Across agencies, inclusive funding programs in the form of grants, loans, and emergency relief must prioritize the needs of small budget organizations—inclusive of for profit enterprises, nonprofit organizations, and sole proprietorships—led by and primarily serving BIPOC, disabled, immigrant, and other historically marginalized and underserved communities. Equity must be at the center of all budget allocations and funding programs in all City agencies.**

Communities of color, disabled people, and immigrants continue to endure disproportionate economic and social impacts of the pandemic, and individuals and small-budget organizations serving these historically underinvested communities should be prioritized throughout the City's programs to support arts and culture.

Dance/NYC joins the arts and cultural sector in asking for the City to ensure the vitality and sustainability of its industry and workers. Arts and culture can lead the City's recovery and these investments can help ensure the sector's continued resilience, growth, and long-term survival.

For Dance/NYC and its constituents, the most urgent priorities are:

- 1. The restoration of the FY2022 PEG cut to the Cultural Development Fund and \$35 million in FY22 funding to the Department of Cultural Affairs;**
- 2. The establishment of a \$15 million Cultural Equity Fund within DCLA to advance equity across its programs and expand the Cultural Institutions Group;**
- 3. \$780 million in total allocations for arts education through the Department of Education and Office of Arts and Special Projects, with a specific focus on equity;**



4. **\$100 million to support BIPOC-led and -serving cultural entities and address gaps in cultural equity through a Citywide Percent for Art initiative; and**
5. **The ongoing prioritization of all new and existing funding programs for small budget arts and cultural organizations—inclusive of profit enterprises, nonprofit organizations, and sole proprietorships—led by and primarily serving historically marginalized and underserved communities experiencing the highest levels of impact from the pandemic.**

The above measures stand to support arts and culture as an essential driver of New York City’s economic health and cultural vibrancy. Dance/NYC expresses gratitude to the City officials and other dedicated workers who have contributed to the recovery of the arts and cultural sector. Now is the time to act so that arts and cultural institutions, organizations, and workers continue to thrive for years to come. Dance/NYC thanks you for your consideration and commends your leadership and ongoing efforts to ensure that New York remains a capital for arts and culture.

##

DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN ARTS ALLIANCE

dbartsalliance.org | 917.765.9576

651 Arts
A Public Space
A.R.T./New York South Oxford Space
ActNow Foundation
American Opera Projects
BAM
Bang on a Can
BOMB Magazine
BRIC
Brooklyn Arts Council
Brooklyn Ballet
Brooklyn Historical Society
Brooklyn Music School
Brooklyn Navy Yard/BLDG92
Brooklyn Youth Chorus
Center for Fiction
Dancewave
Dieu Donn  Paper Mill, Inc.
DreamStreet Theatre Company
Emmanuel Baptist Church Jazz Vespers
En Garde Arts
Encompass New Opera Theatre
EPIC Players
Gallim Dance Company, Inc.
Irondale Ensemble Project
ISSUE Project Room
Jack Arts, Inc.
Jamel Gaines Creative Outlet
Kumble Theater for the Performing Arts
Mark Morris Dance Group
MoCADA
New York Transit Museum
NY Writers Coalition
Open Source Gallery, Inc.
Recess
RestorationART
Roulette Intermedium
Smack Mellon
StoryCorps
The Actors Fund
The Knights
Theater 2020
Theater Mitu
Theatre for a New Audience
Triangle Arts Association
Trilok Fusion Arts
Urban Bush Women
UrbanGlass
ViBe Theater Experience
White Bird Productions

March 11, 2022

To: Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International
Intergroup Relations

From: Beth Allen, Executive Director, Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance

Re: Testimony on Cultural Budget

Thank you Chairman Chi Osse and members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your attention to the impact of cuts to arts and cultural organizations outlined in the proposed Executive Budget.

I write to you as Executive Director of the Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance (DBAA). DBAA is a small arts service organization that brings together a network of over 60 member arts and cultural non-profits in the greater Downtown Brooklyn community to provide peer support, networking opportunities, and a voice in local community issues. Our group spans the visual, performing, literary and media arts, and includes every presenting venue in the Brooklyn Cultural District in Fort Greene, as well as smaller community-based groups, internationally known dance and theater companies, exhibition venues dedicated to visual art, craft, and history, and others. In addition to presenting and creating and commissioning new works, our group includes organizations that offer subsidized studio and rehearsal space, residencies and other services to artists, and a great deal of arts education. Their programs serve over 5

million constituents (approximately 50% of programming is offered free of charge) including over 150,000 children served by school and afterschool programs.

Nearly two years ago, on March 20th DBAA convened our first “All-Member” zoom on the topic of dealing with COVID-19 and began our work of navigating the crisis together. It has been an intense two years, and I have witnessed on a weekly basis, what arts non-profits have been through and how they continue to struggle. While it is all fine and nice to declare that “we’re back” – I was just this morning in a meeting with 20 of our members discussing the many challenges we continue to face, including restaffing and rebuilding our organizations, maintaining the trust of audiences, students, employees in a still-uncertain environment, and the ever-present fears that Covid cases will spike and we will be forced to close our doors again. Our members have been incredibly resilient and resourceful, but are also generally speaking, exhausted from the challenges and frustrated by yet-another statement from City government about how important the arts are to New York City’s recovery, at the same time we are being told the budget for CDF and other programs are to be cut next year. While the various recovery funding programs have helped a great deal, some organizations – largely those that are smaller, and/or who subsidize ticket prices and educational opportunities for low-income residents, and serve those neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID-19 – were ineligible for funding from these programs (DBAA, included) or there were otherwise barriers to applying (onerous application procedures and the like).

We have known for a long time that it would take years for our sector to fully recover from this crisis, many budgets were devastated and income and service models have been upended in various ways. There is also the urgent need to retrofit arts spaces with new HVAC systems,

technological upgrades, and make other improvements that will allow us to operate safely in future crises. We have also seen significant innovation, new forms of programming serving remote audiences, outdoor audiences, seniors and people with disabilities participating in programming for the first time, and greater opportunity for BIPOC artists and organizations to reach wider audiences. It is important to build on these innovations if our field is to not only survive this moment, but to thrive.

As we move into yet another new phase of the pandemic, we are well aware that the work of cultural institutions is an important component to New York City's larger recovery as we continue to provide opportunities to connect the city's residents with one another, and with artistic experiences that offer hope and healing. We are the "intangible aliveness" in our communities, fostering a sense of identity and offering a sense of belonging to those we serve. Arts leaders are, by definition, creative problem solvers, and within our cohort there is great determination to rise to the challenges of the moment, but short and longer-term economic concerns are a tremendous worry right now. Funding provided by the DCLA Cultural Development Fund, as well as through City Council Initiatives, and the Department of Cultural Affairs and other city agencies is especially important to serving those most vulnerable in our communities, including many of the neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID-19, the majority of which are Black and Brown. Reductions to the FY21 budget for DCLA would be a disaster not only in terms of our ability to continue to serve our constituents, but for an equitable recovery.

Many thanks again for the opportunity to testify, and for your commitment to the arts in New York City.

Hello my name is Gloria Zelaya, Artistic Producing Director of The Fantastic Experimental Latino Theater Inc., resident company of t=The Clemente and member of the Latinx Consortium of N.Y. We've been in existence since 1996 providing, acting, playwriting and movement workshops as well as producing and developing plays of new writers. As part of our mission is to produce works by women. We're asking for support to continue to do our work.

- The he City underfunds the arts overall, and BIPOC communities and organizations in particular need much more funding. We need resources to do our work, so we're not constantly scrambling.
- City funding is inequitable, and the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) doesn't report publicly on the distribution of its funding. We call on DCLA to begin reporting publicly on its funding distribution by borough, neighborhood, and organization size so that we can hold the city accountable to pledges on equity.
- The city should correct this inequity through INCREASES to underfunded neighborhoods and BIPOC-led-and-serving organizations that have been historically undercapitalized, NOT by taking funding away from other larger organizations. We need much more OVERALL, not a redistribution of existing funds.
- **We believe \$100M increase at minimum is necessary to fill in funding gaps in underserved communities and historically undercapitalized organizations.**
- DCLA should make processes easier for small organizations, especially by giving annual operating support to smaller organizations, rather than only program support.
- The City should add more funding direct to individual artists, especially BIPOC artists, a community that was one of the hardest hit by the pandemic

Thanks for your attention.



Testimony – March 8, 2022, 12:30pm
NYC Council Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and Intergroup Relations –
Hearing: *FY2023 Preliminary Budget*
Sami Abu Shumays, Deputy Director, Flushing Town Hall

*Ellen Kodadek
Executive & Artistic Director*

*137-35 Northern Boulevard
Flushing, New York 11354*

*Tel. (718) 463-7700
Fax: (718) 445 1920
www.flushingtownhall.org*

Thank you Chair Ossé and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify. I am Sami Abu Shumays, Deputy Director of Flushing Town Hall, a member of the Cultural Institutions group (CIG) and a member of the Latinx Arts Consortium of New York (LXNY).

The preliminary budget for the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) for FY23 represents a significant funding cut - more than 50% - for Flushing Town Hall. As one of the smallest CIGs, our baselined funding is \$375,292, a figure that hasn't increased for over a decade. Instead, for the last several years we have depended on the "one time" increases added at budget adoption, but not baselined, and on one-time initiatives like the CTC and Supplemental Support, Speaker funding, and the "Met" allocation that has been intended for smaller and mid-sized organizations, to make us whole. Excluding program initiatives like CASA and Su-CASA, that has meant that our total operating support has been about \$800,000 for the last two fiscal years, a figure that is comparable to our funding in Fiscal Year 2008, the last year before the financial crash, when we saw a 41% cut in funding that forced major layoffs. In other words, it has taken us 14 years to get back to our prior funding level, and build back the organization to where it was. We are a mid-sized organization with only 16 full time staff, serving predominantly BIPOC communities in Queens with culturally-relevant arts programs, and responsible for the maintenance of a 160-year-old city-owned building. We don't have a base of wealth that would enable us to endure major financial losses, so we depend heavily on the support of the DCLA to keep afloat.

I am here with three requests:

First: that the council and administration restore the cultural sector to FY22 levels in FY23, by restoring the full \$35 million added at adoption last year. We are not the only organization who will experience a significant cut if this doesn't happen, and we will be forced to lay off staff and cut programs if the funding isn't restored.

Second: Baseline the FY22 increases in FY23. We, along with the entire cultural sector, need stability in funding in order to operate well and plan for the future. Dealing with uncertainty every year for more than half of our public funding puts us all in a precarious position.

