



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

Oversight – Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget Hearing

Wednesday, May 21, 2025, 10:00AM – Council Chambers, City Hall

Testimony Presented by NYC Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Laurie Cumbo

Good morning, Chair Rivera, Chair Brannan, and members of the committees. I am Laurie Cumbo, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. I am here today to testify in regards to the Best Budget Ever – also known as the Mayor's FY26 Executive Budget proposal. I am joined today by a number of my colleagues from the agency.

I will begin today with a quick look at the amazing numbers in the Mayor's FY26 executive budget for DCLA. It includes:

- \$52 million for the Cultural Development Fund;
- \$101 million for operating support for cultural institutions on City-owned property;
- \$52.3 million for energy subsidies to groups on City-owned property;
- \$8.2 million for agency staff and operations;
- \$1.7 million for CreateNYC and other agency initiatives.

If you don't have your calculator handy, that amounts to a grand total of \$214.7 million for DCLA in the FY26 executive budget. And this biggest news of all: it includes \$45 million in BASELINED funding for DCLA: \$21.5 million for the Cultural Institutions Group, and \$23.5 million for the Cultural Development Fund. This is the first time that the agency's baseline has been significantly increased in more than a decade. This reflects a major, long-term commitment to support our city's cultural community, and a recognition of culture's essential role in making our city thrive. Particularly at a time when our cultural community is facing so many urgent challenges, I'm proud to be serving as commissioner during the administration that has prioritized this historic commitment to our arts and culture community.

At nearly \$215 million, this is the largest amount included for DCLA in an executive budget proposal in history. By comparison, the executive budget at this same point in last year's budget process was \$151 million – meaning this year's exec budget is a 42% increase over last year's. And as always, this figure does not include any funding that is typically added at adoption, such as City Council initiatives or member items. Starting from such a strong position, we look forward to working toward an adopted

budget that continues to invest in and support our vibrant cultural sector at record levels.

While initially added in the FY26 preliminary budget, another item included in the Best Budget Ever is \$3 million for the creation of up to five new members of the city's Cultural Institutions Group. We are continuing to work closely with the organizations under consideration, to see if the designation is the right fit to ensure their long-term stability and service to New Yorkers. While the CIG as a whole is a cornerstone of our city's cultural community, these new CIG members give us a once-in-a-generation opportunity to foster greater equity in this important source of city support. We look forward to making announcements as we finalize the new groups in the near future.

Now, I'd like to provide a few updates on the great work we're able to do with these historic investments in our cultural community.

The process of distributing the FY26 Cultural Development Fund is already well underway. We released the applications for the next cycle the last week in March – well ahead of last year's schedule – and they were due May 8. We appreciate the many Council members who helped us spread the word about this year's opportunity, which each year supports nearly 1,100 organizations citywide.

For the upcoming award cycle, we estimate that we'll convene more than CDF panels to review approximately 800 applications for support. We are actively recruiting panelists to support this process. It's a great, paid opportunity to learn about the public funding process in depth, network with your peers, and give back to our city's cultural community. Please visit nyc.gov/CDFapply to learn more!

And as you know, last year we brought back City Council representatives to participate in the CDF panel review process. No one knows your districts better than you, and we value you and your staff's insight and contributions to the process. Earlier this month, DCLA's Programs Unit collaborated with Council to host a webinar on the ins and outs of Council participation on CDF panels. We appreciate your ongoing partnership and collaboration on this important program.

Just last week, New York Foundation for the Arts announced the recipients of the latest round of the Queens Arts Fund, and the Brooklyn Arts Council announced grantees for their latest round of DCLA-funded re-grants to artists and small arts groups. Together, these grant programs distributed more than \$1 million to hundreds of artists and small arts groups across Brooklyn and Queens. These funding amounts include the 15% increase we added for the borough arts councils in our FY25 budget, an investment in the artists who live and work in our city.

Our Public Art Unit is also hard at work bringing remarkable works of art to civic spaces across the five boroughs. Together with EDC, we recently launched an open

call for artists to serve as a design partner for the Chinatown Welcome Gateway, part of the Chinatown Connections project. Manhattan's Chinatown is one of our city's most distinctive enclaves, where generations of immigrants have come to make their homes and, in the process, contribute to our city's vibrant mix of communities and cultures. With the creation of the new Chinatown Welcome Gateway, this iconic NYC neighborhood will have the powerful symbol it deserves. Applications to the open call are due June 15. Visit nyculture.submittable.com for details.

We've also got an active open call for artists to serve as our city's next Public Artists in Residence. PAIR is DCLA's pioneering artist residency program which places artists-in-residence with New York City municipal agencies to address pressing civic and social challenges through creative practice. Artists and artist collectives are encouraged to apply to work with one of three agencies participating in the 2025-26 PAIR program: the Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery Operations, the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit, and the NYC Department of Small Business Services. PAIR taps into artists' unique superpower, bringing creatives and public servants together to find new ways of approaching longstanding issues. Applications are due June 30, and the selected PAIRs will be announced later this year. The open calls are also available on Submittable at nyculture.submittable.com.

While FY26 capital adds will not be included in the budget until adoption, that's not stopping us from moving forward on major capital and equipment projects across the city. Earlier in May, we celebrated the reopening of the New York Botanical Garden's Everett Children's Adventure Garden! The \$8.5 million renovation project—which included \$4 million in city support—is the first update to the beloved 12-acre space since it was created in 1998. The project ensures the Children's Garden can continue to accommodate large audiences—over 175,000 children and adults who visit each year—including 18,000 Pre-K through 5th grade students. I was also delighted to join Council Members Rivera, Powers, and Brewer in April to cut the ribbon on the multiyear, \$220 million renovation of the Frick Collection. Marking the most comprehensive upgrade to the Frick since its opening in 1935, the project has restored the museum's historic first-floor galleries and created a new suite of galleries on the second floor of the original mansion, welcoming the public to experience these spaces for the first time. Also in April, I joined The New York Historical – again with Council Member Brewer - for the topping out ceremony of the Tang Wing for American Democracy, the future home of the American LGBTQ+ Museum. The city is honored to be a key partner in bringing this vision to life, having committed nearly \$60 million to support this important project.

And we're proud to be stewarding the next generation of capital projects through our Capital Feasibility Planning (CFP) pilot program. CFP is an incredible opportunity for small and mid-size organizations who are considering construction, renovation, equipment, or other capital projects to take a deep dive into this major decision - BEFORE they make it. In the two previous cycles of CFP, we've worked closely with organizations to strategize, plan, and think deeply about their needs and how a capital

project could fit into their long-term goals. Some groups are able to hit the ground running on their expansion, renovation, or other big projects after coming out of CFP; others decide that such a major undertaking doesn't actually align with their strategic goals, or the timing isn't right. Regardless, CFP can help set up small and mid-size cultural organizations for long-term, sustainable success. The application for the next round of CFP is currently open. All eligible groups should have received an email from our Capital Unit. We'll be sending a reminder this week, so groups who are interested can keep an eye out for that.

As always, our team at Materials for the Arts is doing the most to foster a cleaner, greener, more creative NYC. At the beginning of the month, MFTA welcomed five new emerging designers for MFTA's Young Designers Program. Each designer started the program by creating an original look using materials sourced from MFTA that will now be on display in the warehouse. Throughout the residency, the young designers will return regularly to gather materials, participate in educational excursions focused on sustainability in fashion, and receive mentorship from MFTA's Designer-in-Residence and the BK Style Foundation team. Their final collections will debut at a runway show this September, presented in partnership with BK Style Foundation.

This year, MFTA has continued its MFTA After Hours: Late Night Teacher Shopping program. Launched in 2023, the late night shopping program extends MFTA's hours until 7 PM on a monthly basis to accommodate the schedules of educators during the school year. Thursday, June 5 will be the last day of Late Night Teacher Shopping for this school year, so educators: make sure to book your appointments at nyc.gov/mfta. We've had over 200 appointments from schools during MFTA After Hours this year, so the response to this initiative has been spectacular. MFTA is such a special place, providing free materials that make affordable, accessible arts programming happen in schools, nonprofits, and other spaces across the city – I want to give a big shout out to the team that makes it all happen.

Before closing, I want to recognize that our city's cultural sector is facing challenges on so many fronts. From uncertainty with federal and private funding, to changing audience habits, to rising costs, and so much more. We're proud of our historic investments, which will help our sector persist, thrive, and continue to bring amazing arts programming to New Yorkers. We couldn't do this without the partnership of so many, especially the City Council. I thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and am happy to answer any questions you have at this time.



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Mark Levine, Borough President

May 21, 2025

Testimony of Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine

**NYC Council Executive Budget Hearing on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International
Intergroup Relations**

Thank you, Chairs Brannan and Rivera and members of the City Council Committees on Finance and Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations for the opportunity to testify on this year's budget for libraries.

Our public libraries are an essential pillar of our communities, offering New Yorkers young and old access to print and digital materials, a wide range of services and programming, and service as community hubs that enhance our civic and cultural life. Libraries help adults learn and build their skills. They offer language classes, computer literacy programs, and workshops on resume building and job preparedness. They help bridge the digital divide by offering internet access and the innovative "Neighborhood Tech Help" program for residents of public housing. They foster children's development through early childhood, school-age, and teen-specific programming. And they serve as an important "third space" where neighbors come together to read a good book, enjoy a film, engage with authors and artists, and build community connections.

Manhattan is home to some of the best examples of what our public libraries have to offer – the new Inwood Library, the Schomburg Center in Harlem, and the iconic Schwartzman Building in Midtown are just a few of our most cherished community institutions. And as more and more New Yorkers make use of the libraries' valuable services, our City must ensure that they have the consistent funding they need to keep up with demand, maintain full-time hours, and hire and retain hard working librarians and library staff.

The final budget should restore and baseline \$15.7M for the Libraries Initiative as well as an additional \$44.8M for services and programming. Restoring funding from last year's budget would help libraries cover the increasing costs of materials, wages, and other needs so that they can maintain consistent services. Additional funding would give libraries what they need to add new materials and programming to keep up with increasing demand.

The City must also ensure that the capital needs of our public library systems are adequately met by including \$1.2B in the 10-year Capital Plan for critical library infrastructure. This would reverse last year's capital budget cuts, allow libraries to make much needed repairs to aging buildings and upgrade and modernize outdated facilities, and ensure that branches remain reliable community resources.

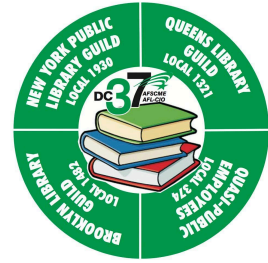
New York City's three public library systems – New York Public Library, Queens Public Library, and Brooklyn Public Library – are world-class and our budget should support them as such. Time and

again, this Mayor has put libraries on the chopping block, cutting this enormously important service to the bone. This budget needs to correct that.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

New York City Library Locals

Queens Library Guild Local 1321
Brooklyn Library Guild Local 1482
New York Public Library Guild Local 1930
Quasi-Public Employees (NYPL) Local 374



May 21, 2025

Good Afternoon, Chairs Brennan and Rivera and Committee Members,

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to testify on behalf of the nearly 4,000 public library workers we represent, including librarians, clerical workers, IT workers, drivers, maintainers, custodians, public safety officers, and more.

We cannot thank the City Council enough for their unwavering support for libraries. Throughout the years, under many mayoral administrations, the Council has made financial commitments allowing our members to provide the services your constituents depend on. This City Council is no exception. Under the leadership of Speaker Adrienne Adams, our union members know that New York City's public libraries will receive Council funding.

We must also thank Mayor Eric Adams for adding money to the Libraries' budgets. Without that financial commitment, our financial situation would have been even more dire. And yet, this is our problem: Libraries' financial situation remains dire. The Mayor's proposed Executive Budget for FY 2026 remains the same as FY 2025 and is only for one year. We are uncertain as to whether the budget will increase or decrease in successive years. If there is an increase, will that be enough to cover the funding needs of libraries?

In our testimony in March, we explained the invaluable services we provide and how libraries' inconsistent funding has impacted those services. Right now, we do not have funding to adequately support staff for six-day service. Right now, children's programs do not take place at every library, because there is not enough staff. There are also not enough custodians to adequately and efficiently clean branches. Another issue is, many branches do not have the security personnel to keep patrons and staff safe. Now as I speak, libraries do not have the maintenance staff to properly keep our facilities operational.

This understaffing is the result of every mayor's inconsistent and inadequate funding of libraries. This funding never allows libraries to adequately hire beyond the next fiscal year. Therefore, libraries will never hire enough staff for the amount of services our elected officials demand of us.

Compounding this understaffing is New York City's high cost of living that crushes our members — forcing library workers to work multiple jobs and overtime, and NEVER feeling financial security. Many custodians leave the library, New York City, and the profession because they cannot afford to work on a salary that does not keep up with the rising cost of living. This is devastating to many of us because our library work is so rewarding.

Our members are rewarded with the engagements we have with our patrons and colleagues. A Children's Librarian sees the joy on the faces of the children at Toddler Time. An Adult Reference Librarian engages with an avid reader on their favorite authors. A branch's neighbor helps the Custodian clean up the sidewalk. A Clerical Supervisor is thrilled to see their former page and mentee after they graduated from college. Those rewards only happen at our library branches. When a mayor inconsistently underfunds our libraries, our members suffer and our patrons — your constituents — lose.

The Mayor's proposed Executive Budget keeps our budget flat while costs are going up and is not baselined. That is unsustainable. Our members will continue to suffer under New York City's unaffordability crisis and Libraries' understaffing, and this does not need to happen. Our elected officials have the ability and duty to consistently and adequately fund our libraries so we can be optimistic about the future, and pay our members a living wage.

John Hyslop

President Queens Library Guild
Local 1321

Deborah Allman

President New York Public Library Guild
Local 1930

George Sarah Olken

President Brooklyn Library Guild
Local 1482

Leonard Paul

President Quasi Public Employees
(NYPL Blue Collar)
Local 374

Katherine Kusiak Carey, Member, Local 1502, DC 37
Brooklyn Museum Workers
Before the Committee on Finance and City Council Committee for Cultural,
Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations
May 21, 2025

Good afternoon. My name is Katherine Kusiak Carey and I work in the Education Division at the Brooklyn Museum. I live in Sunset Park, Brooklyn and have a background in education as well as an MSW from the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College. I have worked at the Brooklyn Museum for 8 years and I am a proud member of District Council 37 Local 1502.

I first want to thank the Chair, as well as the members of these committees, for working with our union to provide ongoing support for cultural institutions and working-class New Yorkers. When Brooklyn Museum leadership attempted to layoff our union members this fiscal year, members of the City Council supported us in avoiding these layoffs and showed its commitment to protecting Union jobs as well as supporting the arts and culture. We hope to continue collaborating – as workers and local government – to protect the artists and cultural workers that make our arts and educational institutions places where all New Yorkers can express creativity, learn, and benefit from resources and programming that enrich their lives.

Today, I am asking the Council to continue that support by increasing funding to the Department of Cultural Affairs in the FY2026 budget. I am here today to talk about how these budgets impact my work as an Educator, and how the Museum's financial situation impacts the communities we work with. In my role in the Education Division, I support the work of educators in four departments that serve around 50,000 people in our communities, including public school students, DOE educators, teens from all 5 boroughs, families and children, access audiences, as well as older adults and emerging young arts professionals. However, over the past few months, our Education team has been directed to drastically reduce programming due to decreased funding. It is deeply concerning to watch thriving programs that serve diverse audiences come to a halt. For example, the Education Division has highly respected paid internship and fellowship programs with targeted outreach to first generation college students as well as CUNY and SUNY schools. These programs create a path for New Yorkers to access jobs in the cultural sector. Next year, for the first time in over 30 years, we will not have a full fellowship program. In addition, a federal IMLS grant was abruptly canceled a few weeks ago and it would have funded this summer's internship program. The impact of cutting this program comes at a high cost to the Museum, our city, and young people. Other Education programs that have been cut include outreach for Adult Literacy art-making Programs, programs for adult Spanish speakers, and a reduction of the number of educators teaching K-12 guided gallery visits to school groups.

Education and Cultural Institutions have been underfunded for years, and while our audiences have come to expect high-quality and accessible programming from the Brooklyn Museum, it is harder and harder each year for educators to meet the needs of our visitors without proper funding and adequate staffing. At a time when federal cuts are forcing museums to halt programs and educators are strained for resources, I urge the committee to prioritize funding cultural institutions as an investment in our city's future and to ensure that our city continues to provide opportunities for arts and education programming for all New Yorkers. Thank you for your time today.



Wednesday, May 21, 2025

Hew Rose Evans
Senior Development Associate, the American LGBTQ+ Museum

Committee on Finance (Jointly with the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations)
Wednesday, May 21, at 12 PM, Via Zoom

Testimony for the Committee (Part 1)

Hello and thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of my organization. My name is Hew Rose Evans, and I am the Senior Development Associate at the American LGBTQ+ Museum. For FY26, we are requesting an increase in City Council Discretionary funding, specifically increasing our Speakers Initiative funding to \$200,000 for LGBTQIA+ Community Services. This funding will support an expansion of our educational initiatives and partnerships in all five boroughs as well as hiring additional staff members to implement this expansion.

To provide some background, our Museum's mission is to preserve, investigate, and celebrate the dynamic histories and cultures of LGBTQ+ people, as well as the emergent and adjacent identities among our communities. Using exhibitions and programs, we seek to advance LGBTQ+ equality through the lens of social justice movements, including, but not limited to, race, gender, class, immigration, and disability. As of today, there is no major LGBTQ+ cultural institution in the United States dedicated to preserving Queer history and culture, illustrating its many impacts on the broader society, or presenting it to the public in an accessible way. An American LGBTQ+ Museum would be a unique institution that would enhance the civic and historical infrastructure in New York City, filling a great educational and cultural vacuum, and recognizing LGBTQ+ people as major contributors to weaving the fabric of American society.

In 2027, our [Museum will open a core exhibition in Manhattan in partnership with the New York Historical](#). Over the next 3 years, our organization will embark on an ambitious strategic plan, which includes significant staff expansions, stakeholder engagement, design/construction, and public awareness initiatives. The resulting 6,000 sq.ft. core exhibition will broadly explore the lives of LGBTQ+ Americans and their contributions to all aspects of our country's history, and it will be accompanied by a robust suite of public programs, digital exhibitions, and online educational resources that tell more specific stories about our various communities and identities. Construction on the Tang Wing of the New York Historical has already topped out, and we will begin the interior build-out of our space next year.