Third: Consider significant increases beyond the \$35 million restoration. DCLA support for arts and culture is extraordinarily inequitable across the 5 boroughs, with one estimate being that Manhattan receives 10 times the per capita funding as Queens and 5 times the per capita funding of Brooklyn. We don't want to see any organization cut, large or small, and it is a fact that many of our neighborhoods in the outer boroughs are severely underfunded, and we need radical, game changing increases in those areas to achieve true cultural equity in the budget. In 2017, the People's cultural plan estimated



Ellen Kodadek
Executive & Artistic Director

137-35 Northern Boulevard
Flushing, New York 11354

Tel. (718) 463-7700
Fax: (718) 445 1920
www.flushingtowball.org

that increasing the DCLA budget by \$270 million annually could enable an equal distribution of funds across the 5 boroughs without cutting the funding of any institution. These are the kinds of figures we should be discussing for an increase, and even with that increase the DCLA budget would be less than half of one percent of the entire city's budget. A Billion dollars for culture annually – 1% of the budget – would be truly fitting for a city that strives to be one of the cultural capitals of the world.

About Flushing Town Hall

Flushing Town Hall, originally known as Flushing Council on Culture and the Arts, is one of the pioneers of multicultural arts programming in New York City.

In 1979 Flushing, Queens was a rapidly diversifying neighborhood. The 1964 world's fair in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, followed by the liberalization of immigration laws in 1965, meant that people from all over the world began to settle all across Queens, and by 1979 the founders of Flushing Council on Culture and the Arts (FCCA) recognized the need to create an arts organization that served these new residents – by celebrating and uplifting the dizzying variety of cultures and artistic practices being brought to the borough. For the next decade and a half FCCA produced hundreds of multicultural events, including African and Asian festivals in Flushing Meadows Corona park, featuring dance traditions, music, crafts, food, and more. In 1990 we began the rescue and restoration of historic Flushing Town Hall (built 1862), and committed to continuing several legacies: the legacy of diversity and multiculturalism that defined our first programs; the legacy of Jazz in Queens, which was home to many of the greatest Jazz musicians in the world; and the legacy of Flushing itself, whose defining moment was the Flushing Remonstrance, which in 1657 established the principle of religious freedom and pluralism that were later written into the first amendment.

As the communities around Flushing Town Hall have continued to evolve and change, so have our programs, and the last decade has seen significant growth in Latinx, Chinese, Korean, and South Asian programming; a deeper collaboration with Matinecock tribal elders who represent the original residents of Flushing; an increase in cross-cultural programming such as our popular "Global Mashups" that bring together bands representing different traditions of global music into one evening of dance (for example "Haiti meets China" or "India meets Brazil" or "Korea meets Greece"); and an increase in arts education services to schools in Queens, deploying our roster of 30+ teaching artists, many of whom are master tradition bearers from different parts of the world, serving more than 23,000 students annually with culturally relevant programming.

Representation is essential to enabling peoples from diverse backgrounds to feel included in a community.

Given how diverse NYC and especially Queens is, the more diverse our arts and cultural programs are, the more people can feel included and represented. In addition to creating positive images to support the identities of people from different backgrounds, arts programs also have a wide range of benefits for all participants, including health, well-being, cognitive skills, social bonding, and violence prevention. Robust arts programming across NYC is essential to helping the city bounce back from the pandemic, and it is especially needed in underserved neighborhoods, whose communities were also the hardest hit by the pandemic.

*Flushing Town Hall (1862) is a New York City landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
In 1996 the facility became an officially designated cultural institution in the City of New York.*

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

Written Testimony

About the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum is an internationally renowned art museum that stands as one of the major cultural touchstones of New York City. Serving as a bellwether of modern and contemporary art since its opening in 1939, the museum has presented to its audiences some of the most striking exhibitions of the 20th and 21st centuries in one of the most significant NYC-landmarked architectural icons of the 20th century, now recognized on the UNESCO Heritage Site list.

For over 51 years, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum's Education and Public Programs department, an 8,200 square-foot learning laboratory in the lower level of the museum, has been the epicenter through which the museum develops and implements arts-based learning opportunities, including multi-session school partnerships, engagement with artists and thought leaders, performances and film screenings, classes for teens and adults, accessibility programs for children on the autism spectrum and those with impaired sight, and daily tours of the galleries. In addition to fostering a long-lasting relationship with art, art history, and the museum itself, the Guggenheim's education programs strengthen valuable academic and life skills including critical thinking, visual literacy, and communication. The Guggenheim serves close to 15,000 students annually across the five boroughs through its dynamic learning opportunities.

Guggenheim Covid-19 Impact and Response

The Guggenheim suffered an approximate \$12 million dollar revenue loss during as a result of the Covid-19 global pandemic. A pandemic that left New York City with an unforgiving education crisis that is impacting students and teachers in every district. In an effort to address this vital need for educational outreach, while historically, the Guggenheim associated programming fees with its educational initiatives, in 2020, the museum eliminated the fee structure.

The Guggenheim is dedicated to serving all New York City residents and to providing support for teachers, students, and parents. In 2021, the Guggenheim served:

- 16,283 K-12 students served through **School, Youth, & Family Programs**
- 450 College and University students and faculty through **Academic Engagement**
- 21,473 audience members through **Public Programs and Public Engagement**
- 5,555 audience members through **Access and Interpretation programs**

The Guggenheim continues to serve all 5 boroughs through these 4 pillars in 2022, serving youth, teens, families, teachers and faculty, and establishing accessible programming for audiences who are blind or have low vision, and hard of hearing, with an array of programs from Internships, Teen programs, Learning Through Art in-school artist residencies, CASA after school programming, Summer College Workshops, University Partnerships, Poetry Residency, Architecture and Exhibition programs, ASL Video interpretation, and Mind's Eye Verbal description.

In an effort to recoup revenue losses associated with the global pandemic, the 2021 New York City budget reflected a 70 percent cut to already insufficient arts funding for New York City public schools. These devastating budgetary cuts will directly impact the system's 1.1 million students, leaving many without access to arts programming.

Just years prior to this dramatic budgetary cut, a 2014 study conducted by the New York City Comptroller's office found that:

419 schools in New York City (28 percent) lack even one full-time, certified arts teacher, including 20 percent of all high schools (76), 22 percent of all middle schools (59) and 38 percent of all elementary schools (232);

More than 42 percent of schools that lack either full-time or part-time certified arts teachers are located in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn; and

Nearly half of the schools that lack both a certified arts teacher and an arts or cultural partnership are located in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn.

The Guggenheim is committed to filling the present educational gap and extend arts programming to students across New York City. In addition to the multitude of proven student benefits connected to arts-based learning—increased self-confidence and self-understanding, enhanced communication skills, and improved cognition—arts education is essential to the city's recovery from the pandemic and to the healing of New Yorkers.

The Guggenheim aims for all New York City residents to feel welcomed. Similar to many New York City museums.. The proposed programs are far more costly than the museum's request for funds. **It is the City of New York's duty to continue to fund arts institutions that provide on site, in-school and at-home arts-based educational programs for children. The Guggenheim Museum is grateful for the critical support of the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs.**



**CELEBRATING THE JOY
OF DANCING ON ICE**

62 Chelsea Piers,
Suite 308
New York, NY 10011
212-929-5811
212-929-0105 (FAX)
www.icetheatre.org
itny@icetheatre.org

Founder/Director
Moira North
Executive Director
Jirina Ribbens
Ensemble Director
Elisa Angeli

Chair
William J Candee IV
Vice Chair
Betty Wasserman
President
Moira North
Secretary
Juliet Glennon
Treasurer
Mary Gaillard

Board of Trustees
Elizabeth Beller-Dee
Jessica Betts
Frances Black
William J Candee III
Violet Eagan
Doug Haw
David Mellins
Susan Numeroff

Artistic Advisory Council
Elise Bernhardt
Dick Button
Richard Caples
Ann Carlson
Richard Dwyer
Josef Koudelka
Meredith Monk
Ken Shelley
Atoy Wilson

NYC Council

Testimony for the Committee on Cultural Affairs- March 8

To Whom It May Concern:

I am submitting this testimony as Executive Director of Ice Theatre of New York, Inc. ®

ITNY's mission is to celebrate and advance dance on ice as a performance art. Through its performances in both traditional and site-specific venues, ITNY presents ice dance that helps to open one's eyes to seeing skating in new and unexpected ways. ITNY was the very first ice dance company to receive dance program funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

As we emerge from the restrictions of the pandemic, including the Key to NYC mandates ITNY sees it as imperative, even as we care for the neediest among our fellow citizens, that the overall NYC budget for Culture increase.

NYC's cultural programming and specifically ITNY's programming brings benefits for life in NYC, from our general audiences to the NYC public school children we serve. We bring joy with our free public performances to dance enthusiasts, figure skating fans and all passers-by of our performances on the seasonal ice rinks all over New York City.

In our outreach programs for NYC public school children we expose them to a new art form, introduce them to a new sport, which they can practice in their local community, in the winter outdoors, with great health benefits (physical and mental), as well as introducing them to potential local jobs in a new industry. Even after pivoting to virtual programming, we are still engaging hundreds of children in arts programming.

Our programming changes up the sometimes-dreary routine of online learning. The students are engaged, their morale gets a boost and they learn about a potential lifelong healthy activity once the pandemic is over.

Culture is a small part of NYC's budget that returns great rewards. The DCLA budget and such programs as the NYC Artists Corps affect not only our constituents, but also the 40 or so artists we employ every year. These artists add to the health, diversity and dynamism of NYC. Culture is what makes NYC different from most other major cities.

Page two
Ice Theatre of New York, Inc.®

Government support is especially critical to small non-profits. Ice Theatre of New York is resilient – we have been around since 1984 – but we could not do this without the support of the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Department of Youth and Community Development and the Council Member Discretionary Funding. This support goes beyond the actual financial contribution in inspiring support from foundations and individuals.

Like all NYC's cultural institutions, Ice Theatre of New York has been hit hard. We were finally allowed back on the ice at Chelsea Piers to rehearse as a group. We have continued our programming with virtual classes, streaming events, and 5-10 minute-long Pop-Up performances by solo or duet performers.

Thanks to PPP we were able to keep our artists through June 2020, but subsequently we had to let most of them go. All performances were halted till December, at which time we could re-employ a handful of artists for pop-up-type of performances. It's a long way from presenting 30-min concerts with a dozen artists and our hour-long Home Season Performances that employ up to 25 artistic workers.

Ice Theatre of New York's Fiscal year 2021 season was completely destroyed by the COVID shutdown and the economic crisis. It remains unclear whether our patrons want to attend a Gala again? If not, how will we find the funds to survive through FY 2023? And how will our artists be able to remain in NYC?