With support from Speaker Adrienne Adams and the New York City Council, we will be New York's and our nation's LGBTQ+ Museum, and we are opening very soon. I would like to thank you for your time, and we appreciate your consideration of our request.



Wednesday, May 21, 2025

Seth Rosen
Chief of Development, the American LGBTQ+ Museum

Committee on Finance (Jointly with the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations)
Wednesday, May 21, at 12 PM, Via Zoom

Testimony for the Committee (Part 2)

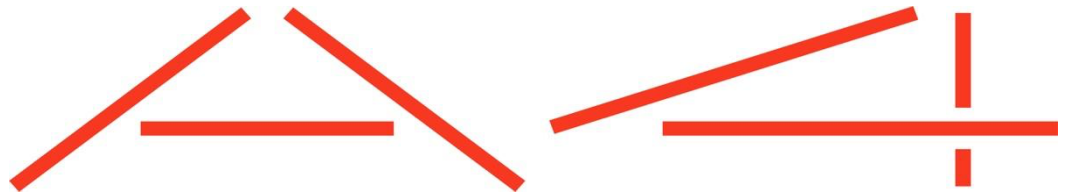
Hello and thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of my organization. My name is Seth Rosen, and I am the Chief of Development at the American LGBTQ+ Museum. For FY26, we are requesting an increase in City Council Discretionary funding, specifically increasing our Speakers Initiative funding to \$200,000 for LGBTQIA+ Community Services. This funding will support an expansion of our educational initiatives and partnerships in all five boroughs as well as hiring additional staff members to implement this expansion.

To add to my colleague's testimony, our Museum is rapidly expanding its audience across all five boroughs and online. Our e-newsletter, the Museum's main form of communication, has grown from about 8,000 subscribers in 2024 to just under 14,000 in the past year, representing an astounding 75% annual increase. This is largely due to investments made by the New York City Council towards our public programs. Within the past year, the Museum has produced over 40 educational events, extending our reach city-wide through a robust online presence and satellite partnerships with community institutions within all five boroughs. So far, we have developed public programs in collaboration with the Queens Public Library, Weeksville Heritage Center, NewFest LGBTQ+ Film Festival, Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Alice Austen House, and many more. Last month, we also just launched the Museum's first activist preservation program in partnership with SAGE USA and StoryCorps, named the [*Queer Legacies Project*](#), which includes facilitated archiving workshops that convene LGBTQ+ Elders and help them preserve their personal archives and oral histories for future generations. Looking ahead to FY26, we are currently piloting a partnership with Culture Lab LIC to co-produce a series of lectures, film screenings, and creative workshops that illuminate local queer histories, provide resources for research and activism, and raise awareness for our Museum project.

These cultural partnerships are just the beginning, and, with discretionary support from Speaker Adrienne Adams and the New York City Council, we hope to expand our available resources citywide ahead of our 2027 opening. I would like to thank you for your time, and we appreciate your consideration of our request.

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**Public Testimony
Committee on Finance with the Commission on
Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International
Intergroup Relations
May 21, 2025**

Chair Brannan, Chair Rivera, Members of the City Council, and friends from the Department of Cultural Affairs, thank you for holding this hearing.

My name is Lisa Gold and I am the Executive Director of the Asian American Arts Alliance, a 41-year-old nonprofit service organization that works to ensure greater representation, equity, and opportunities for Asian American and Pacific Islander artists (APIs) and arts organizations of all disciplines across this great city. We are the only organization in the country that serves this role. I am also a member of the Cultural Equity Coalition and a facilitator of the Culture at 3 call.

I am here today to join my colleagues in **thanking you** and the mayor for adding \$45 million to our cultural funding baseline, *and* asking you to go a step further to **ADD** the \$30 million we requested for Culture in FY26, just bringing us back to FY25 levels.

Small organizations like A4 that serve immigrants and people of color are currently in danger as Washington reels off one Executive Order after another in attempts to suppress our voices and deny our existence.

With rollbacks of corporate and federal support for DEI and attacks on Foundations who are retreating from the arts, we are suffering.

The arts play a critical role in the city and the lives of our constituents, bringing understanding and tolerance in a time of increasing division and intolerance. It is sorely needed. And without city funding, we cannot make it happen.

**ASIAN
AMERICAN
ARTS
ALLIANCE**

As you know, the AAPI Community is one of the most diverse and fastest growing ethnic groups in New York City, making up almost 18% of the city's population, yet we receive less than 2% of grant funding administered by the Department of Cultural Affairs. Communities of color as a whole rely on city funding much, much more than private and predominantly white institutions.

And in this climate when the Federal Government is doing all it can to erase us, it is critical that our City Government can ensure *equitable* support to the arts and culture sector and to keep our city the cultural capital of the world.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY
TESTIMONY ON THE FY2026 EXECUTIVE BUDGET
Jointly to the Finance Committee and the Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries & International Intergroup Relations
May 21, 2025

Good morning. I am Linda Johnson, President & CEO of Brooklyn Public Library. Thank you, Speaker Adams, Finance Chair Brannan, Chair Rivera, members of the Finance and Libraries and Cultural Affairs committees, our Brooklyn delegation, and the entire City Council for your continued leadership and steadfast support of libraries.

It is a privilege to speak before a body that has not only championed libraries but consistently acted to ensure that we can continue serving every neighborhood in our city. Your support has always been strong and, most importantly, effective. Thank you.

The Council's response to the Fiscal Year 26 Preliminary Budget once again demonstrated your commitment to New Yorkers and to our public services. Your call for a \$62.5 million investment in libraries is not only reasonable—it is essential. After years of fending off cuts, Library operating funding has remained flat, even as costs and demand continue to rise. Our patrons and our staff, including our DC37 partners who will testify today, deserve better than another year of doing more with less.

We are encouraged that the **Fiscal Year 26 Executive Budget added \$15.7 million in operating support for libraries**. That investment is welcome, though unfortunately not baselined. I am optimistic that with your help, the full funding our library systems require to sustain and strengthen our services will be secured. That means **allocating another \$44.8 million** for our unmet needs, **and an additional \$2 million** for the Speaker's proposal to expand seven-day service.

We were also pleased to see \$50 million in capital funds for Brooklyn Public Library included in the Executive Budget. This is a meaningful start—for which we are grateful.

Libraries Stepping Up

Libraries and the values we represent are under attack nationally, from the recent firing of the Librarian of Congress to threats against the Institute for Museum and Library Services and the freedom to read. Here in New York, Brooklyn Public Library and our over 1,100 dedicated employees **are rising to meet this moment**—serving more patrons, offering vital programming, protecting intellectual freedom and helping more New Yorkers thrive.

Librarians are serving homebound patrons with books by mail, and our outreach team connects family members in our branches with their incarcerated loved ones via free videoconference. Brooklyn Public Library's digital literacy programs have recently extended into housing developments and community centers in partnership with the City through the newly launched Neighborhood Tech Help program, and our new Digital Discovery Days are giving Brooklynites of all ages hands-on experience with cutting-edge technology.

We're supporting job seekers and entrepreneurs through LevelUP, which has now helped over 500 patrons gain the tools and mentorship needed to advance in competitive industries. 100 women have graduated from the program, and two of them are submitting testimony today. And our workforce and volunteer programs are growing, with a 30% increase in community volunteers helping to lead English as a Second Language (ESOL) groups, citizenship coaching, and homework help.

We're also helping our newest neighbors, offering over 75 ESOL classes every week—from drop-in conversation groups to business English courses and job certification classes. These programs are at capacity, always with waitlists.

And the need is only growing. In 2024, Brooklyn Public Library recorded nearly 6 million visits, a 19% increase in program sessions, and our books and digital materials circulated 9.4 million times.

Unmet Needs

But we can't keep doing more with less. Brooklyn Public Library faces \$12.4 million in unmet needs. These are not wish list items—they are the unavoidable costs of providing reliable library service in every community.

The cost of purchasing books and digital materials is rising. We've seen a 5% increase in material costs over the past five years, and our digital collection alone now requires an additional \$400,000 annually just to keep pace with usage. Our buying power has diminished, and without the ability to increase our book budget, Brooklyn Public Library lags behind the national and state averages in our per capita spending on collections.

Healthcare premiums have also climbed, and we face uncovered costs from negotiated wage increases and minimum wage changes. These are essential investments in our staff, the very people who keep our doors open and our communities supported.

And we now operate two new locations as well as several recently expanded branches, all of which offer in-demand programs that require more staffing and resources. These new sites expand our reach, but without additional funding, they stretch our capacity even thinner.

Patrons continue to feel these effects, even with the reversal of last year's cuts. Longer wait times for books, lost hours and unfortunately more service disruptions. In Fiscal Year 2024, Brooklyn Public Library experienced 102 instances of unplanned delays and closures due to staffing shortages. And this problem persists today. This is not sustainable, and it is not acceptable. The public relies on us to be open when we say we will be open; it is a core Library tenet.

We deeply appreciate the \$4.4 million included in the Executive Budget for Brooklyn Public Library—this yearly library subsidy is crucial—but if the city does not cover, and baseline, our existing \$12.4 million in unmet needs, we cannot stabilize staffing, invest in our collections, or ensure consistent service across our branches.

Capital

What truly keeps me up at night is the staggering capital funding we need to bring our buildings into a state of good repair. Brooklyn Public Library's unfunded capital needs now exceed \$400 million—one-third of which are urgent projects like roofs, HVAC systems, fire safety, and accessibility upgrades.

Of our ageing libraries, nineteen are over a century old. And last year due to failed HVAC, elevators, and other basic infrastructure malfunctions, we lost more than 670 hours of service borough-wide.

The \$50 million allocated in the Executive Budget for Brooklyn Public Library is a strong start, and we are grateful to the Administration for providing this funding. However, this amount covers only a fraction of our \$307.7 million request in the 10-Year Capital Plan. We also require adequate funding to initiate comprehensive and cost-effective branch overhauls instead of moving from crisis to crisis.

New Yorkers deserve public spaces that match the creativity, drive and resilience of our communities. Thank you, Speaker Adams, Chairs Brannan and Rivera, and our Brooklyn delegation, for supporting library capital projects in your district and helping us create spaces that inspire our patrons. Over the years, the Council's lump sum capital funding has been a lifeline, allowing us to address urgent repairs and fill shortfalls in stalled projects. Your capital funding has been instrumental, and we would appreciate receiving these vital unrestricted capital funds from you once again this year.

Conclusion

Libraries are our nation's most democratic spaces. Every day, we welcome neighbors from all walks of life into our trusted buildings. That opportunity for community connection is needed now more than ever.

Last year, thousands of New Yorkers wrote and asked you to support our libraries—and you listened. Their support has not waned. In my hand I hold the personal stories of more than 225 people who are submitting their written testimony for the record. They, too, are optimistic that our committed city leaders will contribute a much-needed boost for Libraries.

I will end my testimony by sharing how personally grateful I am for the strong relationship libraries have with you, and all our City Leaders. Unlike many of my counterparts nationwide, who face service cuts and book bans, we are fortunate to have your unwavering support. It is an honor to serve New Yorkers with you, and I look forward to continuing the conversation with the Council and the Administration to increase the City's investment in libraries. Together, we can ensure every person has free and open access to the resources they deserve.

Thank you.

Brooklyn Public Library Guild
AFSCME Local 1482 | District Council 37
125 Barclay Street, New York, NY 10007
www.local1482.org



Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
FY '26 Executive Budget Hearing

May 21, 2025

Good afternoon Chairs Rivera and Brannan,

Thank you to your committees and to the entire council, for the opportunity to speak today. My name is George Sarah Olken. I am the President of the Brooklyn Public Library Workers Union, Local 1482, DC 37. I whole-heartedly support the testimony shared on behalf of the four New York City Public Library Locals. But I have been asked by my members to use my time to speak about a particular situation in Brooklyn.

You have heard our unions say that the public libraries are understaffed and that library workers are underpaid. Based on economic contracts negotiated by DC 37 with the City, the Office of Labor Relations issues pay orders that lay out minimum salaries and service increments for each city title. For example, I am a Bookmobile Driver, my city title is "Office Associate Level II," which is listed on the Public Library Clerical orders. The current minimum incumbent rate for my title is \$49,014 and that is exactly what I am paid by BPL.

After years of members raising concerns about irregularities, our local found that nearly two hundred union workers at BPL have been systematically underpaid— paid below the contractual minimums— for decades. We filed a grievance in 2023 and a second grievance in 2024 on behalf of the clerical workers and custodians affected.

The library says the current method is how salaries have always been calculated (it is still incorrect) and they have been working with the union to fix it. Unintentional as it may be, underpayment has dire consequences. It changes the course of lives. I spoke to one member who was denied a home loan because their income was just below the eligibility threshold. That member is underpaid by three thousand dollars.

Members are frustrated at the slow pace of negotiations. Altogether, we are talking about \$250,000 total in underpayment across all these workers. We are confident that

salaries will be corrected before the end of this fiscal year. However, incorrectly paid workers also deserve back pay. We urge the library to prove they value workers as much as they say they do and to make good on their commitment to workers.

We are supporting the libraries' ask for increased funding— to hire more workers, to buy books and computers, to repair old buildings— and in part to help us clear this final hurdle, to pay library workers what they have earned through careers of dedicated service, and to end this unhappy chapter in Brooklyn Public Library's history.

Our message is simple: **Pay Us What We're Owed!**

Thank you for your leadership!

George Sarah Olken

President Brooklyn Library Guild

Local 1482 | District Council 37

CARNEGIE HALL

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2025
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Chair Brannan, Chair Rivera and Members of the Committees on Finance and on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I will address the importance of funding culture and the arts in our City's FY26 budget, as well as our requests before the Council to support Carnegie Hall's programming in the areas of criminal justice, workforce development, mental health, and maternal health and wellbeing.

Carnegie Hall endorses the field's request for an additional \$30 million baseline increase to the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) budget – to invest in cultural institutions, programs, and artists across New York City and provide needed additional resources to the agency. In addition to the field's request, I wish to highlight Carnegie Hall's profound impact on New York's cultural identity and our longstanding partnership with the City's human service agencies, including the Department of Cultural Affairs, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, NYC Health + Hospitals, and the Administration for Children's Services. Our relationship with our valued partners is essential to our ability to serve New Yorkers, especially those in challenging circumstances.

Baselining an additional \$45M in the FY26 Executive Budget for DCLA is an historic advance for NYC's support for arts and culture. It is a testament to the Administration's commitment to the arts. We applaud the Administration for its recognition of the role our cultural institutions have in building a creative and resilient city, and our local government's part in ensuring that these organizations are stable enough to support the communities we serve. The City Council has long called for this overdue action, and we express our gratitude for your consistent support to get to this outcome.

But our work is not done. We join our colleagues in urging a baselining of an additional \$30M in FY26. The Executive Budget addition does not increase the culture budget; it simply stabilizes the current funding level. A \$30 million baseline increase, less than three one-hundredths of one percent of the City budget, would be transformative for CIGs, DCLA, and programs across our beautiful City. Such a baseline increase would continue to ensure NYC's standing as the heart of arts and culture in the United States. A commitment to funding the arts and culture is a commitment to workforce development, community healing, education, and public safety, as well as an investment in economic resiliency and growth – arts and culture generates \$110 billion in economic impact in NYC, representing 13% of the City's economic activity. Sustained investment in the arts and culture is a statement to each and every person who calls New York City home that their holistic wellness matters, and we urge this sector's outsize impact to be recognized and duly supported.

This is a critical time for the cultural community, especially while the current federal administration continues to cut and freeze grant funding – funding that support arts education, local artists, and community-based

programs that bring us together. As one of many cultural institutions, federal cuts threaten more than \$1.6M in funding for Carnegie Hall.

Carnegie Hall has received a termination notice for our \$70K FY25 NEA Grant. Due to the continuing resolution passed in March, all potential earmarks were removed from the budget including \$870K in support of Carnegie Hall. As agencies contract, Carnegie Hall also considers the following grants at risk: \$451K from the Department of Education, \$12K from the NEA/Mid-America Arts Alliance, \$91,007.90 from the Department of Justice, and \$125,104.87 from FEMA.

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Highlights of Carnegie Hall's offerings throughout the five boroughs include many of our partnerships with human services agencies:

- **The Council's \$200,000 Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative and \$25,000 initiative for youth programs allocation** supports **The B Side**, a free intensive program for New Yorkers ages 14-22 interested in the business of music, with a focus on those from under-resourced communities with high populations of justice-impacted youth. The B Side provides participants with an interactive space to learn about the inner workings of the music industry. The B-Side's curriculum is designed and facilitated by teaching artists and music executives, while guest speaker panels, and field trips guide participants through the many roles and career paths across the industry. Participants, experienced youth development facilitators, and guests are encouraged to co-create a learning community that supports the development of aspiring artists and future music industry leaders.

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The **Lullaby Project** is an evidence-informed, low-cost, safe, and scalable approach to supporting caregivers, infants, and early relational health. The program pairs new and expectant parents and caregivers with professional artists to create, sing, and record personal lullabies, fostering maternal health, aiding child development, and strengthening the bond between parent and child. Evaluations of the program indicate that it is a source of mutual delight: parents develop self-confidence, well-being, creativity, and their capacity to be loving, sensitive, and responsive caregivers, while infants benefit from exposure to soothing vocabulary, figurative language, and elegant phrases that support development and learning.

Through partnerships with city agencies such as the NYC Departments of Homeless Services (DHS), Correction (DOC), Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Education (DOE’s LYFE program), the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS), Health + Hospitals (H+H), and the Housing Authority (NYCHA), the Lullaby Project has reached thousands of families across New York City. Furthering its commitment to promoting health and well-being, Carnegie Hall recently became the flagship cultural partner for DOHMH’s HealthyNYC initiative.

- **Big Note, Little Note** is a 10-week music class for NYC families, offered at no cost, which offers a range of experiences for families and caregivers to engage with their babies through musical play, singing, instrument exploration, and more. The program centers 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.
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Programs like these continue to 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 is absolutely critical to ensure that these essential services for our city’s youth and families continue. We welcome the opportunity to meet with you individually to discuss Carnegie Hall’s programming partnerships in your district.