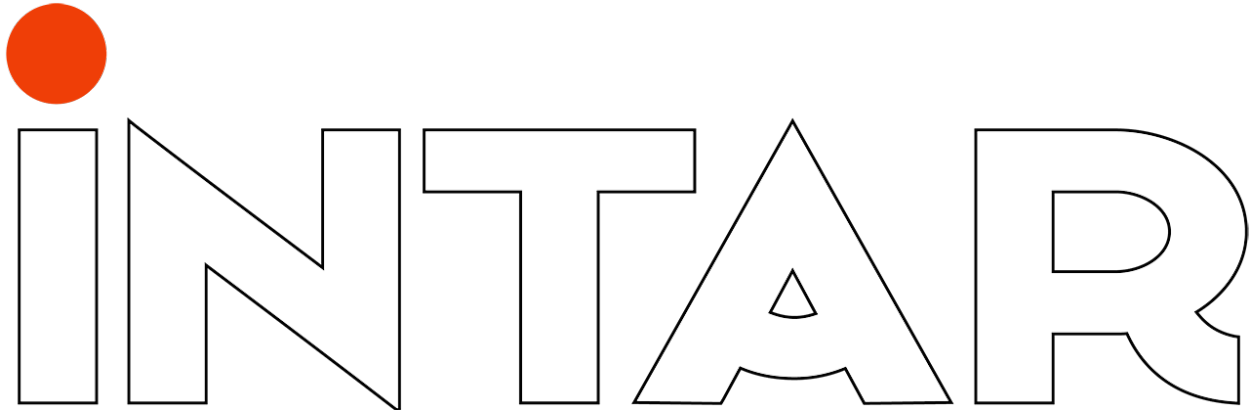
Ice Theatre of New York has been helping to lead the economic recovery with its pop-up ice dance events, by creating traffic to local communities and businesses and enlivening the communities we perform in. We hope that soon – as in the past – ITNY will be part of the cultural landscape that will attract tourist back to our City.

With gratitude for the City's past support and in hope of increased funding for Culture in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jirina Ribbens', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jirina Ribbens
Executive Director



March 1st, 2022

Councilmember Chi Ossé
Chair of the Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations
And Members of the Committee
c/o 1360 Fulton Street, Suite 500
Brooklyn, NY 11216

Dear Chair Ossé and Committee Members,

On behalf of International Arts Relations, Inc. (INTAR) I respectfully submit this testimony with regard to the March 8, 2022 12:30 p.m. Preliminary Budget Hearing for FY 2023.

As a 56-year-old nonprofit theater serving Latin artists and their general audiences in Council District 3, we urge you please to restore the \$20 million increase to the DCLA budget from last year, and to add an additional \$100 million to DCLA's budget in 2023. As proud members of the LxNY Arts Consortium, we have additional requests for your consideration that I outline below.

Cultural funding and other support from NYC has been vital to our company since its founding in 1966, but never mores than during the Covid pandemic of the past 2 years. INTAR benefits from the low rent we are charged in the City-owned (HPD) building we inhabit at 500 West 52nd Street, a subsidy that serves as the basis for our business model as a developmental theater that gives production opportunities to both new and veteran theater artists - reviews and credits that have launched many Latin artists into mainstream show business careers such as actors Audrey Esparza (Blindspot, Power), Florencia

Lozano (Narcos), Raoul Castillo (Looking), Elvis Nolasco (American Crime) and playwrights Nilo Cruz (1st Latino to win a Pulitzer Prize for Drama); Georgina Escobar, Carmen Rivera, Candido Tirado & many more.

As a grantee under the City Council's Coalition of Theaters of Color initiative, INTAR has produced multiple mainstage plays with salaried actors and stage managers for the last 20 years, in a City where according to one recent study by the Asian American Performers Action Coalition, Latin actors received 5 cents for every dollar paid to white non-Latin actors as recently as 2019. As a NYC Open Culture participant, INTAR was able to produce 6 performances of a CTC-funded new rock musical ¡OSO FABULOSO & THE BEAR BACKS! By C. Julian Jiménez and PK Variance last June 2021 on our block of West 52nd Street between 10th & 11th; the impact so galvanized our funders that we almost doubled our company budget from 2021 to 2022.

As a member of the Latin Arts Consortium of NY (LxNY) we at INTAR believe that City funding is inequitable, and the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) doesn't report publicly on the distribution of its funding. We call on DCLA to begin reporting publicly on its funding distribution by borough, neighborhood, and organization size so that we can hold the city accountable to pledges on equity.

The city should correct this inequity through RADICAL INCREASES to underfunded neighborhoods and BIPOC-led-and-serving organizations that have been historically undercapitalized, NOT by taking funding away from other larger organizations.

We need much more OVERALL, not a redistribution of existing funds. DCLA should make processes easier for small organizations, especially by giving annual operating support to smaller organizations, rather than only program support. The City should add more funding direct to individual artists, especially BIPOC artists, a community that was one of the hardest hit by the pandemic.

On behalf of INTAR, thank you for the City's huge role in our company's vibrant contribution to the arts for so many years, thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this testimony, and thank you for your work going forward on behalf of the City we all love.

Sincerely,

Paul Slee Rodriguez
Executive Director

LINCOLN CENTER

70 Lincoln Center Plaza, New York, NY 10023-6583 | [LincolnCenter.org](https://www.lincolncenter.org)

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. FY23 Preliminary Budget Testimony March 8, 2022

Chair Ossé and members of the Committee,

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, one of the 34 members of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), thanks you and your staffs for your attention to driving equitable access to the city's arts and cultural institutions. Collectively, our organizations – big and small – need your support to adequately play our essential role in its recovery.

Founded 60 years ago as a place to center interdisciplinary arts within the daily life of New Yorkers, Lincoln Center is home to 11 independently operated non-profit arts organizations. Complementing the on-campus presence are partnerships across the city with local schools, senior centers, libraries, and community-based organizations. Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts presents free and low-cost programming and education for all New Yorkers.

The pandemic has devastated the arts while also challenging us to think differently about the use of our spaces and the role of live performance within the ecosystem of a healthy city. Over the last two years, we at Lincoln Center have strengthened our commitment to being an arts and civic hub presenting socially engaged artistic works while meeting community needs through hosting blood drives with the New York Blood Center, food distributions with the Food Bank for New York City, and NYC Mobile Vaccine buses. At a time of high unemployment, Lincoln Center accelerated its timeline for the new David Geffen Hall to get New Yorkers back to work by supporting 6,000 jobs, awarding 43% of construction contracts to MWBEs and developing a workforce development program with Turner Construction that put 30 local residents on track for full-time union positions.

Across campus we are taking steps to reopen. After nearly two years of being closed, the Rubenstein Atrium is re-opening its doors this Thursday with a slate of free public programming for the spring season, and open hours that welcome New Yorkers to safely meet, study, and relax. Re-opening within the pandemic poses significant upfront costs to ensure safety protocols are in place. For example, the Atrium required an investment in six large temporary standalone air filtration units to meet the CDC's guidelines to reopen as a public flexible performance space today. That is only one example of the investments needed to ensure performing arts spaces of all sizes are available year-round to support our local community and all New Yorkers. Our organizations need city support to adjust to the impacts of the pandemic and bring our city back safely. New York City's arts and cultural organizations are critical to supporting a healthy ecosystem and to the economic resilience of the city.

Last summer, Restart Stages – an outdoor festival to bring back the arts - featured 400+ activations across 10 stages, including in Damrosch Park and partnerships with 70+ community-based organizations. Over 250,000 people attended free performances, including dance, music, spoken word, and public art installations from diverse artists. Progress has been made in diversify the audiences coming to Lincoln

Center with more than 50% of the Atrium audience identifying as BIPOC and 28% from households with incomes below \$75,000. Our public art installation, THE GREEN, drew in over 100,000 visitors, of which 23% said it was their first-time visiting Lincoln Center.

We are committed to reaching new audiences while maintaining legacy programming that serves all constituencies. For FY23, we are bringing back in-person programming for Lincoln Center Moments, a program serving older adults living with dementia. We are also planning to be back in schools through our partnership with the NYC Department of Education for the Middle School Arts Audition Camp with a potential expansion into 6th grade, and the Big Umbrella Festival, our programming serving young people along the autism spectrum.

We remain dedicated to serving our community and our city in any way we can. Over the last year, we hosted 16 public school graduations livestreamed across 40 countries, blood donations at the Atrium saved nearly 1,500 lives, food distributions served nearly 5,000 individuals, and 275 people were vaccinated against COVID on the Lincoln Center campus. We know that ticket affordability remains a barrier for many. This year we are piloting a Choose What You Pay ticketing model with a \$5 minimum for American Songbook, featuring all global music, to help ensure performances are within reach for families.

Lincoln Center is a proud member of the Cultural Institutions Group, a diverse coalition of 34 cultural organizations across the five boroughs with a distinct private-public partnership with the City of New York and a commitment to serving all New Yorkers. Collectively, we provide access to nearly 24 million New Yorkers and tourists annually, with 4.2 million free visits and 1.5 million K-12 student visitors.

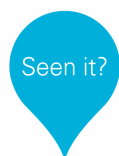
City support remains vital for the survival and renaissance of the arts in New York City. Maintaining funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs and supporting initiative and member items allows us to work with and for New Yorkers in ways that would otherwise be impossible. During inarguably one of the most challenging times for cultural organizations across the City and nation, Lincoln Center created jobs by accelerating its construction of David Geffen Hall. At completion the new David Geffen Hall would have supported more than 6,000 jobs, with 42.7% MWBE participation, 53% of the project's workforce from underrepresented populations, and paid training to 30 local residents on track for full-time union positions. David Geffen Hall is a symbol of New York City's resilience.

We ask that you reconsider the FY22 PEG Cut to the Cultural Development Fund by restoring it entirely. Many of our partners who rely of that funding to sustain bringing diverse perspectives to our stages, in our galleries, and to our communities.

As the Council determines its budget priorities for FY23, we are here to ask for a restoration of all Council Initiatives, including Autism Awareness, Geriatric Mental Health, Arts as a Catalyst for Change, CASA, and SU-CASA, which deliver the arts directly to New Yorkers.

Further, we are requesting the restoration of \$35M of FY22 Funding as our benchmark should be making the Department of Cultural Affairs budget whole to pre-pandemic levels. We need to build from this benchmark with an \$50 million for the cultural community, including and not limited to the long-term sustainability of BIPOC-, Accessibility- and LGBTQ-led and serving organizations.

City funding allows the cultural sector to fulfill its role within a healthy democracy as spaces for convening, learning, healing, supporting, and uplifting all New Yorkers across every neighborhood



district regardless of race, age, ability, creed, gender, or socioeconomic status. The pandemic showed us the dangers of social isolation. At no time has investment in the arts been more critical for the well-being of our city.

We understand the current financial constraints and know that the key to reopening the city is to support the arts and cultural sector. We are a critical part of the reopening ecosystem that drives tourism and economic activity.

At a minimum, we ask that the Cultural Affairs budget be held harmless by being brought back up to pre-pandemic levels to make us whole.

I thank the members of this Committee, and the City at large, for the ongoing partnership in arts and culture and education and urge you to consider supporting cultural institutions as key players in service of our city's students.

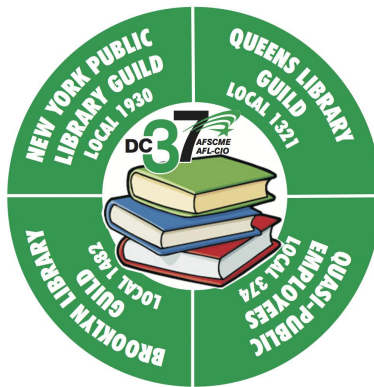
Thank you again for your continued leadership. Lincoln Center is committed to New York City as a place where everyone is welcome and where they belong, and we continue to engage as lifelong learners to do better as a world-class arts, education, and civic hub for all.