Carnegie Hall respectfully asks the Committees on Finance and Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations to support the following requests:

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We thank the Committee for their interest and investment in these programs, and we encourage the Council to continue to support this important work and other programs by our cultural colleagues across the city.

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- **The Council's \$200,000 Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative and \$25,000 initiative for youth programs allocation** supports **The B Side**, a free intensive program for New Yorkers ages 14-22 interested in the business of music, with a focus on those from under-resourced communities with high populations of justice-impacted youth. The B Side provides participants with an interactive space to learn about the inner workings of the music industry. The B-Side's curriculum is designed and facilitated by teaching artists and music executives, while guest speaker panels, and field trips guide participants through the many roles and career paths across the industry. Participants, experienced youth development facilitators, and guests are encouraged to co-create a learning community that supports the development of aspiring artists and future music industry leaders.

The B-Side is now being piloted as an innovative diversion program on Rikers Island, giving eligible justice-involved youth the tools they need to explore careers in the music industry, providing workforce development, a supportive network of peers and mentors, and an invaluable outlet of expression.

- In partnership with NYC's Administration for Children's Services (ACS), Carnegie Hall's **Future Music Project (FMP)** harnesses the transformative power of music to nurture, amplify, and celebrate the creativity of young people ages 14-19 in juvenile justice settings. Carnegie Hall's Teaching Artists

engage young people through workshops, field trips, and performances that explore many facets of music—from honing skills in songwriting and performance to discovering career paths in the music industry. Using music as a vehicle, FMP supports young people navigating the trauma of incarceration by providing a space to learn and express their creativity.

- Carnegie Hall’s early childhood programs encourage connection, well-being, and creativity for families, most of whom are facing challenging personal circumstances.

The **Lullaby Project** is an evidence-informed, low-cost, safe, and scalable approach to supporting caregivers, infants, and early relational health. The program pairs new and expectant parents and caregivers with professional artists to create, sing, and record personal lullabies, fostering maternal health, aiding child development, and strengthening the bond between parent and child. Evaluations of the program indicate that it is a source of mutual delight: parents develop self-confidence, well-being, creativity, and their capacity to be loving, sensitive, and responsive caregivers, while infants benefit from exposure to soothing vocabulary, figurative language, and elegant phrases that support development and learning.

Through partnerships with city agencies such as the NYC Departments of Homeless Services (DHS), Correction (DOC), Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Education (DOE’s LYFE program), the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS), Health + Hospitals (H+H), and the Housing Authority (NYCHA), the Lullaby Project has reached thousands of families across New York City. Furthering its commitment to promoting health and well-being, Carnegie Hall recently became the flagship cultural partner for DOHMH’s HealthyNYC initiative.

- **Big Note, Little Note** is a 10-week music class for NYC families, offered at no cost, which offers a range of experiences for families and caregivers to engage with their babies through musical play, singing, instrument exploration, and more. The program centers 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.

- **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. 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. Fellows partner with DOE music teachers to bring insight, creativity, and artistry to classrooms; and create interactive performances in schools and at community sites.

Programs like these continue to 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 is absolutely critical to ensure that these essential services for our city’s youth and families continue. We welcome the opportunity to meet with you individually to discuss Carnegie Hall’s programming partnerships in your district.

Carnegie Hall respectfully asks the Committees on Finance and Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations to support the following requests:

- **Renewal of \$200,000 with an increase to \$300,000 through the Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative would underwrite the fourth year of The B-Side**, a free intensive program for a minimum of 40 New Yorkers ages 14-22 interested in the business of music, with a focus on those from under-resourced communities. The B Side provides participants with 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 guide participants through the many roles and career opportunities across the industry. Participants, experienced youth development facilitators, and guests are encouraged to co-create a learning community that supports the development of aspiring artists and future music industry leaders.
- **\$150,000 Speaker’s Initiative for Carnegie Hall’s Music and Well-being programming:** In alignment with the Council’s Mental Health Roadmap, Carnegie Hall’s Lullaby Project is an evidence-informed, low-cost, safe, and scalable approach to supporting caregivers, infants, and early relational health. The Lullaby Project invites families, often in high-stress environments, to create, sing, and record their own personal lullabies. Since its inception in 2011 in response to patient care needs identified by Jacobi Medical Center’s neonatal unit staff, the Lullaby Project has helped to create approximately 4,000 lullabies, in over 40 languages, and currently has 60+ Lullaby Partners across the U.S. and globe.

Carnegie Hall's Well-Being Concerts combine world-class musical performances with elements of self-care and mindfulness, animated by evidence that music helps people heal and thrive. Each concert creates an immersive, nurturing space in which audiences and performers share in the soul-nourishing benefits of music, create shared experiences, and explore tools for well-being that last long after the performance.

- **\$100,000 for Carnegie Hall Citywide programming:** For more than half a century, the Citywide Concerts series has taken Carnegie Hall beyond its four walls with free, world-class concerts to diverse audiences of all ages and cultures across all five boroughs. The series showcases outstanding mainstage artists and exciting rising stars of classical, jazz, world music and more. Through partnerships with local community organizations, Citywide taps into the pulse of the city and brings people together to share the joy of music. Through leveraging high-profile artists in hyperlocal venues, these partnerships generate tourism throughout the city and stimulate local economies. Built on long-term and new partnerships with important neighborhood gathering places such as libraries; museums; houses of worship, mission-driven organizations; public plazas; and parks, our close collaborations with local partners are key to the program's success, strengthening these community anchors.

Programs like these continue to 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 to ensure that these essential services for our city's youth and families continue.

We thank the Committee for their interest and investment in these programs, and we encourage the Council to continue to support this important work and other programs by our cultural colleagues across the city.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you individually to discuss Carnegie Hall's school and community 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.



Written Testimony on the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget

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

**Miranda Massie, Director, The Climate Museum
Testifying on behalf of The Climate Museum
May 21, 2025**

Warm greetings, Chair Rivera, Chair Brannan and Committee Members. My name is Miranda Massie, Founder and Director of the Climate Museum. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your prior support of the Climate Museum's work.

At the Climate Museum, we mobilize arts and cultural programming to educate visitors about the climate crisis, helping them recognize their own agency and encouraging them to take meaningful civic action on climate. We are the first climate-dedicated museum in the United States (there are now two others whose development we have supported—underscoring our city's cultural and climate leadership). Our largest audience consists of New York City residents, and the work gives rise to a strong sense of community and empowerment.

When the Climate Museum first began public programming in 2018, we were a fledgling organization with a full-time staff of three, no health insurance, and free office space in the law firm of a friend. Since then, despite a global pandemic and two federal administrations fundamentally opposed to our mission, we have presented 17 successful exhibitions and over 350 events across the five boroughs. Our long list of partners includes the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Rockefeller Center, the Perelman Performing Arts Center, the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, Snug Harbor, and YUCA Arts. We are increasingly woven into the cultural fabric of the City, including its famous embrace of both globally renowned institutions and vibrant community organizations.

The Museum's growth and success are due in large part to the City and its leaders and institutions. We were fortunate to receive early and highly credentializing support from the Department of Cultural Affairs and discretionary support from a number of Members—not to mention first-phase exhibition space on Governor's Island and in New York City Parks. In

short, we would not be where we are without the support of the Council and your peers. Thank you for enabling us to give back to our city through the provision of critical arts and civic engagement services.

We are thrilled to have recently secured a permanent home as the cultural anchor of a new development near Hudson Yards that will open in 2029.¹ We are now in the process of finding and fundraising for an interim exhibition space.

Now more than ever, it is up to local leaders to make change happen—first and foremost, City leaders like yourselves. The Climate Museum is also a leader in New York City’s climate and cultural world, and more importantly, our work turns residents into a community of leaders who recognize their own agency and mobilize within their own circles of trust and influence, with exponential power for impact.

Creating this community around the climate crisis is an essential part of elevating New York City’s leadership on climate. According to the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, in 2024, three out of four New Yorkers were worried about climate change.² But there is an insidious social psychology phenomenon at play, so extreme that researchers call it a “false social reality”: despite a majority of the population caring about climate change, we perceive that the opposite is true.³ Our work seeks to dismantle this myth of climate indifference by building community among those who want to take climate action but aren’t sure where to begin.

With our exciting new future permanent home, the Climate Museum is keen on building a community steeped in climate action long term and is currently planning years down the road to realize this vision.

Accordingly, this year, we have submitted a \$100,000 Speaker request and various Member Items, including from Members of this Committee. This Speaker request is especially important to us, as we hope to start laying the groundwork for eligibility for capital funding.

In addition to being strategically oriented around our future space’s needs, this Speaker request (as well as any Member Items) will be immediately beneficial to New York City’s cultural life. This funding will enable us to provide essential programmatic services that directly benefit New Yorkers and strengthen the city’s civic and cultural fabric. These services are more vital than ever, especially in a time when so many New Yorkers are despairing in the

¹Rossilynne Skena Culgan, “The Climate Museum has found a permanent home in NYC,” *Time Out*, January 6 2025.

<https://www.timeout.com/newyork/news/the-climate-museum-has-found-a-permanent-home-in-nyc-010625#:~:text=The%20Climate%20Museum's%20thr ee%2Dstory,steps%20from%20the%20Javits%20Center.&text=Founded%20in%202015%2C%20The%20Climate,States%20dedicated%20to%20climate%20change.>

² Jennifer Marlon, Emily Goddard, Peter Howe, Matto Mildenberger, Martial Jefferson, Jennifer Carman, Seth Rosenthal, Eric Fine, Andrew Gillreath-Brown and Anthony Leiserowitz, “Yale Climate Opinion Maps 2024,” Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, March 13 2025.

<https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us-2024/>

³ Sparkman, G., Geiger, N. & Weber, E.U. [Americans experience a false social reality by underestimating popular climate policy support by nearly half.](#) *Nature Communications* 13, 4779 (2022).

face of the compounding threats of climate change and a federal government that does not see climate change as the existential threat it is, and indeed opposes both climate action and independent arts and cultural expression. We must come together as a city to uphold our participatory, democratic values and to work toward a climate-just future.

You will be hearing from us again soon on Resolution 0082-2024 in support of the Climate Museum's mission and growth, sponsored to date by Chair Gennaro, Council Member Hanif, and Council Member Nurse.

Thank you for considering our requests, listening to—and shaping—our story, and serving our city.



Cultural Institutions Group Preliminary Budget Hearing Testimony
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Tuesday, March 18th, 2025
Stephanie Hill Wilchfort, Executive Vice Chair, Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)

Good afternoon, Chair Rivera, Chair Brannan, and members of the Committee on Culture and Finance. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Stephanie Hill Wilchfort, President & CEO of the Museum of the City of New York and Executive Vice Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG). I am here today to provide testimony on behalf of the CIGs – a coalition of 34 cultural organizations located in all five boroughs, including zoos, gardens, museums, and performing arts organizations.

We are testifying today to support Culture For All and request a **\$30 million baseline increase** to the DCLA Adopted Budget in FY26.

I want to start by thanking the Council for prioritizing culture and for your strong advocacy in securing a full restoration for our institutions in FY25 and for the historic \$45 million that was baselined in the FY26 Executive Budget.

While the \$45 million baseline allocation stabilizes current funding, it does not increase the overall budget for culture. A \$30 million baseline increase would be transformative for CIGs, DCLA, and programs across NYC. This \$30 million would not only ensure our institutions have the resources needed to fully serve New Yorkers and attract tourists, but it would also build the City's resilience as federal policies and funding cuts threaten the viability of NYC's institutions, programs, and the livelihoods of our artists.

Arts and culture generate \$110 billion in economic activity annually and are vital to the City's economy. Our cultural sector is also central to the success of our City's tourism industry and workforce. The Cultural Institutions Group alone employs 15,700 full and part-time staff of which 5,800 are union members. Furthermore, CIGs offer career pathways and training opportunities to more than 6,000 New Yorkers each year.

Investing in culture is investing in safe, public spaces for all New Yorkers. It is investing in quality of life in our City, which inspires families to make their home here. More than 120 million people attend performances and go to museums each year. 2.5 million students participate in our educational programs every year. Our institutions position New York City as a world-class

cultural hub and as a leader in STEAM education. CIGs also provide lifelong learning opportunities for older adults and accessible programming for neurodivergent audiences and audiences with disabilities.

This is a particularly important moment for the City to support our cultural institutions. The CIG recently conducted a survey indicating that our institutions have lost or are at risk of losing over \$80 million in current and future funding from the federal government. At least 60% of CIG respondents say this puts their institution at risk of deficits. We hope that the City will invest in the resilience of arts and culture such that we are not vulnerable during this time.

Investing in culture is investing in the heart and soul of New York. We ask the Council to baseline **\$30 million** for culture to ensure our sector can survive and thrive.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.



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

Submitted to the City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations on May 21, 2025

Thank you to Chair Rivera and the Committee for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Sara Roer, and I am the Interim Executive Director at Dance/NYC. Our organization serves and represents the estimated 6,000 dance workers and 1,700 dance entities of our city.

Dance workers play an essential role in preserving the resilience and interconnectedness of our city amidst regressive political forces. While immigrant communities are under attack, dance workers are teaching newly arrived youth in our schools, using movement to facilitate belonging beyond language. They're refusing attempts to quell free speech and erase diversity by putting on programming in parks, small businesses, community centers, and theaters that express all of the voices that make up New York City. They're putting in the hard work of using the arts to build stronger communities in an increasingly hostile environment.

But this vital work is not sustainable under current conditions. When the average dance worker wage is 15% below the NYC living wage, we need the city to be our partner. Dance/NYC and A.R.T./New York conducted a survey of 177 CDF grantees. Our data shows what's possible when the city supports culture. Fewer organizations received cuts in Fiscal Year 2025 than 2024— that 25% as compared to 69%. But our data was also clear that in the face of broader instability, this is not enough. 29% of organizations responded that they were unconfident or very unconfident in their contributed revenue goals. This was despite the fact that the survey came near the end of the fiscal year, when projections are more solid.

Mass disinvestment in our cultural infrastructure combined with the silencing of artistic expression means that we must do more to support our arts workers and organizations. That's why Dance/NYC is joining our colleagues in calling for a \$75 million baseline increase for DCLA. We also need increases for City Council initiatives, especially the Coalition of Theaters of Color, which hasn't had an increase in 5 years even though the number of organizations it serves has gone up by 40%.

Right now, our city sits at a crossroads. Our communities are hurting, and the silencing of artistic expression is being used as a tool to sow division and manufacture consent for the rollback of our rights. We have an opportunity to be bold, to say: our cultures are important, all of our cultures, and to invest in culture as a way of deeply investing in our city. We hope that you will join us in this.



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

Submitted to the City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations on May 21, 2025

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony, submitted on behalf of Dance/NYC ([Dance.NYC](https://hub.dance.nyc/)), a service organization that reaches over 6,000 individual dance artists, 1,700 dance entities, 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. Through its action-oriented research and advocacy, Dance/NYC seeks 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 calling on you to:

- **Increase and baseline \$75 million for the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA).** In addition to the baseline of \$45 million in the Executive Budget, we need a \$30 million baseline increase.
- **Increase funding for City Council initiatives** like: CASA, SU-CASA, Art a Catalyst for Change, Cultural Immigrant Initiative, Coalition of Theaters of Color, and Support for Arts Instruction. Specifically, the Coalition of Theaters of Color has not received an increase in five years despite increasing the number of organizations they represent from 50 to 70 in this timeframe.

The dance sector is vital to a livable New York City; yet, we're struggling

Dance and the arts are an inextricable part of thriving community life. Dance programming takes place across theaters, community centers, schools, faith institutions, public parks, and more, with 65% of dance entities conducting programming in public space.¹ This interconnectedness shows—cultural assets are associated with improved outcomes in health,

¹ State of NYC Dance 2023: Findings from the Dance Industry Census.
https://hub.dance.nyc/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/State-of-NYC-Dance-2023-Report-FINAL-23_12_11_ACC.pdf

schooling, and personal security.² This increased vitality is reflected in our economic impact. **Research indicates that arts and culture create the conditions for healthy economies by driving foot traffic and encouraging local spending.**³

Despite our sector's outsized social and economic impact, our workers and organizations are struggling. Based on Dance/NYC's most recent 2023 report,¹ **40% of dance organizations classify their financial health as weak or very weak. More than half of them hold no reserves, meaning even modest fluctuations in funding threaten to shut down organizations. On average, dance workers earn about 15% below NYC's living wage, while dancers and choreographers earn about \$23,000.** This makes living in our city entirely unaffordable for our workers—the median asking rent in 2023 was 82% more than the average dancer's monthly pre-tax income from dance.⁴ Nearly a quarter of dance workers have no savings, leaving them vulnerable to the sector's economic fluctuations. Despite this, 64% of producing dance workers fund their work out of their own pockets, reflecting the scarcity of external funding sources for dance.

Stable funding is critical and makes a difference for the arts and culture sector

City arts and culture funding is a key part of improving financial sustainability for dance and culture. Dance/NYC and A.R.T./New York recently surveyed 177 CDF grantees. This is our third year of conducting the CDF survey. In both FY23 and FY24, we found that over half of organizations reported CDF decreases, with 17% of organizations being zeroed out in FY24. This has had a deleterious impact on our sector, where organizations are already struggling. FY25 saw a significant improvement, with 25% of organizations reporting decreases compared to 69% in FY24. There were also greater increases, at around 59%. The majority of those who reported increases had received decreases the year prior.

This data shows the impact of the restorations to the budget made in FY24. **When we have more sustainable funding levels, fewer organizations are forced to cut staff and programming.** More organizations that received cuts may be able to begin to recover. However, this annual up-and-down is not sustainable. Increases for some organizations that received cuts may get them closer to recovery but do not make up for the losses they endured, or the greater context of instability since 2020.

The additional \$30 million addition to the baseline is key

² The Social Wellbeing of New York City's Neighborhoods: The Contribution of Culture and The Arts. <https://repository.upenn.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/d7531a8f-f046-497f-aa37-494486d98cf4/content>

³ Center for an Urban Future, Big Ideas to Help NYC Thrive in a Post-Pandemic Economy <https://nycfuture.org/research/big-ideas-to-help-nyc-thrive>

⁴ Office of the New York City Comptroller (2024). *Spotlight: New York City's Rental Housing Market*. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/spotlight-new-york-citys-rental-housing-market/>

Still, the increasing precarity in the sector means that baselining last year's levels is not enough. Despite improved outcomes, **29% of responding organizations stated they are unconfident or very unconfident in contributed revenue goals. This is despite the fact that many noted that they were answering near the end of the fiscal year, when their projections were more solid.** Since the survey period, organizations have had their grants terminated by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Discriminatory NEA grant requirements are set to especially impact BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ organizations. During a period in which traditional philanthropic and federal government funders are retreating, and in which cultural workers and organizations alike risk censorship of artistic expression, the city must protect arts and culture.

We need increased transparency and accountability

When conducting our analysis of the CDF survey results, it was difficult to draw definitive conclusions and properly contextualize the data due to an ongoing need for transparency. Key questions included: To what extent are available funds driven by prioritized criteria? How does overall outcome data compare to DCLA goals that were articulated in FY22? Is the distribution more equitable? Increased transparency on DCLA data, goals, and processes would pave the way for more equitable policies and distribution of funds.

It was also clear that overall funding levels were not the only issue. 59% of organizations were impacted very or somewhat negatively by the timing of the grant award. This especially impacted small organizations; 71% of organizations with budgets less than \$250K were impacted very or somewhat negatively. Planned timing shifts by the DCLA should help address these concerns. In addition, 89% agreed that DCLA should grant baselined general operating support within CDF. This demonstrates a need for greater year-to-year stability and overall organizational sustainability.

Once again, we call on the city government to:

- **Increase and baseline \$75 million for the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA)**
- **Increase funding for City Council initiatives** like: CASA, SU-CASA, Art a Catalyst for Change, Cultural Immigrant Initiative, Coalition of Theaters of Color, and Support for Arts Instruction

Dance workers and organizations have always used the arts to build stronger communities in an increasingly hostile environment. But with increasing pressures not just on our sector, but on our communities as a whole, we need your support. The additional \$30 million increase to the baseline would return cultural funding to its historical level of just **a quarter of one percent of**

the city budget, forming a foundation for growth. We hope you can join us in investing in the cultural infrastructure that keeps our city safe, whole, and thriving.



**Executive Budget Hearing Testimony on behalf of Dancewave, Inc.
New York City Council Committee on Finance
New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries
and International Intergroup Relations
Presented by Nicole Touzien on May 21, 2025**

Good afternoon, my name is Nicole Touzien and I'm the Executive Director of Dancewave.

Chair Rivera, Chair Brannan, Members of the Committees, and staff, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Dancewave.

With your focused advocacy and the city's investment, Dancewave is empowered to provide accessible, inclusive, and culturally competent dance programming to an all-ages citywide audience. We spend close to \$1M each year (over 80% of our budget) employing artists and arts workers who engage 6200 individuals with meaningful arts experiences.

Take Shaël, for example. Shaël has been a student at Dancewave for 14 years. We have seen her grow from a shy toddler into a highly accomplished young woman, poised and excited to start college next fall as a dance education major.

Shaël says "Dance is a powerful art form that not only promotes self-expression and creativity, but also serves as an important tool for community building and collective mental health. The community, strength, love, and growth that is harvested at Dancewave is unlike any other place."

Dancewave has played an important role in her development -- nurturing her artistic growth, expanding her perspectives and networks, and thanks to our career development program, connecting her with a million dollars in scholarship offers to universities across the country. Shaël's story is special to me, because I've witnessed her grow up at our organization, but her story is not unlike many others at Dancewave.

As someone who is tasked to work miracles with a budget one one-hundredth of a percent of the city budget, I understand and respect the dance of creative compromise we do during this process. Our administrative team is entirely composed of artists who have honed and polished their business skills, and, because of their lived experience as artists, have been able to maximize the impact of each of Dancewave's programs with less and less funding support each year.

The stark reality we are facing now is that we are running out of creative compromises. We have eliminated all non-essential spending, diversified our income, and implemented a three year strategic plan to help us improve every aspect of our business model. We simply need more funding. An additional \$30M needs to be added to the budget, on top of the \$45M baseline, so that organizations like Dancewave can continue to play such a vital role in our communities.

Thank you.

DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN ARTS ALLIANCE

May 24, 2025

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

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

Re: Testimony In support of \$75M to DCLA the adopted budget / Slightly expanded from
oral testimony presented 5/21/25

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. As Executive Director of the Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance, I am here to join with my colleagues in expressing my gratitude for the \$45 Million baselined in the executive budget and advocate for an increase of \$30 Million - \$75 million total.

Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance (DBAA) is a network of 60 non-profit arts and cultural organizations in the greater Downtown Brooklyn area. Our members include every presenting arts venue situated in the Brooklyn Cultural District, as well as a range of smaller venues, dance and theatre companies, small galleries, and others. Our members collectively serve more than 5 million individuals annually, including 100,000 school-aged children, employ around 4,000 individuals, and generate more than \$200 million annually in economic impact.

DBAA is dedicated to fostering a supportive network for arts and culture and addressing issues that affect our work at the neighborhood and borough level. The context for our work is the growth and gentrification of Brooklyn, where we are fighting for attention and resources amid the large-scale investments in the commercial sector and larger non-profits (for example the famed “eds and meds”). There has been no equivalent investment in scaling the arts. We ask the question of “how do the arts survive gentrification” and not “what do the arts need to grow and to meet the increased demand.” That’s the question I’m trying to put out there to anyone who will listen, where we all know the basic answer is more money. Specifically more money needs to be made available for small and mid-sized organizations to scale up, and more money available for the full range of talented artists and passionate administrators to work in the field and not just those who have proximity to wealthy donors.

New York City is the art capital of the United States precisely because of its diverse and dynamic non-profit arts ecosystem. The non-profit arts sector nurtures artists – giving space, time, professional support, and often employment – and crucially, nurtures audiences and relationships in our communities, partnering with schools and community centers and driving traffic to local retail and restaurants. Non-profit arts organizations are a vital part of the infrastructure for our communities.

DCLA provides crucial funding for this infrastructure, especially in its support for small and mid-sized organizations through the Cultural Development fund. It is the only City agency fully devoted to supporting our core mission as arts organizations (the “social.service” aspects of our work is funded when it flows through DYCD or DOE, but not our existence as a field). I had

a conversation with someone at DCLA recently about the structural issues inherent in trying to work with Small Business Services or NYC Conventions and Tourism to support arts organizations – they are simply not set up in a way that is beneficial for non-commercial arts organizations; the combination of scale and their orientation towards commerce is not a fit.

The combination of pandemic losses, inflation, changes in philanthropy, and yes, the gutting of the National Endowment from the Arts, have all contributed to a very adverse environment for the non-profit arts sector. We are already seeing programming pared back, and this will almost certainly increase as the effects of cutting NEA, NEH, and IMLS funds are realized. The demand for our work has not abated, indeed for many, it has increased, but there is little funding available to scale up. Unlike for profit, businesses, we cannot simply raise prices to a level that will cover increased costs while continuing to make our work inclusive and accessible. We are also coming dangerously close to previous eras when careers in the arts were only accessible to those with independent wealth, this time without the mitigating factor that it was possible to live cheaply in New York City for those willing to make the sacrifice. The cost of living has become too high for many to survive, much less thrive.

I often find myself frustrated when the talk turns to the larger crises in community cohesion and mental health, and the way these are intertwined with public safety and physical health. The arts have been proven to greatly enhance our well-being as individuals and at a community level. This makes sense, the arts remind us that we are at core, free and creative beings who are connected to one another, often through the cultural rituals and traditions kept alive by the non-profit arts sector. By my rough math the requested \$30 million is about .03% of the NYC budget. It is a small but powerful investment to make in our work; it is also an efficient investment in the well-being of our communities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and for your ongoing championing of our work.

EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO NEW YORK

FY2026 Executive Budget Hearing: Department of Cultural Affairs Testimony to the New York City Council The Essential Role of El Museo del Barrio & the Need for Sustained Cultural Investment May 21, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Rivera and Members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations, and Chair Brannan and Members of the Committee on Finance:
Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Gonzalo Casals. I serve as Co-Director of the Culture & Arts Policy Institute and Interim Chief Operating Officer at El Museo del Barrio.

First, I want to thank the administration for responding to the cultural sector's call and including a historic \$45 million baseline increase for the Department of Cultural Affairs in the Executive Budget. This reset is a critical step toward stabilizing the sector and ending the annual "budget dance" that puts organizations and communities in limbo.

But while this increase brings long-overdue stability, it does not bring growth. It holds the line—but doesn't move us forward—despite rising costs and increasing demand. That's why we're urging the Council to secure an additional \$30 million baseline increase for DCLA in Fiscal Year 2026.

This investment would expand access, ignite opportunity, and ensure all New Yorkers see themselves reflected in the city's cultural landscape. It would help offset rising expenses in labor, security, programming, and operations, and reverse the sharp decline in government support at a moment when we can least afford it.

With federal funding under attack and private philanthropy increasingly risk-averse, New York City must step up. A \$30 million increase amounts to less than 0.03% of the City's budget, but it would be transformative for cultural institutions and their communities.

We're facing a perfect storm: inflation, a deepening affordability crisis, and the strategic dismantling of federal cultural support. According to the Independent Budget Office, funding from the NEA, NEH, and IMLS to NYC institutions has dropped by over \$32 million. At the same time, private giving is shrinking due to political pressure and risk-aversion.

This is the landscape in which **El Museo del Barrio** continues to lead, with resilience, innovation, and impact.

El Museo is the only Latinx collection-holding museum in New York City and the leading art museum in the United States dedicated to Latinx art, artists, and audiences. That alone makes us essential. But we're also a community anchor in East Harlem, preserving and celebrating over 50 years of cultural history and creative expression from Latinx, Caribbean, and Latin American communities. Founded in 1969 by a group of visionary artists, parents, educators, and activists, El Museo was born out of a demand for a space that reflected the voices and lived experiences of our community. More than fifty years later, that mission is as urgent as ever.

As New York's Latinx population grows, so does the need for institutions like ours to foster representation, cultural pride, and opportunity.

El Museo's impact goes far beyond exhibitions. We are a vital hub for education, community engagement, and economic activity. Each year, we serve thousands of New Yorkers through free and low-cost programming that is vibrant, inclusive, and deeply rooted in tradition.

EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO NEW YORK

- Our **Three Kings Day Parade & Celebration** brings together more than 2,000 families, schools, and artists in a joyful tribute to Latinx heritage.
- Our **Día de los Muertos** programming creates intergenerational spaces to honor ancestry and cultural memory.
- Our **Super Sábados** offer free art-making workshops and bilingual gallery tours that eliminate financial barriers to participation.
- And our **Uptown Bounce** summer series, co-hosted with the Museum of the City of New York, turns East Harlem into a stage for music, dance, and connection.

Yet in the current climate, programs like Uptown Bounce are at stake – making our advocacy and support more critical than ever.

Through our **Bilingual Arts Education program**, we serve more than 8,000 participants annually—primarily Title I public school students and dual-language learners. But we are forced to turn many away. We currently accommodate 300 school groups per year, with 250 more on our waitlist due to limited hours and resources. With greater investment, we could meet this demand and expand equitable access to arts education across the city.

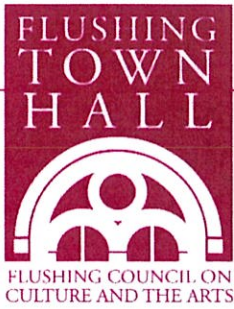
El Museo is also home to a **state-of-the-art theater**—a rare cultural asset in East Harlem with untapped potential. With funding, we could activate this space as a venue for performances, film screenings, artist talks, and more. We strongly urge the Council to support El Museo's inclusion in the **Coalition of Theatres of Color (CTC)**. This would help us amplify culturally relevant programming, elevate underrepresented artists, and provide East Harlem with the rich performing arts experiences it deserves.

We thank the Council for its vision and commitment to cultural equity. We urge you to affirm that vision with an additional \$30 million investment in DCLA's FY26 budget. This is more than a budget decision—it's a statement about the kind of city we want to be.

For over half a century, El Museo has been a home for creativity, learning, and belonging. Every child who walks through our doors deserves to see their story honored. Every family deserves access to the joy, healing, and possibility of the arts.

Let's ensure that the next generation of New Yorkers can grow up in a city that values and invests in their cultural voices.

Thank you. I welcome the opportunity to continue this conversation and work together to strengthen our city's creative future.



Ellen Kodadek
Executive & Artistic Director

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FY2026 Executive Budget Hearing – Committee on Culture, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations – May 21, 2025

Testimony on behalf of Flushing Town Hall (aka Flushing Council on
Culture and the Arts)

Sami Abu Shumays

My name is Sami Abu Shumays, and I'm Deputy Director at Flushing Town Hall, one of the small CIGs, and a steering committee member of both the LatinX Arts Consortium of NY (LXNY) and the Cultural Equity Coalition of New York (CECNY). Flushing Town Hall serves Queens and all of New York City with extraordinarily diverse culturally-relevant programs, including music, dance, visual arts, and theater programs, arts education programs for students and senior citizens, and regrants and professional development programs for artists and small organizations in Queens.

Let me start by saying that we're enormously grateful to the Administration for the baseline increase, and to the council for its steadfast advocacy for that.

However, the new baseline for Flushing Town Hall only brings our budget figure up to \$516,676 which **still represents a cut of \$306,207 from our FY25 allocation of \$822,883**. This still represents a **37% cut** to our operating budget from DCLA and a cut of 8% out of our total annual budget. If this cut is sustained in the adopted FY26 budget it could necessitate us having to lay off 5-6 of our full time employees, which represents just under a third of our staff.

So while you may hear folks saying that "the budget dance has ended" – it has not ended for Flushing Town Hall. We have not been made whole.

I don't have anything to add that hasn't been said by my many amazing colleagues in the cultural sector. I'll just say this:

PLEASE LOOK CLOSELY AT THE NUMBERS AND MAKE SURE EVERYONE IS HELD HARMLESS, from the CDF organizations – who desperately need a new funding model with baselined operating support – to the CIG organizations.

We're not looking at the "BEST BUDGET EVER" - we're looking at a cut.

Please baseline an additional \$30 million for FY2026 and please make sure that the organizations like ours who serve diverse and lower income communities are truly supported and made sustainable.

In a year when we've already faced the termination of our NEA award and expect to be zeroed out in FY2026 this budget is a disappointment at best.

EXECUTIVE BUDGET - FY26
 OPERATING BUDGET
 AGENCY: 126 DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
 UNIT OF APPROPRIATION: 022 OTHER CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

				EXECUTIVE BUDGET FY26			
				MODIFIED FY25-04/23/25			
OBJECT CLASS	IC REF	OBJ DESCRIPTION		#	CNTRCT	AMOUNT	INC/DEC
SUBTOTAL FOR BUDGET CODE 2213						1,330,070	
BUDGET CODE: 2215 FLUSHING TOWN HALL							
40	OTHER	SER&CHR 856001 42C HEAT LIGHT & POWER				79,404	3,913
		SUBTOTAL FOR OTHER SER&CHR				79,404	3,913
70	FXD	MIS CHGS 715 PAYMENTS TO CULTURAL INSTITUTN				516,676	306,207-
		SUBTOTAL FOR FXD MIS CHGS				516,676	306,207-
SUBTOTAL FOR BUDGET CODE 2215						596,080	302,294-
BUDGET CODE: 2216 MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE							
40	OTHER	SER&CHR 856001 42C HEAT LIGHT & POWER				717,167	51,937
		SUBTOTAL FOR OTHER SER&CHR				717,167	51,937
70	FXD	MIS CHGS 715 PAYMENTS TO CULTURAL INSTITUTN				739,911	171,067-
		SUBTOTAL FOR FXD MIS CHGS				739,911	171,067-
SUBTOTAL FOR BUDGET CODE 2216						1,457,078	119,130-
BUDGET CODE: 2220 LINCOLN CENTER							
40	OTHER	SER&CHR 856001 42C HEAT LIGHT & POWER				571,260	152,095
		SUBTOTAL FOR OTHER SER&CHR				571,260	152,095
70	FXD	MIS CHGS 715 PAYMENTS TO CULTURAL INSTITUTN				1,289,752	70,607-
		SUBTOTAL FOR FXD MIS CHGS				1,289,752	70,607-
SUBTOTAL FOR BUDGET CODE 2220						1,861,012	81,488
BUDGET CODE: 2227 CASA funds for CIGs							
70	FXD	MIS CHGS 715 PAYMENTS TO CULTURAL INSTITUTN				1,500,000	1,500,000-
		SUBTOTAL FOR FXD MIS CHGS				1,500,000	1,500,000-
SUBTOTAL FOR BUDGET CODE 2227						1,500,000	1,500,000-

Testimony by Carol Benovic-Bradley

New York City Council Committee on Finance & Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations – Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026 & Executive Capital Plan for Fiscal Years 2025-2029

5/21/25

Good afternoon, Chairs Brannan and Rivera, and esteemed Council Members. My name is Carol Benovic-Bradley, and I've been visiting libraries in New York City since I was a child. Today, I live in Ridgewood, Queens, where I frequent the Ridgewood branch of the Queens Public Library (QPL). I also serve as Vice President of the Friends of Ridgewood Library.

Libraries played a foundational role in shaping my love for reading, my sense of community, and my deep appreciation for our amazing city. As a child, it began with books. I was the kind of kid who could finish a book in an afternoon—so the library helped keep our book spending in check. Riding the bus to the Brooklyn Central branch with my older sister always felt like an adventure: a journey across the borough to a magical world filled with books and calm.

As an adult, libraries have come to mean even more. I love the periodical and newspaper collection, using the Libby app, and I make frequent use of the printing services. And yes, the library still helps me (kind of) keep my book spending in check.

What I've grown to appreciate most is the library as a community space. It's a place to learn about local writers. To enjoy live music and the arts. To connect with my neighbors.

At the Ridgewood branch last November, we hosted a holiday "Friendsgiving" dinner—sharing a hot meal and conversation with over 40 neighbors attending. We've given away hundreds of books, supporting literacy across all ages with comics, popular novels, or titles that had been challenged or banned.

As a Friend of Ridgewood Library, I've made real friendships. I've helped care for the library's garden—creating a peaceful oasis for visitors. I've played bingo, done crafts, and attended events hosted by other local groups, all right at my branch. I was able to attend the opening of the new Far Rockaway branch and celebrate the resources, events, and sense of community it offers. I have a network of neighbors who I can read with, trade books with, and who I call friends. I'm endlessly grateful for these experiences and relationships and for everything libraries offer. It's my greatest wish that all New Yorkers and visitors to our city get to experience all that our libraries have to offer.