We look forward to being in dialogue with the Council and the Administration about that request in detail.

Please email me at edesiervo@lincolncenter.org if you have questions or would like to hear more about Lincoln Center's plans.

Respectfully submitted,

Eleni DeSiervo
Senior Director, Government Relations
Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.
70 Lincoln Center Plaza, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10023
edesiervo@lincolncenter.org
(212) 671-4111



Preliminary Budget Hearing Fiscal Year 2023
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Joint Testimony of
Brooklyn Public Library Guild, Local 1482
New York Public Library Guild, Local 1930
New York Public Library Quasi-Public Employees, Local 374
Queens Public Library Guild, Local 1321
March 8, 2022

Chairman Chi Ossé and fellow committee members, thank you for giving my fellow presidents and I an opportunity to testify at this year's Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations' hearing on the Mayor's preliminary budget for libraries.

These past two years have been very dramatic, chaotic, and tragic. Fortunately for our city, we had a beacon of stability and security - our City's public libraries. Throughout the five boroughs and in each and every neighborhood, library staff, both frontline and back office provided library services in buildings that were safe, comfortable, and clean.

Our dynamic staff provided enhanced, innovative, and novel library services that included grab and go library materials. We provided telephone and in-person reference, along with remote printing. We provide virtual programming, that included book clubs, art workshops, trivia, cultural dance presentations, and much more. Additionally, we held creative tabling and outreach events as a point of contact with our customers. We converted our buildings to testing and

vaccine sites. These vital and free services provided everyone a sense of community, especially important for those who suffered most during the pandemic.

Mayor Adams' Preliminary Budget indicates a funding level that will barely allow library staff to maintain our current service level, and that will strain us next year. As this pandemic recedes, hopefully to a less severe, less tragic, and endemic disease, library users will flock back to their branches demanding more of everything we offer and we barely have enough staff now.

This is where the City Council can help. We need your financial support so that we can meet this pent up and expected demand.

Children's programs are restarting, and there are not enough children's librarians to meet the demand. Senior citizens, who were cut off from their social networks, are getting more comfortable being out in public and need materials, a safe and clean place to congregate, and programming, and we do not have enough staff to meet their needs. Multiple branches do not have custodians, so custodians are required to cover multiple branches in one day. We have more software and hardware offerings that are creating a need for more staff with specialized skills. We have more immigrant and adult learners that will require teachers. Our customers will be demanding so much more from us, and with your financial support we can meet this demand.

These past two years, library staff proved that we are agile and adaptable. As we return to some form of normalcy, library users will be expecting quality library services. The Mayor's preliminary budget is a good start but is not enough. We are overwhelmed right now and will be more overwhelmed very soon. With your financial support, we can fulfill all of our customers, and your constituents' demands for library services.

The Metropolitan Opera

Peter Gelb
General Manager
30 Lincoln Center
New York NY 10023
pgelb@metopera.org

Testimony Prepared for the March 8th, 2022 Preliminary Budget Hearing - Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Committee
By Peter Gelb, General Manager, Metropolitan Opera

March 10, 2022

Committee Chair Ossé, and honorable members of the Committees, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony today and address this critical topic.

As you may know, The Metropolitan Opera is the largest non-profit performing arts organization in the United States, with a \$300M annual operating budget. We present approximately 200 performances each year in a 3,800-seat opera house on the campus of Lincoln Center in Manhattan; bringing world class opera to a live audience of over 650,000 annually. Beyond the walls of the opera house, the Met strives to expand the audience for opera through wide-reaching media programs, including its famed live radio broadcasts and Live in HD transmissions in movie theaters, on PBS television, and online via Met Opera on Demand. The company also provides a myriad of free arts education and public engagement programs each season, which connect the Met with diverse communities in New York City and throughout the country and the world; reaching an audience of millions. In the first 18 months of the pandemic, we offered expanded free programming every day, which played to an audience of over 18 million households.

The Met, as an anchor cultural institution, serves as more than a creative and artistic hub - it is an economic engine supporting a vast ecosystem of small-businesses and individual artists. With nearly 3,000 performers, artists, scholars, theatrical professionals and administrative staff, representing 15 separate unions, we provide good, steady jobs in a variety of trades and sectors and contribute substantial positive fiscal impact to the New York economy.

In addition, the Met is a tentpole of the NYC regional creative tourism sector, drawing local, national, and international tourist audiences who engage with nearby restaurants, hotels, and retail outlets as part of their Met Opera experience. Pre-pandemic, our audience was 20% international tourists and 80% domestic.

In early 2020, this prodigious creative and economic activity came to a grinding halt as the Covid-19 pandemic swept through New York City and eventually the country. Responding to the unprecedented crisis, the Met made the historic decision to close the opera house on March 12, 2020 and cancel performances in March, April and May, putting 1,000+ employees on furlough. The ongoing nature of the crisis and government guidance on social distancing resulted in the cancellation of rentals at the opera house in June, and the cancellation of the 2020/2021 entirely, costing a shattering \$150M in lost revenues. And because of our size, we did not qualify for any PPP funding.

Peter Gelb
GENERAL MANAGER

Yannick Nézet-Séguin
JEANETTE LERMAN-NEUBAUER MUSIC DIRECTOR

The pandemic's effect on the Citywide cultural sector was devastating: according to the Center for an Urban Future, *"No industry in New York City has gone unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but few have been shaken like the arts and cultural sector. This analysis of new survey data finds a cumulative decline in income of nearly \$1 billion (\$924.6 million) among city-based arts organizations—a 36 percent plunge from the year prior to the pandemic. The city is home to just half the number of arts jobs that existed prior to the pandemic, wiping out more than \$1.5 billion in wages.*

With the advent of vaccines, we have been able to re-open, after 18 months of closure, with strict precautions. However, the very nature of our work, in a high-contact business, where hundreds of singers and orchestra musicians are in close proximity to one another throughout rehearsals and performances, technicians are in cramped spaces backstage, and audiences sitting in tight quarters through long performances continue to pose a risk, especially as new more contagious variants of the virus, such as omicron, emerge and spread.

We remain optimistic that by continuing to be vigilant in our precautions, and with the right government support, we can continue to remain open and in performance. We aim to support the ecosystem of restaurants and bars; taxi and livery drivers; hotels; retail; and travel industries that a faithful Opera audience drives. We have implemented a touchless entrance and box office operation and other measures to "pandemic-proof" our visitor experience.

While the worst days of this pandemic may yet be behind us, there is still much more the City Council and the Mayor can do to support the revitalization and recovery of New York's cultural sphere. While there have been governmental assistance funds targeted towards the arts, they have been primarily directed toward smaller outfits. While they are also undoubtedly in need, medium and large cultural organizations, such as the Met, have not been able to qualify for these crucial funds. Like many other cultural organizations, we have been deeply impacted by the pandemic and I urge you to make available additional relief monies for medium and large arts organizations like the Met. While people are returning to the Met, the numbers are still lagging behind past years as tourists have been slow to return, especially from outside the US. These monies will directly support our work, and by extension will support numerous small businesses in our ecosystem. We also understand that while there may be tough budget choices ahead in the fiscal year, we would urge the Council to advocate for a budget that would not make any cuts to agencies that provide critical supports to cultural organizations. These supports are critical to bring tourists back to the city and generate revenue as the city aims to recover from the pandemic.

We look to this hearing to energize and advance innovative measures that will help assure the return and sustenance of the creative economy, understanding we are an integral driver of the economy at large and the small business sector in particular. Again, I thank you for your attention to this critical matter and for your ongoing work in this challenging time.

Submitted 3/10/22 Peter Gelb, General Manager, The Metropolitan Opera

Dear Honorable Council Members,

Checking in to say hi!!
Hope you are doing well these days!!

Wanted to ask if you could stand with MusicWorkersAlliance.org and elected officials 11AM Friday march 11th (Place TBA, but probably in front of the village vanguard) to demand relief for musicians whose tours were shut down by Covid.

There are all kinds of Covid related subsidies for “Art”: 15 billion in shuttered venue operators grants, \$100 million extra NYSCA/nonprofit funding, \$450 million for hotels, etc, etc:

TBH: NY State is swimming in Covid relief \$.

But (since Pandemic Unemployment Insurance ended this september), none of it has covered working, touring musicians.

Musicworkersalliance.org (MWA) is trying to get NY State to help musicians hurt by Covid related cancellations in the past year, and provide some kind of protection for the future.

We’re also trying to get the City to channel Covid Arts relief money to actual working artists/musicians actually hurt by the shut downs— instead of self described “artists”, whether they had lost gigs to covid or not— or whether they had ever played any in the first place. (Believe it or not: That’s how the City spent \$25 million last year).

State Senator Brad Hoylman is sponsoring our proposal. But we need to show strong musician/press support or its not going to happen.

We’re doing a press conference 11am friday March 11th. place TBA, but probably in front of the Village Vanguard. The pols will be there.
If you support this, can you stand with us?

Its strange to deal with this now, just as covid seems to be over: but this almost certainly will not be the last wave, and no one knows whether there’ll be more shutdowns, and a lot of people are digging out from a mountain of debt.

So sorry to be hitting you with yet another political thing. Wouldn’t be doing it if i didn’t think your presence could make a real difference. We gotta bring out the star power on this one, and...well: that’s you;-)

Anyway, hope you’re well.

Rachel Z Hakim

marc ribot

Music workers alliance

My name is Jack DeJohnette--I am a musical artist and National Endowment of the Arts Jazz Master.

During the Covid-19 pandemic I had a west coast concert tour cancelled twice; I had shows in the northeast being negotiated that were cancelled; and I am still facing work cancellations due to issues around the coronavirus.

This year I was scheduled to perform at the Montreal Jazz Festival, which was cancelled these last two years, but festival organizers could not put me into the lineup because of problems related to various issues--another major source of income lost. I currently have no work going forward.

I am a senior with health concerns and seek to protect myself from Covid-19, so I am being more cautious. The unsettling reality for me and so many other musical artists is that our world has completely changed.

When I lead my group, I feel a large responsibility for the musicians I am working with: right now, I can see how much the pandemic and its aftermath have had a major financial impact on them. I see the painful struggles they are going through. When a band leader like myself loses work, a lot of other people feel the financial loss as well.

I believe the federal and state pandemic relief has helped many people in different areas of work, but for artists there are prevailing inequities that need to be addressed as soon as possible. Financial assistance in this critical time of need should not just be directed toward those industries and business leaders with the most visibility, loudest voices and best paid lobbyists.

Please support the Music Workers Alliance and help us now.