This is exactly why our libraries need more funding. It is my dream to see all branches open seven days a week. Where extended hours are considered standard. Where our libraries can plan for the future with confidence and invest in staff and collections. Where facilities don't just keep up, but thrive, offering modern amenities that reflect the needs of the communities they serve.

Investing in our libraries is investing in people, in our collective future, and in the strength of our communities. Please support QPL, BPL, and NYPL with increased funding so they can continue their efforts to promote not just reading but learning, service, and community.

Thank you.

**Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.
FY26 Executive Budget Testimony
May 21, 2025**

On behalf of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, we are submitting this written testimony in support of the unified cultural sector request to restore culture funding to its historic level with a **\$75 million baseline increase** to the Department of Cultural Affairs budget in FY26. Speaker Adams, Finance Chair Brannan, Cultural Affairs Chair Rivera and Members of the New York City Council, **culture is essential to the vibrancy, diversity, and quality of life of New York City** and the upcoming weeks of negotiations are crucial to supporting these spaces of creativity, learning, healing, and growth across the City.

We applaud the Administration for committing to culture in the Executive Budget with the historic addition of **\$45 million** in baselined funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs, along with the restoration and baselining of \$41 million for arts in education. This presents an opportunity for our cultural champions in the City Council to fortify the arts and culture sector with the **additional \$30 million to the baseline** and bring culture back to **.25% of the city budget** for the first time in ten years. We thank you for your continued advocacy and look to your leadership in safeguarding New York City's cultural ecosystem.

The City's cultural organizations of various sizes in every neighborhood are the beating heart of New York City. Annually this sector generates \$110 billion in economic activity, 13% of the City's economy, and employs more than 300,000 New Yorkers. The cultural organizations that make New York the cultural capital of the world welcome over 307 million tourists and locals every year and over 77% of those are attending for free. These organizations act as community centers providing peaceful public spaces, workforce development, STEAM education, food pantries, community blood drives, resource fairs, mental health support, community composting, violence prevention programs and so much more. Our spaces are where one comes to open their mind, feed their soul, and nurture their wellbeing.

The Lincoln Center campus is home to 11 arts and arts education nonprofits, presenters of emerging and established local and global artists, and civic and arts education partners to community-based organizations. The resident organizations at Lincoln Center include the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Film at Lincoln Center, Jazz at Lincoln Center, The Juilliard School, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center Theater, The Metropolitan Opera (Met Opera), New York City Ballet, New York Philharmonic, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, and the School of American Ballet (SAB). These organizations represent the cultural program groups and members of the Cultural Institutions Group. Funding culture brings city-wide economic resiliency and growth, invests in tourism, and lays the foundation for an equitable and educated New York City.

At Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, we are committed to being a place where all New Yorkers see themselves and feel welcome. We continue to see new and growing audiences attending free and Choose-What-You-Pay performances throughout *Summer for the City* and year-round through *Lincoln Center Presents*. We welcome guests to come as they are with *Lincoln Center Moments*, designed for older adults with dementia, and *Passport to the Arts* and *Big Umbrella Festival* for young people with

disabilities and neurodiverse audiences. This work is ongoing, and our audiences know first-hand the positive impact of culture in our city. Here are just a few of their stories:

“Everything, every performer, every event, every staff member and every space at Lincoln Center is always stellar! It's all amazing and such an integral part of the NYC I am most proud of as a native New Yorker!” – *Lincoln Center Presents attendee*

“So much FUN! The music, atmosphere, and positive vibe amongst people. The plaza felt like a global family, a real cosmic, universal experience.” – *Summer for the City attendee*

“The campus is inviting and strives to further expand this invitation culturally and socially, bringing together global cultures and audiences.” - *Summer for the City attendee*.

“These free autism friendly programs are the highlight of my daughter’s life. Our family looks forward to them all year. Thank you for making it possible for us to experience music and ballet as a family. It means everything to us. Autism is such an isolating and lonely disorder for our daughter and for us as her parents. There are not a lot of places we can bring her without judgement about her happy noises and non-contextual laughter. Being able to bring her to Lincoln center to experience the best performances in the city is a lifeline for us. Thank you.” – *Passport to the Arts attendee*

“My mother has always been very active. She wanted to go everywhere, see everything, and meet everyone. She still enjoys her life, but going out is increasingly stressful. When we leave friends or performances, she often asks whether she behaved all right, or did anything improper. My mother finds Lincoln Center Moments stimulating without the stress of feeling like she might not fit in. She seems much more relaxed and less unsure of how she appears to others. The quality of the performances have been excellent (she still has good taste and high standards). The difference is striking. She remains confident the entire session and practically skips home. She cannot remember any of it. She is globally confused. But somehow, she knows that she belongs. The last time we went, she said, "I don't know what we just did, but I am pretty sure it was fun." – *Lincoln Center Moments attendee*

The cultural sector is at risk amongst growing operational challenges and ongoing cuts to previously reliable federal support. City support this year is essential for the longevity of the arts in New York City. A healthy cultural ecosystem helps enrich our economic resiliency and growth and uplifts the mental and civic health of communities.

In support of the artists that grace our stages, the young people that will be the artists and audiences of tomorrow, and the ecosystem of small businesses supported by the cultural sector, we urge you to be champions for culture in the Fiscal Year 2026 budget. Culture has the data-proven ability to strengthen communities, improve education outcomes, decrease youth involvement in the criminal justice system, and improve the mental health and well-being of neighborhoods. City funding allows the cultural sector to fulfill its role within a healthy society as spaces for convening, learning, and healing.

I thank the members of the Committee on Finance, members of the City Council and Committee staff. Securing **\$75 million in baselined funding** for arts and culture with the addition of **\$30 million** and the **full funding of all City Council initiatives** from the City Council is crucial for the entire sector, which includes live performance, living science centers, gardens, museums, and much more, to continue serving New Yorkers as an integral part of New York City’s identity. Lincoln Center is committed to New

York City as a place where everyone is welcome and where they belong, and we continue to engage in community to embrace the values and practices of being an active citizen through artistic practice and experiences.

Thank you again for your continued leadership. We are grounded in the belief that the arts are fundamental to our shared human experience—that they are crucial to expanding our collective imagination, creating shared connections and dialogue, and they should be accessible to 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.

Respectfully submitted,

Eleni DeSiervo
Senior Director, Government and Community Relations
Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.
edesiervo@lincolncenter.org
(929) 388-9489

From: [Lucy Sexton](#)
To: [Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: Lucy Sexton testimony for budget hearing on culture May 21, 2025
Date: Wednesday, May 21, 2025 3:22:55 PM
Attachments: [Lucy Sexton Testimony City Council Hearing on Culture and Budget May 21 2025.docx](#)

[REDACTED]

Lucy Sexton (she/her)
Executive Director
New Yorkers for Culture and Arts
NY4CA.org

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Lucy Sexton [REDACTED]
Date: Wed, May 21, 2025, 3:20 PM
Subject: Lucy Sexton testimony for budget hearing on culture May 21, 2025
To: Brannan, Justin <JBrannan@council.nyc.gov>, Rivera, Carlina
<CLRRivera@council.nyc.gov>
[REDACTED]

Thanks for hearing my testimony on why the \$30m add to the baseline is critical.

1. CDF does not have what it needs to fund orgs across the city; orgs still getting zero or much less than in previous years
2. DCLA needs more staff. Currently has 9 program officers serving 1100 grantees. Thus is an equity issue since smaller orgs are more dependent on help.
3. We are under attack for feel gov. NEA, NEH. IMLS together gave NYC cultural groups \$32m in 2024. That is all going away. Add to that tens of millions lost by zoos and science museums from federal science funding.
4. The NYC economy will need us as the fed policy takes it's toll!

There is more, but remember adding an additional \$30m to the baseline gets us BACK to .25% if tge city budget. We have been receiving less than that for 10 years.thank you both deeply fir all your work and support!

Lucy
[REDACTED]

Lucy Sexton (she/her)
Executive Director
New Yorkers for Culture and Arts
NY4CA.org

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Lucy Sexton** [REDACTED]
Date: Wed, May 21, 2025, 2:43 PM
Subject:
To: [REDACTED]

-
- As you've heard we are asking for \$30M to be added to the baseline. Why? Many reasons I'll list a few: but I want to note that \$30m will bring us up to .25% --for the first time in 10 years. We have long asked for 1%.
- Reason 1—to fully fund the Cultural Development Fund
- many orgs that depend on the cultural development fund are still getting zero—losing funding for the first time or worse, like the Chocolate Factory a beloved staple of Western Queens who had long received support, getting zero for the 2nd year in a row. Those that did have funding restored like Bronx Arts Ensemble received less than half what they had been getting two years ago. CDF simply does not have enough to fund cultural organizations across the five boroughs.
- 2. DCLA needs more staff. They currently have 9 program officers for 1100 grantees. Its an equity issue since smaller orgs with less capacity are more dependent on help from program officers
- 3. We are under attack from the federal goverment

- Institute for Museum and Library Services, NEH, and NEA together provided NYC cultural groups w \$32M in 2024--that is all going away. And the zoos, gardens and science museums are losing tens of millions more in science funding. We need this \$30M added to the baseline to protect us as we face these devastating headwinds over the next 3 years.

You know who else needs us protected and stable? The economy. It will need all the help it can get in the coming years. And we are why people visit, why people live here, why people go out to bars and restaurants---we generate 13% of the city's economy.

Even more important, our communities will need the connection and well being culture provides. I leave you with this: a recently released study showed culture's impact on the overall health of a community was greatest in low wealth neighborhoods. Children in areas with low income but strong culture and arts had test scores 91% higher than kids in similar neighborhoods that lacked cultural assets. So as you work to do all you can for those communities most impacted by cruel federal cuts, remember that

this modest investment in culture is essential to keeping those communities whole, connected, educated, and healthy.



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

May 21, 2025, 10am

TESTIMONY

Juliana Cope, Assistant Executive Director for Development and External Affairs, Jcope@mind-builders.org, 718-652-6256

Thank you all – you, dedicated public officials for your service and for this opportunity to share the work of Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center and other community-based organizations who train the next generation of New York City civic leaders and cultural contributors and on behalf of the youth, families, and neighborhoods we are honored to serve.

Founded in 1978, Mind-Builders began with a grassroots mission to inspire the growth of local youth and families in the Northeast Bronx by providing low-cost, high-quality arts education. Since then, we have grown to become a cultural anchor for our community – more than just an arts center, we bring together best practices in arts education, youth development and community engagement in the belief that a healthy community is a vital ingredient in the healthy development of a child.

For 47 years, Mind-Builders has offered hundreds of music, dance, theater, folk culture, production corps and martial arts programs serving over 750 young people every week. In 2015, we were honored to be selected to participate in the first NYC cohort of Universal Pre-K providers and have continued the program since thanks to ongoing support from the City of New York. During the school year, 18 three- to four-year-olds and their families participated in our full-day Universal Pre-K Program. This free, arts-centered program, including Suzuki violin, follows the curriculum established by the NYC Department of Education, with whom we are so very fortunate to partner. We have close partnerships with the local public schools, which send their children to us for arts instruction including through contracted performing arts residencies, and for the past 10 years our successful Pre-Kindergarten program has served as a feeder into the local school kindergartens, where we help families and students enroll. Many of our Pre-K families stay with us year after year, to participate in our after school and Saturday arts and culture programs in music, dance, theater, folk culture, theater production and martial arts.

Intrinsic to our purpose is the community we serve, which is predominantly lower-income; our children and families identify as West African, Black, Latino, and/or Caribbean. Participants come from every zip code in the Bronx, but predominantly from neighborhoods local to our facility – Olinville, Wakefield, Williamsbridge, and Norwood, which have historically had fewer safety nets than their peers, despite greater need. Mind-Builders employs dedicated staff coming from the five boroughs: professional teaching artists, pre-kindergarten instructors, support and admin staff, reflective of the communities we serve. Our work is woven into the fabric of our neighborhood and our staff continue to make transformation in the lives of our young people possible.

Organizations like Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. Like so many nonprofits, our funding has been impacted by changes at the federal level including a loss of \$40,000 in anticipated renewed NEA support for our Community Folk Culture internship program in addition to longstanding partner foundations and corporations are citing diminished funds and refocusing their funding priorities due to federal changes. We will continue to prioritize our programs and public delivery of services throughout this new time of uncertainty. We call on the City to continue your ongoing investments in the cultural sector, supporting work that effectively transforms lives, neighborhoods and cities. We look forward to the opportunity to continue to provide arts residencies for public schools and UPK services to the community.



Powering
New Victory
& New 42 Studios

Recipient of a 2025 Tony Honor
for Excellence in the Theatre

May 21, 2025

Dear Members of the Committees on Finance and Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations,

First, we would like to thank the New York City Council, and in particular the Committees on Cultural Affairs and Finance, along with Chairs Carlina Rivera and Justin Brannan, for your tireless efforts to restore city funding for cultural organizations like New 42 and our New Victory Theater. As we all know, the arts and culture sector exists at the very heart of our City, and meaningful funding for cultural organizations is critical to maintaining our status as a world leader in the arts.

As many young New Yorkers continue to have their first engagements with live performance at the New Victory Theater, we are acutely aware of the transformative power of the arts, expanding kid's socioemotional development and opening up their creative potential. For the past two years, New 42 has sadly seen a reduction in DCLA CDF funding and has not been awarded Speaker Initiative Funding in recent fiscal years. These reductions in funding have caused a strain on our already limited resources, making it more difficult to think expansively and sustainably about how we invite ALL New Yorkers to engage with the arts.

This year, New 42 additionally experienced a cut in federal support when the NEA withdrew its funding recommendation for one of our 2024-25 New Victory Theater productions. The loss of funding occurred following the conclusion of the production's run, which meant that costs had already been incurred. Securing replacement funding at this point is highly challenging.

We continue to urge the City Council to fight for essential cultural funding in FY26. **New 42's mission is to make extraordinary performing arts a vital part of everyone's life from the earliest years onward.** We partner with over 130 schools throughout the five boroughs to provide dynamic, in-classroom arts education as well as welcome up to 19,000 students into the New Victory Theater for the highly-subsidized rate of \$2 per ticket - the same price since 1995. Additionally, we continue our partnership with the New York City Housing Authority and have distributed over 3,000 free tickets to NYCHA residents citywide over the past three seasons. These programs (and more) rely on city funding.

Thank you for ensuring that New Yorkers of all ages have access to world-class performing arts. We welcome you to the New Victory Theater to witness how our arts and educational programs impact thousands of New York City children and families each year.



Powering
New Victory
& NEW 42 Studios

Recipient of a 2025 Tony Honor
for Excellence in the Theatre

New 42's Impact

New Victory Education:

- "None of my students have ever been to a theater before! Some of them had never even taken the train until today! This is so exciting for us." - *NYC Teacher*
- "Thanks for making our students feel welcome!" - *NYC Teacher*
- "I come here to learn to become a better theater teacher." - *NYC Teacher*
- "I love that I can just relax when I come here, you all totally have this...New Victory is the best field trip we come on. You are so organized." - *NYC Teacher*

Our Bring Your Family NYCHA Partnership:

- "My partner never went to see shows as a kid so I am also opening him to this world...It's really important to show your family the arts and the theater and it is always a really great quality family time." - *Resident of NYCHA-managed housing*
- "Thank you all for your work! I'm so truly grateful to be able to do this and expose my children to this place. I don't know how it is behind the scenes but I know it must be a lot and we couldn't be more grateful for this program and opportunity." - *Resident of NYCHA-managed housing*

New Victory Theater Presentations:

- "This is exactly the thing that we need to be doing today. Thanks for bringing us some joy." - *Parent*
- "I cannot pick my favorite part. It was all my favorite" - *Kid*
- "You all are awesome, you really do cater to everyone's access needs." - *Parent*

Sincerely,

Kristen Barrett
Vice President of Development
(646) 223-3081
kbarrett@new42.org



**NYBG Testimony to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations
Wednesday, May 21, 2025**

Good afternoon Chair Rivera, Chair Brennan, and Members of the Committees. I am Angel Hernandez, Director of Government Relations for the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG), which is a member of the Cultural Institutions Group, the CIG. Thank you for accepting this written testimony and for your ongoing support in our city's cultural community. I also want to thank Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, and your colleagues in the council for their support as well.

The recent announcement of a \$45M baseline in our Culture and Arts budget marks a historic moment for the Department of Cultural Affairs. On behalf of NYBG, I want to thank Speaker Adams, Chair Rivera, and Chair Brennan for their unwavering support and efforts in this achievement. The increase allows the agency to make pivotal investments in our city's cultural institutions, an accomplishment that will empower these local economic engines to preserve jobs and create more opportunities for the communities they serve. The investment also comes at a time of uncertainty in our nation's broader funding of cultural and arts programming. After many years of advocating for a baseline in the city's cultural budget to return back to historic funding levels, cultural institutions now focus on withstanding federal cuts as they currently grow, while inflation has rampantly swelled since the last cultural budget baseline 15 years ago. Therefore, today I sit in solidarity with my colleagues in the cultural community and ask for your support in **baselining \$30M of the Department of Cultural Affairs'(DCLA) budget in the upcoming fiscal year adoption.**

The baseline would make an economic impact that can bring our city's cultural institutions to a steadfast position. As a whole, our community can continue our role in the cultural economy to help generate billions of dollars in city revenues, while expanding as service providers for the betterment of local communities. At NYBG, such an increase would bring many potentials to fruition. For instance, our school partnership programs and the *Edible Academy* and newly restored *Everett Children's Adventure*

Garden would see an increase of staff and resource capacity to serve more Bronx public school students. With a renown educational program in the plant sciences and nutrition, a significant boost in NYBG's baseline funding would indeed empower the institution as a major provider. We also advocate with our *Sci Network NY* coalition colleagues to increase the initiative's funding with a \$30M baseline. Our paid internships for city high school students can increase three-fold from previous fiscal years, and thus expands our reach to offer economic opportunities and career skills for many generations.

Yet, a full baseline does not only help expand current initiatives at NYBG, but it can also help create new ones too. The yet to be instituted *Rooted in Accessibility* initiative, which funds the enhancement and expansion of accessibility programming at NYBG, along with three other CIG botanical gardens, can become a reality. Under the new initiative, the gardens can work with the borough's District 75 schools, senior centers, and local VA hospitals, and provide more staff to offer quality programming to address a variety of complexed mental and physical needs. New initiative funding also includes training for internal staff to keep informed off certain conditions, rules, and regulations.