Sincerely,
Jack DeJohnette
Drummer, National Endowment of the Arts Jazz Master
March 1, 2022



The following was submitted by MWA to be considered as part of the testimony delivered in connection with the Tuesday, March 8, 2022 12:30 AM remote hearing by the New York City Council regarding Committee of Culture Affairs

March 11, 2022

Thank you for considering this testimony on behalf of the Music Worker's Alliance. We are a Music Worker center created with the shared purpose to empower music workers by engaging in collective action to create a community where music is valued financially and culturally, and music workers benefit and achieve dignity in our lives.

A Dire Picture for Music Workers, Who Received No Dedicated Relief Funds Outside of Pandemic Unemployment

In October of 2020, the [MWA How Are We Surviving Survey](#) asked music workers how the pandemic and subsequent shut downs had affected their livelihood. It found that 71% of musicians and DJs surveyed have lost three quarters or more of their income during the pandemic. In the 2022 MWA Lost Wages Survey (forthcoming) we are seeing as of 2/16/22 77% of respondents said they lost over 50% of their income in the last year compared to pre-pandemic levels. A clear indication that our sector is far from recovered and most have been without any form of relief since PUA ended in September 2021. Many music workers function primarily as 1099 workers or have mixed income, and like all independent contractors, they pay into the unemployment system yet receive no benefits with the expiration of Pandemic Unemployment Assistance.

MWA estimates there to be between 30,000 - 60,000 music workers within the state though exact numbers are difficult to find. 67% of NY music workers rely on live or touring income, according to a 2019 survey of American Federation of Musician Local 802 members by the Indie Musicians Caucus. Touring was nearly impossible for nearly all of 2020 and much of 2021.

Touring During COVID Has Been Financially Detrimental

New York City's professional touring musicians are trying to claw their way out of a deep hole created by the global pandemic and governmental measures necessary to control it. In this present stage, music workers are experiencing a new set of problems blocking the full return of the business of bringing live music to the public: the risk of bearing substantial losses and costs imposed by COVID-control measures encountered during tours, non-recoupable losses of badly-needed income due to work canceled under contractual "force majeure" clauses, and costs of mandatory quarantine and travel rebookings.

These issues have continued to threaten tours of all sizes with unacceptable risk. Many music touring operations are “micro-businesses”. During a low-margin tour, the cancellation of one or two key dates due to an infection surge can easily tip its balance sheet from “profitable” to “loss”; needing to buy last-minute airline tickets to handle new pandemic border restrictions can do the same. The financial impact of quarantining in a hotel if a member tests positive for COVID-19 can torpedo a tour’s budget. Some groups have decided that they could not bear these risks and actually turned down confirmed tour work—work which would have earned them income.

Bailing Out Venues and Relying on the Trickle Down Effect Doesn’t Help Music Workers

We would like to recognize the historic investment in arts and culture that was the Save our Stages Act and Shuttered Venue Operators Grants (SVOG). The approximately \$15B invested are levels not seen since the New Deal and WPA. However, while many of these venues are critical to the lifeblood of music workers as valued performance spaces, there was a grave oversight by not making any funding contingent on paying performance fees when touring and performances began again.

Venues without performances are not economic generators, they are simply empty real-estate. Radio City Music Hall in Manhattan or Shea’s Performing Arts Center in Buffalo are truly magnificent architectural wonders, yet there were not thousands of people lining up to see inside while touring stopped. Yet performance venues were able to use their calculated gross receipts from performances to receive millions in federal relief dollars. New York State businesses alone received over \$2B in SVOG funds yet not a dime was guaranteed to performers. Adding insult to injury, the law mandates funds must be spent by March 31, 2022, meaning that tours canceled or not scheduled due to recent surges will receive none of these funds.

Artists Are Unfairly Bearing the Risk of Covid Cancellations

By not accounting for the artists that fill the stages, there was a failure to recognize the labor force that drives the economic activity these venues provide to their community. In the recent COVID surges, canceled performances are once again rampant and performing artists are left to inherit the costs of touring (travel, transportation, lodging, salaries, etc) with no compensation from performance venues. Losses reported by the MWA Lost Wages Survey (forthcoming) are significant. 43 respondents have reported over \$1.2M in lost wages and an additional \$80K in unreimbursed expenses due to cancellations. Similarly, for those concerts that do take place, ticket sales have suffered and in many cases, the performance fees once expected have diminished. This unevenly affects the artists as any losses taken by the venue can be subsidized by the SVOG funds while losses suffered by artists go against their bottom lines.

Declining Recorded Music Revenues Offer No Safety Net

Due to the devaluation of recorded music and abhorrently low payment structure from streaming services, most music workers work primarily through live performances to earn a living. There was no viable safety net when the pandemic hit, and there was no option but to

try and go back to unsafe working conditions when Pandemic Unemployment Assistance ran out.

The dire situation musicians find themselves in relying on live performances cannot be overstated. The recording and streaming industry, while theoretically an alternative means of income for music workers, is currently structured to devalue the work of independent recording artists. Studio recordings can cost thousands of dollars to create, often indebting the recording artist in the process. The most popular music streaming platform, Spotify, touts infamously low payouts at \$0.0038/stream payments, a rate that requires millions of streams to even recoup the investments artists make in their recordings. YouTube is the largest streaming platform in the world, has exploited gaps in current copyright law, hosting entire albums of copyrighted material against the will of the creators with no penalization.

Put Music Workers Back To Work Equitably and Improve Previous Programs

Music and Arts workers desperately need access to relief grants and capital financing similar to what is available to other small businesses across the country. We understand the City is working towards a second version of the 2021 City Artist Corps program. While the original program had good intentions, the speed in which it was implemented and the means by which funding was distributed meant the program failed to prioritize working performance artists who were most impacted by COVID shutdown. The state comptroller's report on the arts sector showed over 66% unemployment during the height of the pandemic and that, "extending unemployment relief commensurate with need, including extended relief for freelancers and self-employed workers", was a top priority of federal, city and state relief efforts.

However, City Artist Corps made no distinction between performers and professions that were severely impacted by Covid and those that were marginally impacted. Secondly, the program was open to every self defined artist, regardless of whether they had history working as an artist. While MWA fully supports accessibility in funding, there is a danger of devaluing the labor it takes to become a working artist when programs are overly accessible. In this case, it resulted in the marginalization and failure to serve severely impacted working artists. A simple fix for future programs would be a balance, by presenting some proof of work, be it 1099, contracts, Schedule-C tax filing, press clippings or a combination of any of these. This is a small barrier that most working artists would be capable of meeting and help ensure funding is helping the artist's who fell the hardest since the onset of the pandemic.

Help Ensure a Healthy Recovery for Music Workers

We have asked that the state make available \$8M in relief dollars to touring musicians who have been so adversely affected by the pandemic to recoup some of the costs highlighted above. According to our current survey, respondents lost an average of \$34k in gross revenue in 2021. For reference the **NYS COVID-19 Pandemic Small Business Recovery Grant Program** offers \$5k for businesses with annual gross receipts \$25k-49,999; \$10k for \$50k-99,999; and max grant is 10% of gross receipts up to \$50k for annual gross receipts of \$100k-\$500k. Touring is the economic engine of New York City and State's creative music economy, the single most important source of income for a large majority of working musicians. European touring alone

generates an estimated \$37.5 million annually. The recordings and live shows of touring musicians represent American culture to the world, and are a major attractor of foreign tourists to New York City. For New York's economic recovery we must ensure the survival of the touring circuits and fan bases that supported musicians before the pandemic. For that to happen, we need effective protection that lowers the financial risks imposed by pandemic-control measures on our State and city's workers in the enterprise of live-performance touring.

We believe the City should invest in a pilot program for touring insurance. A private/public partnership through MoME, DCLA or SBS could create a two year performing artists' touring insurance program. All event cancellation insurance programs stopped covering losses associated with the pandemic. We know cancellations will continue, omicron is still active in Asia, Hong Kong and New Zealand are having unprecedented surges and shut downs. We need to plan for the future and since touring is how most New York City working musicians make much of their income, touring musicians should no longer be subject to unsustainable risks. We are asking the City to initiate a pilot program that would provide such insurance, and also to conduct a study on the export component of New York City's musical economy.

Finally, we need an artistic census to measure the needs of the community and inform priorities, and can also mark progress being made towards improved conditions over time. This could be a partnership between the city, an academic institution, and various music ecosystem partners. Also the MOME Music Report released in 2017 should be required to be updated periodically.

Sincerely,

Music Workers Alliance



NEW YORK FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS – Committee on Cultural Affairs Testimony

My name is Ya-Yun Teng, Program Officer, Immigrant Artist Resource Center (NYC) at the New York Foundation for the Arts, also known as NYFA – an arts service organization whose mission is to provide financial, educational, and professional services to individual artists and emerging arts organizations.

Our work impacts real human beings and it is critical work to the communities in New York City. Last year, NYFA was a lead partner launching the City Artist Corps Grants to support NYC-based working artists who were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. NYFA distributed \$15M to 3,000 working artists across the City's five boroughs, helping the artists sustain their practice and engage the public throughout New York City. In total, with the help of the philanthropic community, NYFA has been able to distribute over \$22M in emergency funding to artists and arts workers since the start of the pandemic.

In addition to administering grants, NYFA provides professional development training to artists, and has been serving 10,000 immigrant artists since 2007. This year, we are expanding NYFA's Immigrant Artist Program, to provide more support to immigrant artists who play a crucial role in healing our communities and are the backbone of New York City's creative economy. We know that the livelihoods of immigrant artists are facing major threats, because many immigrant-led and immigrant-serving arts organizations reported 50% or more losses of their annual budgets. NYFA feels that we need to make efforts to reach and serve those that we are not reaching yet and further uplifting their perspectives. Therefore, NYFA is building an Immigrant Artist Resource Center to help achieve these goals.

In order for us to continue our work, we need funding now more than ever to support artists and to sustain our own operations. This is also very personal to me – as I am an immigrant from



Taiwan and have been working in NYC's arts sector for more than 10 years. We recognize that the city council is facing very difficult budget decisions, but the funding we receive through the New York City of Cultural Affairs, is critical to our survival. We ask you to keep in mind that artists and cultural workers are essential. They heal our communities and we know that neighborhoods with cultural assets show better outcomes for education, aging, crime, health, and community well being. We ask that the FY22 PEG Cut to the Cultural Development Fund be restored. And for FY23, we ask for a restoration of all Council Initiatives and a restoration of \$35M of FY22 Funding to DCLA.

We know you have a difficult job ahead, and we want to thank you for doing your best. Special thanks to our Council Member in Dumbo New York, Lincoln Restler, for supporting the immigrant artist community that we serve. Thank you everyone.

Lucy Sexton
Executive Director
New Yorkers for Culture & Arts
lucy@NY4CA.org
NY4CA.org

March 8, 2022

Culture's vision for investing to build an equitable economy

Thank you Chair Ossé and members of the City Council for hearing our testimony. We are here today to ask that you invest in the citizens in every neighborhood of NYC. By investing in culture and arts for every New Yorker, we can build a vibrant, safe, healthy, and equitable city.

You will hear from many artists and cultural groups today detailing the extraordinary cultural work they are doing across our city. As you know, culture is key to citywide recovery, and to its longterm economic stability---the

creative sector generates 13% of the city's GDP. Culture is key to tourism---taken as a whole it is far and away the number one attraction for visitors. It is key to local neighborhoods, serving to increase foot traffic and bring dollars to local restaurants and small businesses.

Today, I want to talk about what culture brings to every aspect of the lives of your constituents---and to call for an equitable investment in culture for every community so that every citizen can experience the benefits of a robust cultural life in their neighborhood.

This country, has a history of neglecting and disinvesting in communities of color. This city's history is the same. We must consciously and deliberately ensure that dollars are going to Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, and deaf and disabled communities and cultural organizations. By investing in BIPOC-led AND serving cultural groups, by investing in culture for New Yorkers with disabilities, by sending tourism dollars to those local cultural centers, we

will build a more equitable city. Every neighborhood should enjoy the data proven benefits of a strong cultural ecosystem. Those include improved outcomes in everything from education and aging to public safety and mental health.

I ask that you speak to your colleagues in other committees - education, mental health, aging, criminal justice, and finance--and explain to them that culture and arts are part of the solution in every one of those areas.

I join the CIG and many other colleagues in calling that the FY22 PEG Cut to the Cultural Development Fund restored. Cuts to DCLA staff are an equity issue. If the agency can't function efficiently, funds are delayed, most impacting smaller often BIPOC organizations that can least afford to wait for reimbursement.

As the Council determines its budget priorities for FY23, we are here to ask for a restoration of all Council Initiatives---Coalition of Theaters of Color, Immigrant Arts Initiative, CASA and SuCASA and more---and a

restoration of \$35M of FY22 Funding. We will be requesting an additional \$50 million for the cultural community from the Council and the administration and are happy to follow up with more details.

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM & LIBRARY

Testimony to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Delivered by Laura Washington, Chief Communications Officer and Vice President for
Strategic Partnerships

Dear Members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup
Relations:

Thank you for your continued service to education and the arts in New York City, particularly during these challenging times, and thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of the New-York Historical Society. For over 200 years, New-York Historical has told the story of our nation's founding and history, using our vast collections to highlight diverse perspectives throughout that history. Education is the cornerstone of our mission: each year, we serve 200,000 students and educators through our robust slate of K-12 and higher education initiatives. Through these initiatives, New-York Historical aims to be an active, accessible community resource for audiences historically underrepresented by textbooks or cultural institutions, with programming that reflects the rich cultural fabric of our city and nation. Since 2005, New-York Historical has been a galvanizer in the museum world by boldly undertaking a series of landmark exhibitions that re-examine U.S. history from the perspectives of the historically disenfranchised, including *Slavery in New York*, *Chinese American: Exclusion/Inclusion*, *Black Citizenship in the Age of Jim Crow*, and most recently, *Dreaming Together*. Ever-rising to the challenge of bringing little or unknown histories to light, New-York Historical will soon inaugurate a new expansion housing its Academy for American Democracy as well as The American LGBTQ+ Museum.

CAPITAL PLANS

In Fiscal Year 2020, New-York Historical partnered with **The American LGBTQ+ Museum** to bring forth plans to construct a major museum dedicated to LGBTQ+ history and culture. The new Museum will be housed on the top floor of New-York Historical's planned expansion, encompassing a stunning gallery, roof garden and areas for offices and storage.

With general capital allocations from the New York City Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs, New-York Historical is prepared to begin construction in 2023 and the full addition will be completed by 2025. This project will provide critical workforce development and job creation opportunities, allowing New-York Historical to help advance New York City's economic recovery in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic while bolstering the arts and culture sector.

While the multi-story expansion is under construction, The American LGBTQ+ Museum will partner with New-York Historical to develop programming in the Museum's existing building and outdoor spaces, bringing the voices, perspectives, actions, and achievements of this often-marginalized population to the foreground for hundreds of thousands of annual visitors and New York City schoolchildren, and serving as a major driver of tourism for the City.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Additional classrooms and gallery spaces will allow New-York Historical to expand the number of K-12 and higher education students it serves. New-York Historical currently serves roughly 200,000 K-12 students and teachers each year through a robust suite of education initiatives, including social studies enrichment, field trips, teacher programs, workforce development opportunities for teens, and intergenerational family programs. We are limited by physical space in our current building: though a renovation in 2017 added classroom space, our Education team still struggles to schedule all of the visiting teachers and youth groups in our existing spaces. The expansion's much-needed new classrooms will not only create room for our LGBTQ+ education programs, but also expand access to our **Academy for American Democracy**—a civics-learning residency for New York City's sixth-graders. At a time of national political discord and uninformed debate, providing young people with a thorough understanding of the roots and evolution of America's government could not be more urgent. In addition to K-12 students, the expansion will also host students in our **Masters of Arts in Museum Studies program**, facilitated in partnership with The City University of New York's School of Professional Studies. Conceived to address issues of equity and inclusion in the museum field, the program will bring students to the expanded building for hands-on experiences in a museum setting. **New, state-of-the-art underground Library stacks** will allow us to bring a plethora of materials currently housed off-site back to our historic home, increasing access to essential materials for research of New York State and American history by students and researchers, and advancing scholarship of this great state and nation.

CONCLUSION

The New-York Historical Society remains deeply grateful for the important programmatic and capital funds from New York City that have allowed us to expand our resources and reach and adapt to the urgent needs of our local community. These funds will become even more essential as we embark on this capital project as we plan to continue providing enriching and engaging programming to the broadest possible public during construction. We remain grateful for the city's investment in cultural education and its support of our ongoing capital campaign to expand our historic building, increasing our capacity for exhibitions, public education, and K-12 offerings.

We thank you and your fellow City Council Members for your exceptional service.

Organization: **Pregones Puerto Rican Traveling Theater, Inc.**
Hearing: **NYC Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries
and Intergroup Relations** — *“Preliminary Budget Hearing”* held
on 8 March 2022, 12:30pm



Serving 40,000 diverse participants including youth, adults, and seniors, Pregones/Puerto Rican Traveling Theater, Inc. (Pregones/PRTT) has been a fixture of New York City arts for over five decades. Love of in-person theater and what it represents for both artists and audiences is the proverbial north for Pregones/PRTT and the many creatives harbored in our year-round season. COVID-19 catapulted us into the digital realm, but nothing rivals our loyalty to and excitement for the theater craft. Our company is carrying on in hybrid formats and making upgrades in digital infrastructure, but what excites us the most right now is the prospect of graduating the number of indoors performances before a diverse live audience back to pre-pandemic levels.

The COVID Omicron wave ruined one of our big Mainstage runs in December, but it did not pull the brakes on other activities before or after. We had a stellar run from early spring through late fall 2021. Online programming was already in place, but things kicked off in earnest when our artists resumed outdoor events as part of our Stage Garden Rumba series at community gardens of the South Bronx. This activity segued into short-run, limited seating performances at both our Bronx and Manhattan theaters. It was glorious! Everyone was visibly moved by the experience of again being able to greet new and familiar faces, and join in collective bursts of laughter, conversation, and applause.

In all, the work we continue to carry out year after year and despite historic undercapitalization highlights and sustains three ways in which Pregones/PRTT contributes to the vitality of our City and its residents: as a theater company serving a multigenerational Latinx ensemble, a rich roster of visiting, associate, and collaborating artists, and a growing and diverse audience; as a growing arts employer caring for full-time, part-time, and adjunct creatives, many with a long history of working with Pregones/PRTT; and as a cultural anchor and legacy organization of local and national relevance.

We are part of a formidable professional network of NYC organizations with proven track record for creative excellence and benefits to the public, most recently highlighted by public- and privately-funded collectives like HueArts NYC, Mosaic Network & Fund, and LxNY Latinx Arts Consortium of New York, where Pregones/PRTT is a founding member of the Steering Committee. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color-serving cultural groups add vibrancy to all City neighborhoods and enjoy the trust of the communities we serve. Our network is the real

purveyor of cultural sustenance for most New Yorkers and yet we receive only 15-20% of the funds distributed citywide through the Department of Cultural Affairs.

Pregones/PRTT joins peer organizations citywide in asking Council Members to consider the following priority actions when negotiating FY23 Budgets:

- **Please restore the \$20M cultural funding added at adoption last year.** This money was not added to the baseline, so it is gone in the Mayor’s Preliminary Budget for FY23. Its absence means that right now, when we are gearing to close programming gaps created by pandemic, our sector faces a \$20M cut. Such a cut would endanger many plans already in place at small and mid-sized organizations and our communities will feel it.
- **Please add a new increase of \$20M to the cultural budget.** Reopening has significant costs and its own set of escalations, so it costs us more just to bring activity back to 2019 levels.
- **Please consider a Cultural Equity Fund of \$100M** to begin addressing historic funding gaps. We need RADICAL INCREASES to underfunded neighborhoods and BIPOC-led, BIPOC-serving organizations that have been disinvested and undercapitalized. It will not be enough to redistribute what is already in the cultural budget—we need new money specifically earmarked for new, equity-based investments in arts and culture.
- **Have DCLA expand its funding eligibility requirements** to include smaller organizations and individual artists—their labor is as diverse and necessary as any other to the wellbeing of the New York City cultural eco-system.

Because the needs of BIPOC-serving arts and cultural organizations like ours are multiple and overlapping, and because we don’t typically have interest-bearing capital endowments, **the City is our number one partner to get things done.**

The two long years since outbreak of COVID-19 have shown that imbalances in equity threaten the actual lives of all New Yorkers, and that those with the least access stand to suffer most. Supporting existing BIPOC entities and opening new avenues for support for cultural projects and cultural workers artists is a smart investment of the City’s human and material resources.

Pregones/PRTT believes in the centrality of creativity and imagination in empowering all persons to aspire and accomplish. We thank the NYC Council for its commitment to listening, dialogue, and action in support of our work.

Submitted by: Arnaldo J. López, Ph.D., Managing Director, ajlopez@pregones.org



P.O. BOX 150253
BROOKLYN, NY 11215
Email: info@reginaopera.org
718-259-2772

PRESIDENT

Francine Garber-Cohen

EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT/ SECRETARY

Linda Cantoni

TREASURER

Joseph Delfausse

TESTIMONY BY FRAN GARBER-COHEN TO NYC COUNCIL ON MARCH 8, 2022 @ 12:30PM

I am Francine Garber-Cohen, President of Regina Opera, a small-budget organization. For 52 years, Regina Opera Company, based in Sunset Park, an underserved and low income BIPOC community, has offered fully-staged operas with full orchestra, and many free concerts in parks, libraries, and festivals, in Sunset Park, Bay Ridge, Borough Park, Marine Park, and other sections of South Brooklyn.

We provide affordable entertainment in accessible venues for audience members who may not otherwise attend live performances. The performances bring happiness and empathy to our audiences, and bring people together, especially Senior Citizens which make up about 65% of our audience. The need for this cultural enrichment is reflected in the facts that over 4000 people usually attend our live performances each season, and we have had about 40,000 views of our online operatic and instrumental programming, allowing people who are avoiding public contact due to COVID to still enjoy music.