Outside the garden's gates, baseline funding allows NYBG community endeavors to expand and flourish. At *Karol's Community Urban Farm*, a site located in the Castle Hill NYCHA houses in the Bronx, NYBG can enhance its service reach to local residents, especially for families and older adults, with more staffing to offer free programming. Our *Community Composting* programs, funded by the city council and powered by our Bronx Green Up team, can expand its staff capacity and continue its boots-on-the-ground work with local residents to help revitalize and maintain urban greenspaces throughout the Bronx.

I want to conclude this testimony by extending an invitation to you all, to visit our latest summer installment *Van Gogh's Flowers*, which opens this week. Only a baseline **of \$30 million in FY26** can allow NYBG to continue its mission of public engagement on this level, despite the obstacles that lie ahead.

Thank you for your time.

Angel Hernandez, *Director of Government Relations*



Testimony for the New York City Council Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget Hearing - Libraries

May 21, 2025

Good morning,

My name is Max Prime. I serve the New York Library Association (NYLA) as its Director of Government Relations and Advocacy.

NYLA is a not-for-profit corporation formed to lead, educate, and advocate for the advancement of New York State's library community. With over 4,470 individual and 350 institutional members statewide, we represent librarianship in the public, school, academic, and special library settings.

On behalf of NYLA, I thank the City Council and its members for providing the opportunity to submit testimony regarding library funding in the City of New York's FY 2026 Budget.

Background

New York's libraries are instruments of the common good – institutions established to serve our collective interest in guaranteeing access to art, education, and community for all people. As centers of foundational and lifelong learning, they also bridge gaps in access to critical resources for vulnerable populations. Whether aiding job seekers and new Americans, assisting with tasks like obtaining government ID and navigating the Health Insurance Marketplace, or working to close the digital divide, our libraries are local support hubs for those in need.

This month, the State of New York adopted a FY 2026 budget that makes robust investments in flagship library aid programs. In its final form, the budget increases State Aid for Libraries by \$2.473 million to a total of \$106.325 million and delivers a \$44 million investment in State Aid for Library Construction. By buoying these categories of spending, Governor Hochul and legislative leaders have moved to ensure that libraries and library systems have the state backing needed to effectively leverage local funds and provide patrons with the collections, programs, services, and facilities they deserve.

NYLA is grateful that, for the first time in recent years, these statewide library investments have not been delivered in the context of proposed budget cuts for New York Public Library (NYPL), Brooklyn Public Library (BPL), or Queens Public Library (QPL). With this the case, the present moment is an opportunity to not only maintain current operations in city libraries but pursue meaningful expansion of existing services and facilitate progress towards long-term strategic goals.

New Yorkers deserve fully supported libraries with dependable access not limited by inconsistent funding. NYLA thanks the New York City Council for consistently championing libraries and joins with NYPL, BPL, QPL, and library patrons across New York in advancing the following budget requests.

Unmet Expense Needs & City Council Libraries Initiative:

Our libraries require consistent investment that keeps pace with rising operational expenses and the ever-evolving needs of their patrons. These costs include those required to accommodate wage and healthcare increases, maintain staffing levels that keep libraries open and accessible, and acquire the resources required to keep collections and services that match community demand.

- ***NYLA requests the City invest and baseline \$44.8 million for unmet library expense needs, with \$18.9 million for NYPL, \$12.4 million for BPL, and \$13.5 million for QPL.***
- ***NYLA requests restoration and baselining of the City Council's \$15.7 million Libraries Initiative, with \$6.94 million for NYPL, \$4.38 million for BPL, and \$4.38 million for QPL.***
- ***NYLA requests an additional \$2 million investment and baselining of City Council Speaker Adams' proposed expansion of seven-day service through 10 branches.***

Capital Investment:

For just the four-year period spanning 2023 to 2027, the New York State Library estimates that statewide construction needs total more than \$1.75 billion. \$944,851,652, roughly 54% of that total, is derived from sorely needed projects in the NYPL (\$502,164,600), BPL (\$385,350,000) and QPL (\$57,337,052) systems. This is a growth of 22.5% over the \$771,220,662 of estimated need during the last five-year period calculated by the State Library (2021 – 2025), outpacing the increased need for construction funding statewide in the same period (16%) by 6.5%. Since this data was compiled, capital needs have continued to grow at a rapid pace, with a whopping \$1.2 billion in currently identifiable capital needs across NYPL (\$485M), BPL (\$307.7), and QPL (\$413.3M).

Failing to issue capital funding commensurate with community need risks postponing critical work ranging from HVAC and roof replacements to ADA-compliant entrances and full branch renovations that are essential for keeping New York's libraries open and accessible to all members of the public. Immediate and long-range investment in the capital needs of New York's libraries is essential.

- ***NYLA requests meaningful inclusion in the City's Ten-Year Plan, with:***
 - ***\$485 million for NYPL***
 - ***\$307.7 million for BPL***
 - ***\$413.4 million for QPL***
- ***NYLA Requests unrestricted lump-sum capital funding in the form of at least:***
 - ***\$30 million for NYPL (\$10 million for each borough served)***
 - ***\$10 million for BPL***
 - ***\$10 million for QPL***

Thank you again for accepting NYLA's testimony on this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact advocate@nyla.org with any questions or concerns.

Queens Museum
New York City Building
Flushing Meadows Corona Park
Queens, NY 11368

Cultural Affairs Testimony
Written Testimony Submitted by:
Sally Tallant, President & Executive Director, Queens Museum
May 20, 2025

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony today.

A special thank you to Chair Carlina Rivera and her ongoing support of the Queens Museum. We are so grateful to the Council and their ongoing support of our institution and in particular our capital project which breaks ground later this year. The Council's recognition of the importance of this project has been critical in garnering support from other City stakeholders. We know that with the finalization of the Queens Museum, we will better serve children, teens, families, and older adults across the entire borough.

We are excited to share that we will break ground on the final phase of our capital project later this winter, with an estimated completion in 2027. Our request for FY26, in combination with funding from Queens Borough President Donovan Richards and DCLA, will enable us to see this project to fruition. **We are requesting a total of \$3M in additional funding: \$1M from the Queens Delegation of the New York City Council, \$1M from DCLA and \$1M from the Borough President.**

The Queens Museum of the future will be a sustainable and greener building. The project will resolve accessibility needs for all visitors, offer the Borough's first children's museum for art and culture, and highlight the rich history of the World's Fairs in a World's Fair Archive, Exhibition Galleries, and Study Center. The project will also provide Queens Museum staff, who have been working in provisional spaces for too long, with a safe and nurturing workplace.

Some of the many highlights of the project are a fully accessible elevator in the Children's Museum to transport visitors of all abilities from the ground floor of the Children's Museum and activity zones to the second-floor classrooms and learning spaces. We will also replace our 30-year-old HVAC system on the North Side of the Building with an energy-efficient HVAC system. The project will also see the renovation of our auditorium space so that it may be fully accessible which it is not currently. This upgrade will include new updated flexible seating and better technical capacity in order to serve as both a performance space and event space for Queens Museum's artists, performers, visitors, and community partners.

In addition to our capital ask, **we are also requesting \$100,000 in Speaker funding for educational capacity building in advance of this final phase. We have also submitted individual member items to our Queens Council Members and \$50,000 from the Queens Delegation for this same purpose.** In order to make the most of all of these new spaces and meet the needs of a larger audience, we are engaging in several capacity-building exercises for the Children's Museum, including staffing and research. Our goal is to provide educational programming for our community: from our youngest visitors to older adults in advance of and continuing through to the opening of the Museum.

Queens Museum
New York City Building
Flushing Meadows Corona Park
Queens, NY 11368

We are also actively engaging older adults in focus groups to gather input for the design of an older adults space within the Museum. Once these initial focus groups have been completed participants will work on tangible prototypes of ideas; these prototypes will serve as a vision board for our future plans. We are planning to complete this work with program participants over the course of a three-year period, resulting in a capital improvement plan with a dedicated space on our second floor for older adults.

The Education Team will continue to launch focus groups and pilot programs, informed by the needs of our community, aimed at improving all of our varying education offerings and looking at each program through the lens of access and inclusion. Funding from the Council would go to support all of these strategic planning and capacity-building efforts, including providing for partial salaries for education staff and programming including teaching artists. The Delegation's support would also cover program related expenses such as art materials, supplies, transportation, and marketing.

The capital improvements along with support for our educational team will better enable the Museum to fulfill its mission and provide for the accessibility, safety, and comfort of all students, visitors, and staff, and allow for the successful functioning of the borough's first Children's Museum. We thank you for your consideration of this request. With your support, we hope to have a Queens Museum that better serves the growing needs of the Queens community. We also wanted to share our support for the collective \$75M Cultural Ask - for CIGs and CDF program groups. This increase in funding for the sector is much needed and could not come at a more critical time where this community has seen significant cuts to funding from the federal government.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to testify today.



Statement by Dennis M. Walcott, President & CEO, Queens Public Library

**New York City Council Committee on Finance, jointly with the Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations**

**Oversight Hearing - Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026 and the Executive Capital Plan for
Fiscal Years 2025-2029**

May 21, 2025

Good morning, Chairs Brannan and Rivera, Speaker Adams, members of the esteemed committees and Council Members. I am Dennis M. Walcott, President and CEO of Queens Public Library (QPL, Library). It is a pleasure to be here to testify on the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget, specifically how it will impact the Library's operations and capital portfolio.

We are grateful that the FY26 Executive Budget includes an additional \$15.7 million for NYC's libraries, with the Administration funding the City Council's Libraries Initiative. A long priority of the City Council, the added funds restore Libraries to Fiscal Year 2025 levels. **Your unwavering support, as well as that of our millions of users across the city, has made this possible — thank you.**

Still, the hard truth is that this allocation falls short of our system-wide need and is only for one year, meaning we will need to continue fighting just to remain flat. Earlier this year, I testified that **QPL is facing ongoing expense needs of \$13.5 million, \$44.8 million for all three systems.** After years of flat funding and sustained and looming cuts, additional dollars are needed for us to cover increased costs (contractual wage, health insurance, and inflation), keep up with public demand, and make the necessary investments in our workforce, collections, programs, and our 66 locations across Queens.

Public libraries represent unlimited opportunities, and our goal is to meet the evolving needs of the communities we serve. New Yorkers depend on their libraries for storytimes, homework help, ESOL classes, job search and resume assistance, technology and workforce trainings, creative aging workshops, books, computers, Wi-Fi, and more – all for free. For youth and adults who have work and family responsibilities but dream of earning their diploma, QPL offers the National External Diploma Program, which allows individuals to obtain a High School Equivalency at their own pace from home, the library or anywhere, with trusted guidance from library staff.

In April, QPL celebrated the wonders of space with innovative science programming, NASA presentations and book giveaways. Programs like Robotic Mission to Mars, Aurora Borealis, and Lego NASA Shuttle encouraged exploration amongst our younger users, and the installation of ISS-ABOVE units at 51 branches captivated all ages with the ability to view Earth from the perspective of the International Space Station (ISS).

Queens Public Library is preparing for summer activities at our branches, including robust summer learning opportunities and our partnership with NYC Public Schools to provide summer meals so young people can be nourished year round. Last year, QPL had an attendance of more than 128,000 for our summer learning programs and served more than 25,000 meals at our sites. Beyond our walls, the Library's Outreach team will be traveling to parks, street festivals, parades, and other community gatherings to connect with people in their neighborhoods, host programs, and share resources.

In March, the St. Albans Library received a letter from self-described loyal and lifelong QPL customer Charline Ogbeni. Ms. Ogbeni detailed the Library's role in her life, especially in supporting her passion for birth work and her success as a postpartum and birth doula. The branch helped her develop materials for her business, study for exams, and access the Internet, which culminated in her becoming an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC), a feat only 1,100 other individuals in the state have accomplished. Ms. Ogbeni expressed her excitement to continue using the Library as a key resource, to fuel her dreams and "help contribute to solving the maternal health crisis."

Across the system, key metrics, including visits, circulation and program attendance, are steadily growing, a trend we expect to persist. New Yorkers continue to rely on libraries for free access to books and other materials. However, our ability to meet rising demand is limited, and QPL's average wait time for e-materials is 23 percent higher than it was this time last year. At any given time, we may have more than 40,000 active requests for physical materials. Thanks to the efficiency of our staff and our systems, most of those are fulfilled and ready for pickup within a week; however, we currently have 6,139 requests for materials with borrowers waiting for 60 or more days. Without sufficient funding for our collections, the wait will only worsen.

Since July, we have had 111 full and/or partial unplanned closures due to staffing shortages and emergency branch maintenance. As the summer approaches, extreme weather may increase the likelihood of closures unless we receive the necessary funding to replace or repair our aging infrastructure, including roofs and HVAC equipment. Without increased funding, QPL will be forced to defer critical maintenance and repairs and will be susceptible to more unplanned branch closures. In addition, we will be unable to meet demand for the vital programs, services, and books and materials our communities count on. **We are hopeful that as discussions between the Council and Administration continue, we can avoid these outcomes by fully funding the Libraries' \$44.8 million expense need in the upcoming adopted budget, as well as baselining the added \$15.7 million and supporting the Speaker's \$2 million seven-day expansion proposal.**

The Executive Budget included capital funding for comprehensive renovations of both our East Flushing and Lefferts libraries. We sincerely appreciate the funding, which will result in the complete transformation of the two facilities, including the modernization of their appearance, infrastructure, technology, furniture and more. **Still, Queens Public Library has an outstanding 10-year capital need of \$369.58 million, with \$42.3 million representing our most urgent needs.**



We are committed to having welcoming and safe branches, but we can't accomplish this fully without funding. With every budget cycle in which our capital needs are overlooked, the more dire the issues become, resulting in worsening conditions, higher costs and longer construction timelines. **The allocation of additional capital funding in FY26 is needed so we can immediately address crucial projects and move forward with critical infrastructure replacements, renovations and more.**

The Council's lump sum capital funding is vital to QPL, as it allows us to cover shortfalls as soon as we are notified of them by the NYC Department of Design & Construction (DDC). We hope we can count on the unrestricted funds in FY26 to ensure much anticipated library projects continue to advance through DDC.

Public libraries are beacons of hope and serve as an inspiration for New Yorkers. As a new American, teen customer Abida first visited the South Jamaica Library within a week of arriving in Queens from Bangladesh. She instantly connected with the branch's Assistant Manager, who signed her up for her first library card, shared essential information that helped her adjust to life in the United States, and welcomed her to participate in branch programs that match her interests, like crocheting classes. Despite only residing in the borough for a short amount of time, Abida already identifies the South Jamaica Library as her "second home."

Strong public libraries build strong communities. New Yorkers from all walks of life visit our locations and digital platforms to connect with their neighbors, tap into their full potential, and get what they need, all for free. They are able to explore diverse ideas and perspectives and discover their own voices and passions. As libraries throughout the country – and the freedom of expression they represent – continue to be under attack, it is exceedingly important for the city to stand up against censorship and reinforce our commitment to knowledge and understanding. This is the time. The return on investment is immeasurable. We need to fortify the three library systems now to help lead New York City into the future, creating a more informed, equitable, and democratic city. We hope as negotiations between the Administration and the Council continue, we can fulfill this vision together.

Thank you, Chairs Brannan and Rivera, and Council Members for the opportunity to testify today.



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NYC Council Hearing on the cultural budget - MAY 21, 2025 at 10AM

Dear Members of the Committees on Finance and on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations,

I am Francine Garber-Cohen, President and Producer of the Regina Opera Company, which has offered year-round, fully-staged operas and ticketed and free concerts in Southwest Brooklyn for 55 years including the past 13 years in Sunset Park.

At these performances thousands of Brooklyn residents, over 2/3 of whom are Senior Citizens, many of them retirees on a fixed income, are able to meet other music lovers - getting them out of their homes where many live alone. We not only provide entertainment to help the Grandmas and Grandpas feel happy listening to our music, but we also help to combat the scourge of loneliness and feelings of isolation. Music is Medicine!

But in order to provide these services, Regina Opera, like other arts organizations, needs increased support from New York City. We at Regina Opera thank you for the baseline of \$45 million dollars in the Executive Budget in Fiscal Year 2026, and now, due to extreme losses caused by the cuts to Federal funding, we have to ask for an additional \$30 million dollars. The extra support is especially needed to increase the Department of Cultural Affairs funds to distribute to Arts groups and hiring additional Staff.

Please note that these are "high velocity dollars". Money goes directly into the hands of Staff Members and Arts Workers who spend it immediately on rent, food, taxes, and other necessities which helps local businesses.

Investment on the Arts is an investment in NYC.

Francine Garber-Cohen, President, Regina Opera Company

GREEN-WOOD

Written Testimony for the 05.21.25 Hearing of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations

Hello Chair Rivera and members of the Committee:

We are grateful for the chance to connect with you and other council members who are so passionate about cultural affairs. Because we are too.

Our message today is simple: **Green-Wood Cemetery is expanding cultural programming in New York City.** We serve **500,000 visitors** a year who come to experience this historic and beautiful landscape and arboretum.

We also offer over 300 public programs each year from **specialized tours to art installations to concerts in our catacombs.** Together **our programs serve just under 40,000 people annually.**

I am writing to respectfully advocate for Green-Wood's request for **discretionary funding to allow us to bring arts and cultural programs to New Yorkers** throughout the year.

Our **free community-based programs** ensure that our green space is a resource for all.

For example, our **Dia de los Muertos** family celebration welcomed over 3,500 visitors last fall to celebrate with food, performances, and hands-on activations for kids. Artistically, our Day of the Dead community ofrenda (created by local artist, Raul Ayala) invited thousands to leave mementos, offerings and remembrances for departed loved ones.

And there are way more than can fit within this testimony. But some other highlights of our **free-of-charge community programs** include **Green Adventures for Families**, Battle of Brooklyn & the Meaning of Freedom, **Juneteenth Family Trolley Tour**, **Wings over Green-Wood**, and **annual summer kickoff concert** on Memorial Day.