In NYC before COVID, the creative economy in NYC employed more than 300,000 people, and generates \$110 Billion in economic activity for the city.

Regina Opera Company, as did most other cultural organizations, has suffered greatly in the past 2 years due to the COVID pandemic. We need to return NYC to its prior strength as a Cultural Capital of the US, which means

bringing in tourist dollars. A slower recovery for arts and culture will extend the length of recovery for the many industries the creative economy affects.

To accomplish this, we request that all funding \$35 million, which was cut from the DCLA Cultural Development Fund for FY22, be restored, and additional \$50 million funding for NYC's Cultural community through DCLA.

As the Council determines its budget priorities for FY23, we are here to ask for a restoration of all Council Initiatives.

In addition, I'd like to stress that Cultural equity is central to a thriving culture and city. Underserved and underfunded areas in NYC deserve an equitable share of the funding. This will help us in Sunset Park to return to "normal".

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francine Garber-Cohen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Francine Garber-Cohen
President, The Regina Opera Company, Inc.

MISSION

“Developing the community in the area of arts and social services with the focus on educating the community on Caribbean culture”

TAGLINE

“Using Culture as a Tool for Social Transformation”

PROGRAMS

After School Programs

Artist Resource Center

Authors Connecting

Award of Excellence

Body of Vibration Dance & Theater

Choral Singing

Concert Series

Musicians Mentoring Musicians

Spirit of the Arts Award

Stilt Walkers /Moko Jumbies

The Art of Masquerade

The Art of Photography-Videography

SLOGAN

Official Home for Caribbean Culture

Serving all New Yorkers with programming & events in:

Crown Heights, Brownsville, Prospect Heights, Bedford Stuyvesant, Park Slope, Flatbush, East New York, Canarsie, Fort Greene, Bushwick, Clinton Hill, Harlem, Lower Manhattan and expanding.

March, 6th 2022

The importance of culture on a person’s well being

The word ‘Culture’ is a term that has been misused with other words such as ‘Nationality’ and ‘Religion’. However, culture is a much bigger picture than what the ordinary human eye can see. Normally, we think of culture as the way we dress, our different languages and what we eat, however, that is merely a fractional part of the bigger picture. Culture is what helps us form or create our personalities. Culture has been recognized as a critical symbol throughout the world that combines one’s identity, self-expression and beliefs. It is something that has positively impacted one’s well-being by identifying what is wrong and right, morals, values and principles along with setting a unique background. We all learn some form of culture as we grow up which will be used in our daily lives to determine our present and future. Many individual achievements today can be credited to the impact of one’s culture through respect, innovativeness, the need and desire to inspire and the general principle of doing what is right.

Our culture is what makes us, us! The absence of our culture brings forth uncertainty and disconnection simply because it acts as our strength and contributes to our ability to function within society and many other settings. It is through culture that we can be disciplined and attentive to our wants and needs along with considering others around us. It is important to note, that culture is maintained and passed on through generations, hence, it is vital that families and members of society by extension, assist with the contribution of the youth’s patterned ideas and behaviors. We can benefit in many ways through culture resulting in enhanced health, social and personal lifestyle, improved learning and our ability to be the best us.

Tropicalfete’s Contribution on culture on a person’s well being

Tropicalfete Inc. has made it their duty to represent as a role model for the youths and people in general in society ensuring that they receive massive support through their instructors. Through art, we can allow them to not only learn something new whilst discovering a new passion but by allowing them to contribute a vital instrument to society through music, dance or theatre, etc.

Our key role is to act as an impulse for social transformation by assisting our students and the youth by extension to be seen as a golden symbol within the society. Tropicalfete influences culture on the youth/seniors and one’s well-being in the following ways:

- Art services/programs – through our art services such as stilt-walking, steel pans, masquerade, music, dance, theatre, etc. we can instill a sense of discipline, attention to detail and management and organizational skills; so that they can



MISSION

“Developing the community in the area of arts and social services with the focus on educating the community on Caribbean culture”

TAGLINE

“Using Culture as a Tool for Social Transformation”

PROGRAMS

- After School Programs*
- Artist Resource Center*
- Authors Connecting*
- Award of Excellence*
- Body of Vibration Dance & Theater*
- Choral Singing*
- Concert Series*
- Musicians Mentoring Musicians*
- Spirit of the Arts Award*
- Stilt Walkers /Moko Jumbies*
- The Art of Masquerade*
- The Art of Photography-Videography*

SLOGAN

Official Home for Caribbean Culture

Serving all New Yorkers with programming & events in:

Crown Heights, Brownsville, Prospect Heights, Bedford Stuyvesant, Park Slope, Flatbush, East New York, Canarsie, Fort Greene, Bushwick, Clinton Hill, Harlem, Lower Manhattan and expanding.

display and contribute such abilities within settings such as school, church and work. When undertaking each art, there are rules, keys and codes that must be respected and acknowledged to be considered the best of the arts. Hence, Tropicalfete is and will continue to be considered the top non-profit organization to cultivate emerging cultures.

- Our love for the youth – as the saying goes ‘the kids are the future. This saying has been identified within the Tropicalfete family. We believe that protecting children from negative settings and influences are just some of the many ways to ensure that their full potential may be achieved. This will enable the children to contribute positively to their respective communities as they prepare to be role models for the next generation. We ensure that they are heard and are free to express themselves because they are at the point of their lives where mistakes are expected but also they will be better positioned to learn from them.
- Professional and experienced staff – the Tropicalfete family consists of caring, professional and talented staff members whose main focus is the students’ needs and wants. We ensure that we pay attention to each child or senior behavior and self-expression because we do not want any child/ senior to feel abandoned, unsupported and disconnected. Each staff member at Tropicalfete is fully trained to assist most matters as it relates to children and culture.

Yours Sincerely,

Alton Aimable,

President and Founder

Tropicalfete, Inc.

Letting Our Work Speak for itself. – the Impact of our Programs Unedited

From: G Z <glezama13@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, December 2, 2021 6:56 PM

To: info@tropicalfete.com

Subject: Why I joined your program.

My name is Gregory Lezama, I'm a 52 year old retired US Navy Veteran and this my story on how I ended up as a steel drum player with Tropicalfete Inc.

After going through a long distance divorce in 2019 and with the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns/ restrictions in 2020, I became somewhat isolated, lonely and very depressed. It had affected my mental health to a point where I'd spent most of my time at home alone reminiscing on old memories instead of creating new ones.

MISSION

“Developing the community in the area of arts and social services with the focus on educating the community on Caribbean culture”

TAGLINE

“Using Culture as a Tool for Social Transformation”

PROGRAMS

After School Programs

Artist Resource Center

Authors Connecting

Award of Excellence

Body of Vibration Dance & Theater

Choral Singing

Concert Series

Musicians Mentoring Musicians

Spirit of the Arts Award

Stilt Walkers /Moko Jumbies

The Art of Masquerade

The Art of Photography-Videography

SLOGAN

Official Home for Caribbean Culture

Serving all New Yorkers with programming & events in:

Crown Heights, Brownsville, Prospect Heights, Bedford Stuyvesant, Park Slope, Flatbush, East New York, Canarsie, Fort Greene, Bushwick, Clinton Hill, Harlem, Lower Manhattan and expanding.

And then one hot summer day in July 2021, I'd a lot on my mind and really needed to get some sunlight and fresh air, so I left my home to go for a walk and I ended up on a subway platform on 23rd st. in Manhattan. I was waiting for the D train when suddenly I heard someone playing Human Nature by Michael Jackson on a steel drum pan in the background. Somehow, I forgot about my train and immediately ran over to where the music was coming from get a closer look.

That was the last thing I remembered.

Because you see, the gentleman playing the steel drum pan had put me in a trance. He transported me to another realm. Without me knowing, I was dancing on the subway platform right in front of him with my eyes closed, I had this huge smile on my face and I was giggling non stop. I was going around and around in circles. I saw and felt my body dancing in a gigantic ballroom, with what looked like shiny hardwood golden floors. There were faint shadows and silhouettes of people shaped out of clouds dancing all around me. And above me I saw a huge pulsating disco ball made out of white light, so memorizing that I couldn't stop staring at it. And all I wanted to do was to just to dance. The harmonic melodies and sweet tone pitches coming from the steel pan made me want to hop, skip, jump and dance. I felt so happy and so free, all my troubles, and every single thought in my mind just simply vanished. It was pure nirvana.

It felt as if I was in pre heaven floating around and dancing my troubles away.

Then I opened my eyes, which seemed like hours had past, but it was back to reality. I was back on the subway platform on 23rd st. where, by then a small crowd had gathered to watch me, and then I realized at that moment, the gentleman had hypnotized me with his music. With his years of experience, commitment and dedication he had perfected his craft. He was able to transport me to a heavenly place that took away my pain and worries. If only for a few minutes it worked, he'd turned my frown upside down and at that moment I decided that I wanted to learn how to play the steel drum pan because, I felt other people in my shoes having a rough and tough day ought to experience what just happened to me.

He'd changed my life. Through his music he helped me find what I was searching for. Pure Peace. I was looking for something meaningful to do. Something that I can be passionate and excited about again. Something new to obsess over and bring joy to my life. Something to take me out of my mind. Something that will take a lot of work, dedication and commitment to do, but the rewards will be endless. Something that can lead to my life's purpose and soul mission. My dream is to pay it forward one day, to extinguish one's pain and worries simply by playing my steel drum pan like he did.

So then started my journey on how I ended up with Tropicalfete Inc.



MISSION

“Developing the community in the area of arts and social services with the focus on educating the community on Caribbean culture”

TAGLINE

“Using Culture as a Tool for Social Transformation”

PROGRAMS

After School Programs

Artist Resource Center

Authors Connecting

Award of Excellence

Body of Vibration Dance & Theater

Choral Singing

Concert Series

Musicians Mentoring Musicians

Spirit of the Arts Award

Stilt Walkers /Moko Jumbies

The Art of Masquerade

The Art of Photography-Videography

SLOGAN

Official Home for Caribbean Culture

Serving all New Yorkers with programming & events in:

Crown Heights, Brownsville, Prospect Heights, Bedford Stuyvesant, Park Slope, Flatbush, East New York, Canarsie, Fort Greene, Bushwick, Clinton Hill, Harlem, Lower Manhattan and expanding.

I reached out to three different Steel Band groups to begin my musical adventure, and Tropicalfete was the only one that had it's contact information updated on its website and was the only one that responded. Alton Aimable, the founder of Tropicalfete texted me within about 30 minutes and kindly asked if I wanted to come see them practice the following day. I accepted. That was Saturday August 14th, 2021 and I've been showing up to practice every Saturday ever since. There was no fee, no age requirement and no experience necessary. The whole band accepted me with warmth and open arms. A loving trait of the Caribbean community.

So far I've had the opportunity to participate in many community events on Tropicalfete's busy itenary. From playing at a concert in a park in Crown Heights to assisting with one of their teaching programs at a public school in Canarsie Brooklyn. Where we set up junior pans for the students to learn and play. All of these experiences were a first for me and I totally enjoyed it.

I signed up to their program because of their many opportunities to make one's dreams come through. To me, It's not just playing the pan and learning new songs, but it's also about being around my peers, being part of the Caribbean culture and keeping its rich history intact, and especially about Tropicalfete's commitment to teaching the steel drums and the other crafts to the youths involved. This way they can keep it alive and pass it on to the next generation and so on. It also brings me joy being part of something big. I no longer feel isolated and depressed at home with nothing to do and nowhere to go. This is my new love interest now, my home away from home, this is what I want to spend my time and attention on. It's what I'm passionate and excited about. And I can't wait to be a great panist/teacher one day and transport people with my music.

With all the different programs they offer, and by me giving it my all, I truly see myself evolving into the highest version of myself sticking with Tropicalfete. Thank you for all that you do! I'm very grateful to have found you.

Sincerely yours,

Gregory Lezama,



THE OFFICIAL RECORD OF HIP HOP

UNIVERSAL HIP HOP MUSEUM

Cultural Affairs Capital Budget Testimony FY23

Good morning, Chairman Ossè and esteemed City Council members of the Cultural Affairs Committee.

I am Rocky Bucano, President and Executive Director of the Universal Hip Hop Museum, the Bronx, and New York City's newest cultural institution. The Universal Hip Hop Museum serves as the cultural anchor of the Bronx Point Development, which features 100% affordable housing in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx. The journey to establish a permanent home for Hip Hop began 12 years ago. Construction of the Universal Hip Hop Museum's 53,000 sq. Ft. state of the art building began construction last year during the height of the Covid pandemic. Despite the challenges of building a new cultural institution during a global pandemic, the museum's construction is on track to open in Q4 of 2024.

The Bronx is known as the home of Hip Hop and New York City's contribution to Hip Hop's global evolution is synonymous with the biggest names in the world's most popular music genre. I am here to request \$8 million in new capital funding, to support design and construction related to the museum's interior. The city's capital investment is vital to the development and success of the museum's final phase of construction.

When the Universal Hip Hop Museum opens in 2024, it will become New York City's newest global cultural attraction drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world uptown to the Bronx generating millions of dollars in revenue from tourism. Local businesses within the museum's immediate vicinity will realize new revenue from increased foot traffic by tourists and residents of New York City. The UHHM's construction has already created new jobs and will create many new employment opportunities in the years to come. There is no doubt that the Universal Hip Hop Museum's economic impact on The Bronx will be transformative.



THE OFFICIAL RECORD OF HIP HOP

Since the UHHM's journey began, we have produced a variety of educational, cultural, and social justice programs serving students and educators from the city's five boroughs. This year, the UHHM is producing a Hip Hop Physics program for New York City middle school and high school students. We are also introducing a new program called Shoot Cameras, Not Guns, designed to help reduce gun violence committed by both young men and young women who live in under-resourced communities.

I am thankful for the support that the City Council and Mayor's Office has provided in years past and look forward to working with the members of this committee and the Department of Cultural Affairs to bring the museum's construction to the finish line.

Warmest regards,

Rocky Bucano
President/Executive Director
Universal Hip Hop Museum



John F. Calvelli
Executive Vice President
Public Affairs

**Testimony to the Committee on
Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations
Christopher Durosinmi, Assistant Director, Government & Community Affairs
Wildlife Conservation Society
March 8, 2022**

Thank you Chairman Ossé and members of the Committee. My name is Christopher Durosinmi, Assistant Director, Government & Community Affairs for the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

Based in New York City since 1895, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), which includes the Bronx Zoo, New York Aquarium, Central Park Zoo, Prospect Park Zoo, and Queens Zoo, saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature. We are proud to be a member of the Cultural Institutions Group, a diverse coalition of 34 cultural organizations across the five boroughs with a distinct private-public partnership with the City of New York. As part of the cultural community, we would like to see the FY22 PEG cut to the Cultural Development Fund restored. As the City Council determines its budget priorities for FY23, we are here to ask for a restoration of all Council Initiatives, and a restoration of \$35M of FY22 funding. We will also be requesting an additional \$50 million for the cultural community and look forward to meeting with the Council and the Administration about that request in detail.

To achieve our mission, WCS, headquartered at the Bronx Zoo, harnesses the power of its Global Conservation Program in nearly 60 nations and in all the world's oceans and its five wildlife parks in New York City, visited by ~4 million people annually. WCS combines its expertise in the field, at our zoos, and aquarium to achieve its conservation mission with the aim of conserving the world's largest wild places in 14 priority regions, home to more than 50 percent of the world's biodiversity. WCS envisions a world where wildlife thrives in healthy lands and seas, valued by societies that embrace and benefit from the diversity and integrity of life on earth. We hold ourselves to the highest standards, adhering to our core values of respect, diversity and inclusion, accountability and transparency, innovation, collaboration, and integrity.

Our five parks are both tourist and family destinations serving diverse audiences in some of the poorest congressional districts in the country. Funded in part by the City of New York, our living collections help save endangered species, educate and inspire tens of thousands of teachers and children in environmental science, and help us maintain our programming and interactive educational experiences for diverse constituencies. In New York City, our five parks employ more than 2,500 full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees. As one of the largest employers



John F. Calvelli
Executive Vice President
Public Affairs

of youth in the city, and managing one of the largest youth workforce development programs in the city, WCS employs and supports over 1,400 youth ages 14-24 in a myriad of opportunities that create life sustaining change in our surrounding communities. Much of this is possible through city support, in particular, the New York City Council. Additionally, WCS has more than 576,000 online advocates in the city representing every City Council district.

It is no secret that culture is vital to the city's economy, generating over \$7 billion in economic activity in NYC alone pre COVID, and employing some 100,000 New Yorkers. Culture and art have also led the city out of many of the city's crises, from reinventing empty spaces in the 70s, to bringing back downtown after 9/11, to getting tourists back after the financial crash.

Further, WCS takes seriously its commitment to the neighborhoods it resides in. Our work with these communities has been holistic, addressing a broad range of needs for youth and young adults. Prior to and throughout the pandemic, WCS has provided essential services through programming and partnerships that have positively impacted diverse communities throughout the city. Some vignettes of our impact include our *Community Access Program (CAP)*, where we provide thousands of seniors, youth, individuals with special needs, and community-based organizations with complimentary access to our parks. WCS has held long partnerships with city and state agencies to provide educational opportunities and experiences to thousands of children and families. Additionally, in response to the COVID crisis we shifted our public engagement and youth development programming to digital platforms. We launched the virtual zoo and aquarium on our website that has incorporated a multitude of free resources for our community, including webcams where our visitors can experience our exhibits virtually, ongoing animal stories created by our keepers, and engaging family fun activities that incorporate art, science, and nature. We have also developed virtual field trips for schools in order to help bring the zoo and aquarium experience into the classroom. We continue these programs in a hybrid model to ensure all can participate.

WCS recognizes New York City youth as future change makers and leaders who reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of our city. Thanks to City Council support, WCS has been able to fully implement and expand the *WCS STEM Career Lattice*, which is an innovative tiered engagement model that provides WCS youth, ages 14-24, with paid leadership opportunities that scaffold their professional experience and prepare them to transition into paid positions in WCS and our industry. Collectively, youth earn on average \$5 million working in the five WCS parks on an annual basis. This program combines education, workforce development, networking, and outreach to increase opportunities for over 1,400 youth who work and learn at our five facilities. We focus on reaching youth from communities that are underrepresented in STEM fields. 77% of the youth who work, intern and volunteer at our parks identify as young people of color and collectively speak 46 different languages.



John F. Calvelli
Executive Vice President
Public Affairs

Realizing our collective impact on STEM career development for youth, WCS led the effort to bring together 12 science-based cultural institutions, forming the *SCI Network NYC*. Funding from the New York City Council has enabled us to create a community of practice composed of leaders and youth development professionals from across the 12 institutions. Together we collectively provide over 1,200 internships to NYC Youth. Across NYS cultural institutions, internships have historically been less accessible to youth who identify as people of color and those from underserved communities. *The SCI Network NYC* works to provide equitable access to internships to NYC youth and ensure that these internships allow youth to gain meaningful work experience and career opportunities.

Therefore, as the Council determines its budget priorities for FY 2023, please know that WCS stands at the ready to continue our enhanced, high-quality programming should funding be available. As the Council determines its budget priorities for FY23, we respectfully request that all Council initiatives and \$35M of FY22 funding be restored, in addition to \$50M for FY23 from the City Council and Administration for the cultural community.

3/8/22

Dear Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations,

My name is Carina Nieves and I am a native New Yorker residing in Richmond Hill, Queens. I am testifying in regards to the lack of development about the renovations of the QPL Richmond Hill Library branch. I am deeply disappointed about how long it's taking for library renovations. I am providing some history of the project with article links as references.

In 2017, QPL had announced plans for the Richmond Hill Library to be renovated and DDC had stated in an article it would be completed in two years. Two years went by and I saw them do renovations on other libraries in the system. It seemed like this forgotten child of a library was not important for them to consider renovating for some obvious reasons. One; QPL has done minor renovations to the library like the roof in 2014 and children's room done in the 2000s. It hasn't done major renovations, just small projects at a time. Two; QPL has been utilizing a large portion of the basement for their storage and office space for custodians since the 1990s. I used to go to this library as a child and remember the back rooms not being accessible to the general public. The library staff have a small space in the upper floor that only they can utilize, but it always has leaking issues and not much height space. The now defunct Friends of the Richmond Hill Library that I was a member of till 2017 was on top of the renovations. After our group decided to not renew our charter, members of Community Board 9 kept on top of QPL and DDC to ensure that the library wasn't forgotten. I had reached out to Assemblymember David Weprin's office and the former Councilmembers in November on this issue. Only the Assemblymember's office got back to me that there were major design delays and that they were waiting on QPL to send final documents. I had reached out to DDC on a recent Twitter post they had and they stated "There were design delays".

I want accountability from the new City Council to ensure that the communities of Richmond Hill and Kew Gardens that utilize this historic Carnegie library don't wait another twenty years for a modernized library branch that has complete community access to the basement. Please help me get what my community deserves and has long waited to have. Thank you for your service!

Regards,
Carina Nieves

References:

<https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20170628/richmond-hill/richmond-hill-library-gut-renovation-queens-library-118-14-hillside-ave/#:~:text=QUEENS%20%E2%80%94%20The%20Richmond%20Hill%20Library,Carnegie%20Corporation%20of%20New%20York>.

https://www.qchron.com/editions/south/richmond-hill-library-project-gets-timeline/article_cfe50cea-4a75-55a1-9fe1-3527add78e16.html

https://www.qchron.com/editions/queenswide/holding-out-for-the-richmond-hill-library/article_ed49b09d-8de1-5f18-94f4-4f63bdacdb67.html