I'd like to emphasize an especially important area we seek funding for as well: Death Education. We serve New Yorkers with programs that focus on **grief, loss, and mourning.** The programs come in many different formats. Guided, small-group conversations, like our **"Death Café"** discussions. Hands-on workshops, like **Grieving & Weaving** and **Grief & Gardening.** And coming up this summer, **The Art of Goodbye.** Collectively, our death education programs served 2,500 participants last year, who range in age **from teenagers to seniors in their 80s** and even 90s.

Our vision is to significantly expand the Death Education program series in 2025-26, **especially at a time when New Yorkers are experiencing increased levels of depression, anxiety, and generalized mental distress.**

We also seek to expand our work to schools, houses of worship and other community groups whose members **experience grief that isn't openly acknowledged or socially validated.**

We urge the Council to invest in these critical initiatives. And we thank you for your consideration.

Lisa W. Alpert, SVP for Development and Programming



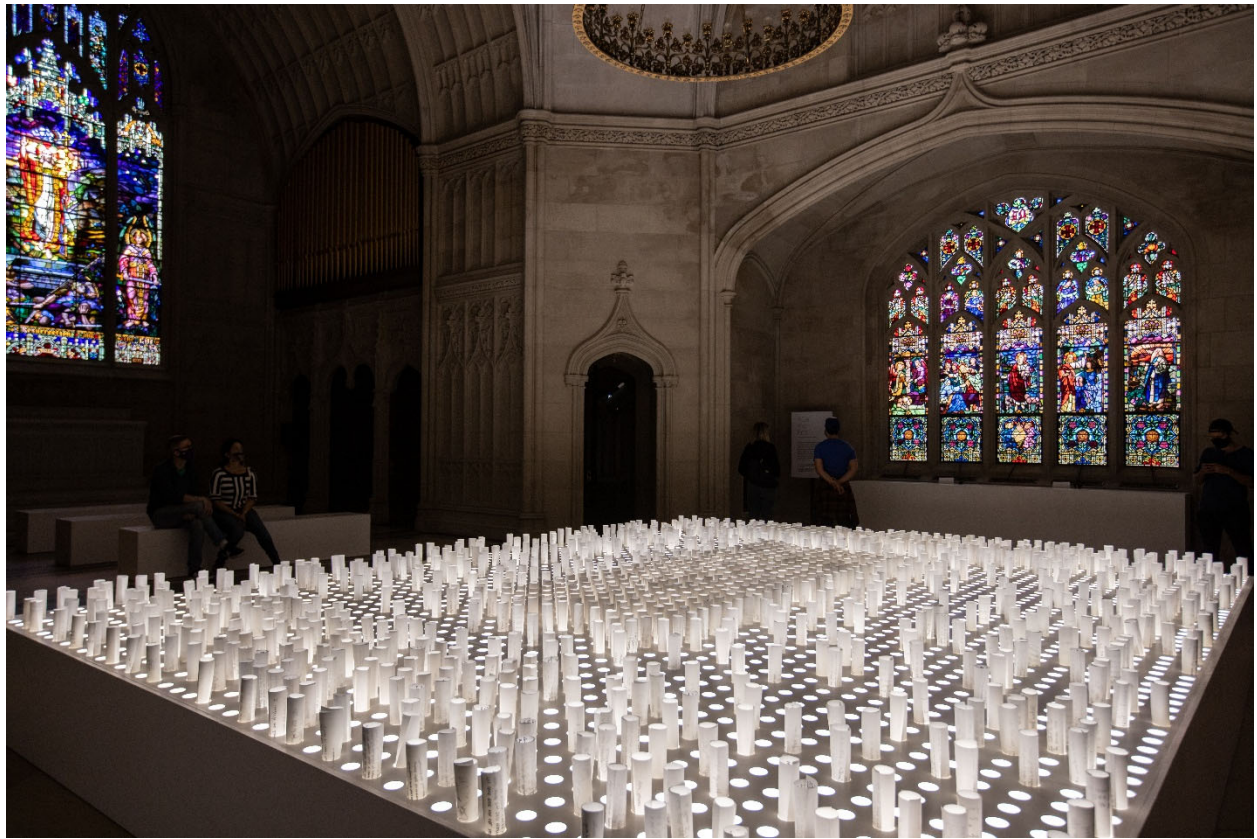
















S m a c k M e l l o n

City Council Culture Budget Hearing May 21, 2025

Testimony from Kathleen Gilrain, Executive Director, Smack Mellon Studios Inc.

Thank you, members of the City Council, and Council Member Restler, my representative, for everything you have done and are doing, and will do to support NYCs cultural organizations and keep the arts alive and well in our beautiful city. Mayor Adams has done a historic thing to add 45 million dollars to the cultural budget but the mayor's addition to baseline is only restoring us to where we were last year. We are asking for 32 million more from the City Council to help organizations that are losing their federal funding. Many of NYCs cultural organizations have lost their federal funding already and we are all bracing for the end of the NEA.

Federal agencies gave 32 million dollars to New York City cultural organizations last year. For Smack Mellon the end of the NEA means the end of federal funding for our Artist Studio Program where we support under-represented early career artists who are living and creating in NYC and who are giving back to their communities. These young artists are not able to afford to rent a studio space. Smack Mellon supports a new group of artists each year with a free studio space and a fellowship. In turn, several of our fellowship studio artists have worked as Mentors to high school students through Smack Mellon's Art Ready Mentorship program, preparing them for future careers in the arts. The mentors are paid, and the students attend for free. An artist who was part of our Studio Program in 2024 and had participated in Art Ready when she was in high school, became a mentor to our Art Ready students. Many of our students go on to have exciting careers in the arts. In fact, our Programs Manager was an Art Ready Student herself and now she is leading the program.

This important work that Smack Mellon has been doing for the past 30 years could come to an end. It's an ecosystem that must be maintained for the system to work, and you, members of the City Council, are a part of the ecosystem. Please add an additional 32 million dollars to the NYC cultural budget and let's make sure our city's vibrant cultural institutions remain vibrant and able to serve our communities! Thank you for hearing my testimony.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF JESSICA BAKER VODOOR
PRESIDENT & CEO
SNUG HARBOR CULTURAL CENTER & BOTANICAL GARDEN

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
Committee on Finance
Jointly with Committee on Culture, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations
Joint Committee Oversight Hearing: FY26 Executive Budget
May 21, 2025

Good morning, Chair Brannan, Chair Rivera and members of the Committees. My name is Jessica Baker Vodoor, and I am President & CEO of Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden in Staten Island. I am providing this testimony to thank City Council and the Mayor for the additional \$45 million baseline for culture, and to urge adoption of an additional \$30 million increase.

Founded in 1977, Snug Harbor is an expansive culture park on Staten Island where arts, nature, education, and history unite to bring dynamic programming, events, and festivals to our diverse community. We welcome 500,000 annual visitors to explore our gardens and grounds, discover a new passion, and engage with culture. Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden is the private non-profit tasked with managing and operating the site on behalf of the City of New York. We are the only free botanical garden in New York City, open 365 days a year from dawn to dusk. City Council funding underwrites our efforts to create a more culturally connected, thriving community in an underserved area of New York City.

As a member of the Cultural Institutions Group, Snug Harbor receives an annual allocation through the Department of Cultural Affairs to support operations, which represents approximately 40% of our income. City Council generously provides support through multiple initiatives totalling approximately 10% of our income.

The additional \$45 million in baseline support for culture will offer enhanced stability in these uncertain times. Snug Harbor has had its funding withdrawn by the National Endowment for the Arts and is still awaiting determination on USDA regrant funds administered by NY State Agriculture & Markets – critical funding for our farm, and already well past the project start date. Humanities NY has cancelled its grantmaking, which had been supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Our campus partners have also experienced deep cuts in federal funding.

Snug Harbor has been aggressively pursuing non-City sources of funding to reduce our reliance on the City's budget. While we have made significant gains in State and Federal support,

Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden

Testimony to Committee on Finance

Jointly with Committee on Culture, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations

Joint Committee Oversight Hearing: FY26 Executive Budget

May 21, 2025

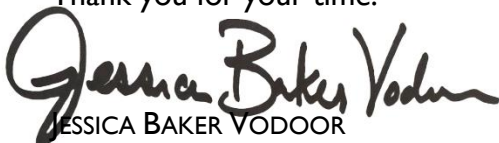
Page 2 of 2

Washington's changing priorities imperil both streams. Snug Harbor continues to creatively pursue private funding, both contributed and earned, to offset these losses which cause instability and threaten our capacity to deliver dynamic programming and effectively steward our historic site.

Now is the time for New York City to invest in culture, one of the City's institutional pillars. \$30 million will safeguard our public institutions and programs and build resilience as federal policies and funding cuts threaten the viability of our sector and the livelihoods of our artists. A \$30 million investment will bring City support closer to historic levels and reverse recent downward trends. \$30 million represents less than 3/100 of one percent of the City budget, yet would be transformative for the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Cultural Institutions Group, and for thousands of cultural programs and organizations throughout the five boroughs.

We are grateful to City Council for including the additional \$45 million baseline for culture request in the FY26 budget. With deep uncertainty surrounding state and federal funding for health, education, and immigration services, New York City is facing some difficult decisions. We hope that City Council will continue to recognize the critical role that our "institutional pillars" – culture, libraries, parks – play in attracting tourist dollars, underpinning civic life, and producing positive health outcomes for all New Yorkers. We need the additional \$30 million to ensure quality of life and access to culture for all of our residents.

Thank you for your time.



JESSICA BAKER VODOOR

President & CEO

Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden

718.425.3501 / jvodoor@snug-harbor.org

TESTIMONY MAY 2025

Thank you, Members of the Finance and Cultural Affairs Committees, for this opportunity to submit this testimony in support of the Arts and its funding. Spanish Theatre Repertory Company, Ltd. (Repertorio Español) is grateful for all of your support and partnership over the years.

Repertorio Español's mission is to introduce the best theatre from all over the Spanish-speaking world to multinational and multigenerational audiences through live performances and arts-in-education theatre residencies, serving approximately 9,000 NYC public school students per year, many of whom are from Title I schools.

As the nation's premier Spanish language not-for-profit theatre company, Repertorio Español respectfully seeks funding to produce new productions, nurture Latinx artists, and most importantly, to maintain the level of artistic activity throughout the coming season. In 2025, this ask becomes more urgent as funding at the federal level is being terminated without cause and with tremendous haste. This decision is a direct blow to our country's cultural life, our powerful voices, and the freedom to create and share our art. For Repertorio, this loss threatens the work we do every day and the way we connect with our audiences and serve our communities.

Our programming reaches our youngest students to retirees, allows us to engage with emerging generative Latinx theatre artists, promote and develop new plays that accurately depict and resonate within the entire community, and are culturally relevant to those who have recently arrived and now call NYC home.

After many years of historical underfunding, BIPOC lead organizations like Repertorio have proven that we're an integral part of the American Theater landscape and that we have a direct impact on the communities we serve.

Funding from DCLA and the City Council has been utilized to:

Create free downloadable study guides that provide teachers and students with the historical background and context of the plays.

Students come to our theatre with subsidized tickets to see more than 200 performances a year of ten different productions to celebrate their roots, who they are, and see themselves represented on stage.

Four yearly play readings at Repertorio of original work by emerging Latinx playwrights writing in either Spanish or English, representing an American life with a distinct perspective, and putting Latinx characters at the forefront of the narrative. These plays are in Spanish and/or

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English, relate directly to Latinx culture, engage over 50 local Latinx theatre artists, and bring these works to the attention of the American theatre community. We premiere and develop new stage plays and collaborate with other NYC organizations to produce quality Spanish language, bilingual, or multi-lingual work without having to compromise on these activities, which are mission fulfilling and directly serve our patrons.

Funding expands existing programming, for example, Spanish Golden Age productions directed by Repertorio's young Latinx Van Lier Directing Fellows in summer of 2025 will be able to add 2 more live performances of each production, have English supertitles available and there will be recordings of each show to stream for a brief time after the initial run increasing the reach of these productions in New York City. The audience also has dialogues with the directors and cast members after the performances. Performances will also be recorded and remain on the website in perpetuity for those interested in learning more about this genre. Our mission to produce, develop, and teach Spanish language theatre is even more significant and needed now more than ever in 2025.

After 57 years, Repertorio continues to make significant contributions to the academic and professional advancement of our youth, the well-being of our older adults, and provide theatre to underserved Latinx communities across the City. Each performance is not only a high-quality theatrical experience, but also a celebration of our culture. All of it is under threat.

Repertorio is determined to continue producing original pieces which speak to and uplift our community as well as provide impactful arts education that uses theatre to inspire positive self-awareness, challenge cultural perceptions, and promote cultural exchange.

We thank you for this opportunity to share our exciting artistic programming.

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SYMPHONY SPACE

Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on
Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Hon. Carlina Rivera, Chair
Department of Cultural Affairs Executive Budget Hearing
May 21, 2025

I am Maren Berthelsen, Deputy Director of Development at Symphony Space, and on behalf of our Executive Director Kathy Landau, I'd like to express my deepest appreciation to Chair Rivera and this Committee for your support of the arts in New York City.

We were thrilled that the proposed Executive Budget provides \$23.5 million for Cultural Development Funding, and that the baseline funding for arts education was restored. This shows that, once again, New York City leads the nation in demonstrating the importance of the arts in strengthening communities and civil society.

The Council, and this committee in particular, understands that the arts and artists matter. Every story matters. Every student matters. That every dollar matters and makes a difference.

Generation after generation, we see this – on our stages and in our classrooms. From audience members who attend our literary, music, and film programs at 95th and Broadway, to the thousands of New York City children and adults who participate in our arts education and literacy programs, to people around the world who tune in to our *Selected Shorts* radio show and podcast, we witness the power of the arts to transform lives.

After a three-night residency at Symphony Space, author and musician James McBride shared that “the humble space at the corner of 95th and Broadway has stood as a shining lighthouse of what art means and should mean to the wider world. It shows the diversity of hope and aspiration and opinion that we all should aspire to. It is our treasure, a New York special.”

Now more than ever, it is up to all of us to ensure that the arts continue to enlighten, illuminate, and inspire as they have throughout history. That they remain a source of celebration, refuge, resistance, acceptance, and evidence of our shared humanity.

With your committee and the City Council leading the way, we know that New York will remain the beacon for artists, audiences, and community that it has always been.

**Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Committee on Finance
Fiscal year 2026 Executive Budget Hearing
Wednesday, May 21st, 2025
The 92nd Street Y, New York**

Thank you to the New York City Council, Chairs Carlina Rivera and Justin Brannan and members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations and the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to share testimony on the NYC Executive Budget. My name is Ariel Savransky and I am the Director of Government and Community Relations at The 92nd Street Y, New York (92NY), a nonprofit cultural and community center in Manhattan.

Since 92NY's founding more than 150 years ago, we have offered services for children, families and individuals. Over 700,000 people of diverse racial, religious, ethnic, and economic backgrounds come each year to enjoy and create the arts and literature, to engage their minds through lectures and classes, and to exercise their bodies. Through a wide array of educational programs, community outreach initiatives, and performances, 92NY strives to make the arts accessible to individuals of all ages, socio-economic statuses, and cultural identities. By offering scholarships, subsidies, and opportunities for NYC public school students to attend events at 92NY, we help ensure that all people can have these experiences. While 92NY is located on the Upper East Side, we reach New Yorkers in all five boroughs.

We want to thank the NYC Council and the Administration for adding \$45 million to the baseline funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs and for restoring and baselining \$41 million for arts in education. This critical funding will support over 1000 cultural organizations, including 92NY, and help to ensure students have access to arts education in their schools.

NYC Council initiative partnerships:

We are honored that City Council members again awarded CASA and SU-CASA partnerships to us during FY25. These programs have expanded 92NY's direct engagement with schools since 2013 and senior centers since 2018.

In FY25, 92NY is providing eight free Cultural After-School Adventures (CASA) programs in schools throughout the city. Residencies include those focused on creative movement, Cuban Music and American Rhythm and Blues, and Afro-Brazilian percussion, among others. Without 92NY's programming, many of the students we serve would lack access to creative arts experiences, as extracurricular activities are financially prohibitive. We hope we can expand our CASA programming in FY26 and deepen our relationships with additional schools throughout the city.

We are also grateful for our SU-CASA funding. 92NY has provided successful, productive and joyous choral arts instruction at Roosevelt Island Senior Center since FY19 through programming led by a 92NY Teaching Artist. Our partnership with the Roosevelt Island Senior Center allows older adults to experience the joy of making art. We have heard from our Teaching Artists that past participants have been enthusiastic not just about singing but also about discussing the music, reminiscing, and sharing stories and experiences. Staff also commented that they saw the participants experiencing joy in making music. We hope that we can continue this program in FY26 with support from the NYC Council.

Programs for public school students:

For 35+ years, 92NY's School Engagement in the Arts (SEA, formerly 92NY Center for Arts Learning and Leadership) has played an increasingly outsized role in bringing the arts to public school students, serving

7000+ students and teachers across all five boroughs. Programming provides opportunities for in-depth classroom visits from top teaching artists and innovative curriculum design, interaction with 92NY mainstage talent and thought leaders from around the world, and unparalleled access to professional internships and other early career opportunities that provide a crucial foothold into a life in the arts.

92NY has built strong collaborations with many schools through proactively engaging with principals, teachers and arts liaisons, and understands the unique needs of each school population and what cultural resources are/are not available in its community and neighborhood. Partial or full subsidies are provided to most participating schools, ensuring that cost is not a barrier to participation. Approximately 80% of the FY25 Partner Schools have Title 1 status, and in a typical year, over 70% of students at SEA partner schools come from families living in poverty.

92NY offers programs that increase access for public school students in grades K-12 to further their skills in the arts. During the 2024-25 school year, 92NY is working with 58 schools Citywide to provide a variety of cultural education experiences taking place during school hours, after school and on weekends. These include the Discovery Series and a “Build Your Own” School-Based Residency program for elementary school students. Programs for high school students include the Concert Schools Project, Christopher Lightfoot Walker Literature Project, two workforce development programs for teens, and Teen Arts Week.

Through the **Discovery Series**, approximately 3000 students from 30 elementary schools explore a variety of dance and music genres through lively, curriculum-based classroom sessions with their dedicated Teaching Artists throughout the school year, along with attendance at exhilarating dance, music, and musical theater performances at 92NY. Schools can also bring in a “**Build Your Own**” **School-Based Residency** led by professional practicing artists. Residencies have focused on Afro-Latin Percussion, House and Hip-Hop and Visual Arts, among others.

92NY’s programming for high school students is provided free of charge. **The Concerts Schools Project** offers free music education for over 100 students from 5+ public high schools citywide, and **The Christopher Lightfoot Walker Literature Project** connects 600+ students in 20 public high schools across the city with contemporary and classic literature. Through these programs, students attend live concerts or readings at 92NY and participate in pre- or post-performance Q&As with the featured performing artists or authors.

High school students can also take part in the **Arts Fellows Program**, which is a transformative opportunity designed for students who demonstrate talent in and passion for music, dance, and visual arts. Fellows benefit from fully subsidized classes in their chosen artistic discipline as well as invaluable one-on-one mentorship opportunities.

92NY also offers two workforce development-focused programs for NYC public high school students: 1) **Teen Gems** is a 12-week jewelry-making course offered free of cost to teens, providing access to jewelry studio equipment, training, and mentorship to students with an interest in art and design. 2) **Teen Producers** is 92NY’s two-year paid internship for 10-20 teens that builds technical skills in arts administration, programming, production, and nonprofit management and offers hands-on experience producing live events at 92NY. In FY25, 20 teens are participating in this program.

Teen Arts Week is a citywide annual celebration of the arts created for teens, by teens. 92NY’s Teen Producers help create this week of free programming for all NYC teens. During the 2025 Teen Arts Week, 45 cultural organizations across all five boroughs offered classes, workshops and performances for almost one thousand teens throughout the city. These events enable teens to gain hands-on experience in different areas of the arts, engage with professionals in creative industries, and explore career pathways. Some highlights include:

- Brooklyn Public Library’s Teen Party: 100 teens showed up for music, art, and community connection.
- Whitney, Cooper Hewitt, The Met, and UrbanGlass: Offered hands-on workshops giving teens tangible, creative experiences.

- Classic Stage Company and Open Stage Project: Strong turnouts for organizations providing talkbacks and discussion about different career pathways.

Public funding is crucial for our organization to be able to provide New Yorkers with experiences that expand thinking and expression as well as bring joy. We are fortunate to receive annual funding through the Department of Cultural Affairs and Department of Youth and Community Development, though the levels of funding have decreased in recent years as the City's budget for program services has been cut. Nonetheless, we are committed to providing significant subsidies to participating schools so that students will continue to experience high quality arts education in their classrooms and the thrill of live performances at our global community center.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ariel Savransky

Director, Government and Community Relations

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Finance Chair Brannan, Cultural Affairs Chair Rivera, and distinguished members of the City Council Finance and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Dohini Sompura, Director of Government Affairs, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) at this Committee's Executive Budget Hearing.

The American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) is one of 34 esteemed cultural institutions that make up New York City's Cultural Institutions Group (CIG). Together, we are responsible for maintaining some of the city's most significant public properties across all five boroughs. Beyond preserving history and culture, our institutions serve as powerful economic drivers, fueling tourism, employment, and commerce while offering vital cultural, educational, and workforce development programs to New Yorkers.

Fiscal 2026 Executive Budget

AMNH is deeply grateful to the Administration and the City Council strong advocacy in baselining \$45 million for cultural and arts institutions in the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget. This long-overdue baselining—transitioning what has been a decade-long one-time addition at budget adoption into permanent funding—provides much-needed stability and helps reduce financial uncertainty for New York City's cultural and arts organizations. However, while this baseline funding is a critical step forward, it does not address the rising inflationary and operational costs that continue to challenge the sustainability of these institutions. **AMNH along with our fellow CIG and arts organizations, is respectfully requesting an additional \$30 million be added to the Fiscal Year 2026 Adopted Budget.** This critical funding would help address the growing needs of our institutions, particularly at a time when other public funding sources for arts and culture have diminished or disappeared.

Fiscal 2026 City Council Expense and Capital Requests

AMNH is deeply grateful to the City Council for its support of our Discovery Days and Sci Network programming in Fiscal 2025. As we seek continued support for these initiatives in Fiscal

2026, we are also requesting funding for a new initiative aimed at strengthening the cultural workforce in the City.

Discovery Days Program

Since 2014, AMNH has been proud to partner with the New York City Council to offer New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) families an opportunity to participate in the AMNH Discovery Days program, which organizes Saturday visits to the museum for NYCHA residents from selected developments. The program, funded at \$100,000 in Fiscal 2025, supports families in developing skills for observing and understanding the natural world, engaging parents and children alike in scientific conversations, while providing them with the resources needed for continued engagement after their visit. This year, AMNH is requesting a \$30,000 enhancement to work closely with local communities that encompasses several NYCHA buildings to deepen engagement and our understanding of how to more effectively make the museum programs more accessible and inclusive to the families. **For Fiscal 2026, AMNH requests \$130,000 from the City Council to continue this program.**

SCI Network

New York City is a world-class cultural hub and leader in science education. At the forefront of these efforts are eight science-based cultural institutions: the American Museum of Natural History, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, New York Botanical Garden, New York Hall of Science, Queens Botanical Garden, Staten Island Zoo, Wave Hill, and the Wildlife Conservation Society. Together we act as STEM career development centers, supporting young New Yorkers as they build their STEM skills, professional experience, and social capital.

In Fiscal 2025, SCI Network NYC funding supports AMNH's Science Research Mentorship Program (SRMP) and the Museum Education Experience Program (MEEP), two flagship workforce development initiatives. MEEP prepares college students for careers in education, science communication, and museum careers more broadly. The SRMP Consortium – which consists of 28 partners across the city, serving primarily low-income students and those of color – has provided mentored-research opportunities for over 600 NYC high school students over the past

decade. Through coursework and apprenticeships, these students learn lab techniques, data science, and scientific communication skills. In Fiscal 2025, we aim to serve 120 students across both programs. **In Fiscal 2026, along with our partner institutions, AMNH requests \$2,000,000 from the City Council to continue to support this network, with \$250,000 allocated to AMNH.**

Science and Cultural Workforce

AMNH is proud to be among the leading cultural institutions offering workforce development opportunities for New York City's youth. Our programs equip participants with the essential skills to become impactful science communicators, analyze complex data, and present this information in clear, accessible, and meaningful ways.

AMNH would like to expand the scope of our workforce development programs and build connections between city agencies and youth from our Science Research Mentoring Program (SRMP), Museum Education Experience Program (MEEP), the SCI Network NYC and Consortium youth groups, by facilitating career exploration and opportunities for future employment at New York City agencies. City jobs offer not only financial security through competitive wages and benefits but also opportunities for long-term professional growth, skill development, and advancement within various sectors. Additionally, increasing representation of individuals with backgrounds in the arts, sciences, and cultural fields within City agencies will help cultivate a more dynamic workforce that reflects the richness of New York City itself.

The program, *STEM2City: Connecting STEM Talent to NYC Careers*, will span one year, with a focus on cultivating strong partnerships with city agencies. The program will culminate in a career fair designed to connect youth with hiring managers and leaders from these agencies. Through this collaboration, AMNH will gain valuable insights into the skill sets city agencies seek for entry-level positions, ensuring alignment with the skills our programs help develop in participants. **In Fiscal 2026, AMNH is requesting \$225,000 to support this new initiative.**

In addition, AMNH would like to expand our current Museum Education Experience Program (MEEP) program. MEEP prepares 60 New York City college students aged 18-24 years old, for

careers in education, science communication, and museum careers more broadly through a 150-hour internship program with a stipend provided. Next fiscal year, AMNH plans to expand our impact by doubling the number of students served through a high school adaptation of this program. **With support from the City Council, AMNH would like to recruit 25 high school students to participate in this program with a cost of \$75,000 in Fiscal 2026.**

Capital Request – Phase 3 Roof Replacement Project

For Fiscal 2026, AMNH requests \$25M from the City Council for the restoration of roofs across six of our buildings as the third phase of this project. Many of these roofs are over 100 years old and well beyond their useful life. The buildings in need of roof repairs house our Science offices and laboratories, public exhibition halls, collection storage areas, and infrastructure facilities, all of which play an integral role in fulfilling the Museum's mission of science and education. Water damage caused by the leaking roofs presents a risk of mold and delamination of asbestos, which is a health and safety hazard to our staff and visitors and compromises our collection and laboratory spaces housed in these buildings.

By replacing our roofs, we will be able to preserve and protect our extensive collection, maintain our historic landmarked building, and continue to provide an exceptional experience for visitors. Funding this project will continue to build on the successful private-public partnerships AMNH maintains, where City funding supports the maintenance and improvements of this City-owned asset.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you Commissioner Cumbo, Mayor Adams, Councilmembers Rivera and Brennan and all Council members present,

First, I want to thank the Mayor's Office for baselining DCLA funding at \$45M. This is an important historic step to ensure stability for cultural organizations in New York City especially in moments of great uncertainty like the one we're living through right now.

My organization, The Bushwick Starr, has gone through dramatic growth over the past five years having purchased and renovated a building in our neighborhood of Bushwick, Brooklyn through a capital campaign with strong support from the city and state for which we are extremely grateful. Because of the success of these efforts after 18 years of existence we have now established the Starr as a permanent asset for arts and education in our neighborhood. Our yearly season of programming offers three month-long runs of premier works, five readings of new plays, afterschool classes for elementary and high school students, writing workshops for seniors, intergenerational workshops with our season artists, and more. We bring 5000 visitors to Bushwick over the course of the season and serve our neighbors with our season programming and enriching programs. As the Starr grows so does our ability to offer paid internships, training, and employment opportunities. We are an institution that is a destination as well as a true neighborhood arts center.

Yet, in this moment when we are flourishing, we are also facing the existential threat of a shifting and shrinking funding landscape. When major foundations are changing their priorities and funding that the field has relied on for decades suddenly disappears, we cannot expect individual donors to be able to sufficiently fill the void. The Starr's mission is to offer free programs and affordable tickets to ensure access to the work we do. Our earned income is 16% of our total budget. In order for us to be able to continue to serve our constituents it is essential that we have reliable funding sources dedicated to preserving local institutions like ours that serve New York's communities. In this moment of uncertainty, I ask you to add another \$30M to the DCLA budget to ensure healthy and robust cultural institutions that will ensure New Yorkers of all ages and income levels have access to the arts. We enrich lives, connect communities, and create revenue. This increase would get the DCLA closer to .26% of the budget which is the historic average. It is a worthy investment for a city that prides itself on offering world class arts and culture, not just at its largest institutions, but throughout the boroughs, and for all New Yorkers.

Thank you.

Noel Allain

Founding Artistic Director at The Bushwick Starr

**Testimony from the Lower Eastside Girls Club
City Council FY 26 Executive Budget Hearing
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Jointly with
Committee on Finance
MAY 21, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chair Carlina Rivera and members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee. My name is Jenny Dembrow, and I am the Executive Director of the Lower Eastside Girls Club. I've been with the organization since its founding in 1996. Initially, there were three Boys Clubs, but no Girls Club. We operated out of a basement, community rooms, schools, and over two dozen locations until we moved into our current 35,000 sq ft facility in 2013. Over nearly 30 years, thousands of young women, gender-expansive youth, and their families have benefited from our free programming and championing of the Arts.

The Lower Eastside Girls Club (LESGC) connects young women and gender-expansive youth throughout New York City to healthy and successful futures filled with Joy, Power, and Possibility. We nurture safe spaces where young people can dream big, find their passions, and connect to peers and careers through free, year-round programming and mentoring. Our members tap into their creative passions, explore a variety of mediums, and connect with the thriving Arts scene in New York City. In 2022, we expanded our offerings by launching the Center for Wellbeing & Happiness (CWBH), which promotes intergenerational community care through accessible Arts and Wellness programs.

Culture-centered, community-based youth arts (CCYA) programs have been proven to support the well-being and well-becoming of youth of color (Osai et al., 2025). And yet, Arts education in NYC is too often inaccessible. Our Alphabet City Arts School and Center for Wellbeing addresses this need. We share healing-centered art practices, develop artistic skills, champion creative imagination, and facilitate career pathways in the creative industries of NYC.

LESGC creates spaces where members of all ages can dream, build, and create. Our class offerings include Painting, Illustration, Comics, Printmaking, Screenprinting, Mosaics, Mural Arts, Music, Animation, Photography, Film, and Podcasting. At CWBH, adult members access Dance and Music workshops and creative expression classes such as Knitting, Crafting, and Creative Writing. Members' artwork has been showcased on Governors Island, MoMA, MoMA PS1, Art on Paper Fair, and the United Nations Headquarters, among other locations.

Beyond Arts Education, our Art+Community Gallery and CWBH Gallery provide a vital community space for public art exhibitions, art-related workshops, artist talks, and community gatherings. In 2024 we hosted 30 Art events. Our CWBH recently celebrated its 100th community event since its inception. Thousands of New Yorkers experience and benefit from our free public Arts programming and events annually.

Currently, LESGC is navigating a challenging financial reality and stands at a critical inflection point. Beyond the government funding cuts, LESGC is also confronting the recent attack on DEI initiatives and general fiscal uncertainty, which have negatively impacted philanthropic giving among corporate, private foundations, and individual donors. Between a \$3 million mortgage for purchasing our CWBH space in 2019, rising costs due to inflation, and declining donations, our revenue has fallen behind, resulting in a \$2 million deficit.

Combined, these fiscal challenges pose a direct and imminent risk to our ability to provide the vital services and innovative programming so many people rely on at a time when the need is greater than ever. We have already been forced to lay off 17 employees in April 2025 and cut back on our program offerings. We are requesting a total of \$2.5 million from the City Council in FY26 to support the broader stabilization of the organization. City Council support will:

- **Invest in a Proven Solution:** Support an organization with a demonstrated track record of success in uplifting youth.
- **Address Urgent Needs:** Provide critical resources to tackle the youth mental health crisis through culturally relevant, community-based approaches.
- **Create Lasting Change:** Promote long-term economic mobility by investing in education, workforce training, and comprehensive youth services.

As we search for a way forward, general operating support from the City Council would help us secure our legacy as a transformative force in youth development in New York City and expand our impact for future generations.



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The Metropolitan Museum of Art
FY 26 Executive Budget Testimony
The New York City Council
May 21, 2025

Thank you, Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, Chair Rivera, and the esteemed members of the Committees on Finance and Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Groups. We are deeply grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony today. I am Norah Yahya, the Senior Government Affairs Officer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

At The Metropolitan Museum of Art, we are honored to be stewards of an extraordinary collection that spans more than 5,000 years of human creativity. While we are proud to be known for our world-renowned exhibitions and our vast permanent collection, The Met is also so much more: a hub for lifelong learning, a vital center for cutting-edge research in conservation and archaeology, and a welcoming space for all New Yorkers and visitors from around the world—regardless of age, background, or ability.

Each year, our multidisciplinary programs, offered both in person and online, bring people together in meaningful ways, fostering dialogue, understanding, and connection. In fact, in recent years, we've welcomed millions of participants to over 30,000 events, highlighting the powerful role that culture plays in civic life.

We are profoundly appreciative of the City Council and the Mayor's Office for their historic recognition of the value that cultural institutions bring to our city, as reflected in the baselining of \$45 million in the Executive Budget. This is an extraordinary step forward, and we commend your leadership. As we advocate for the additional \$30 million at Budget Adoption to preserve the strength of our sector, we remain hopeful and committed. Your support brings us closer to ensuring that New York's cultural life continues to flourish.

Like many of our peer institutions, The Met continues to face lasting challenges brought on by the pandemic and subsequent global and economic disruptions.

While we are heartened by the resurgence of tourism, the landscape has shifted. International visitation is still far below pre-pandemic levels, impacted by global conflicts like the war in Ukraine, which has made travel from Asia more difficult and prohibitively expensive. And tensions with long-standing partners like Canada, Mexico, and the EU are already having a chilling effect on travel, raising real concerns for our future audiences.

We are also monitoring troubling federal developments that could threaten the stability of cultural institutions nationwide; from potential taxation of endowment income, to cuts in state and municipal funding, to the uncertainty of tariffs and rising capital costs. These pressures weigh heavily on our sector, and jeopardize our ability to plan, grow, and serve.

In this moment of both profound challenge and great potential, we ask for your continued support. The arts are not a luxury, they are essential. With stronger partnership and investment, we can meet the moment and ensure that our institutions remain vibrant, inclusive, and resilient for generations to come.

In closing, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the Council, the Committees on Finance and Cultural Affairs, and all who are working tirelessly to protect and uplift New York City's cultural community. Your dedication does not go unnoticed, and we are truly grateful.

Thank you for your steadfast commitment and the opportunity to provide testimony.

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

FISCAL YEAR 2026 EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARINGS

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

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, and for the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of The New York Historical. Founded in 1804, The New York Historical conveys the stories of the city and nation's diverse populations, expanding our understanding of who we are as Americans and how we came to be. Our work is made possible, in part, by generous funding from the Department of Cultural Affairs and the City Council, and we thank you for your vital partnership.

Diversifying Museum Programming

Ever-rising to the challenge of bringing little or unknown histories to light, The Historical's mission is to collect, preserve, and interpret, for the broadest possible public, material relevant to U.S. history, and serve as an accessible community resource for audiences underrepresented in cultural institutions. Upcoming exhibitions in FY2026 include:

Blacklisted: An American Story (June 13 – October 19, 2025), an exploration of the intersection of politics, art, economics, and the social dynamics that impacted the American First Amendment rights of speech, religion, and assembly during Hollywood's Red Scare. The exhibition sparks reflection, conversation and engagement about civil liberties and patriotism by exploring a time in which art, artistic expression, and speech were no longer protected.

The New York Sari (July 25, 2025 – January 4, 2026), a reflection on how the sari has become an essential part of the cultural fabric of New York City, using it as a metaphor for the ways that the individuals who wear and create saris have straddled tradition, culture, and modernity in their work, art, and lives. Focusing on the sari as an object that tells the stories of who wears them, how that relates to their identities, and how that has changed over time, this exhibit offers us a powerful opportunity to think more expansively about the history of migrant communities and gender in New York City.

The Gay Harlem Renaissance (October 10, 2025 – March 8, 2026), a look at the vibrant and dazzling world of Harlem's queer Black community during the 1920s and 30s. To mark the centennial of *The New Negro*, Alain Locke's groundbreaking edited volume of literature and art, this exhibition invites visitors to enmesh themselves in the richness of LGBTQ+ Black life during the height of the Harlem Renaissance.

Arriving in America: Portraits of Immigrants from The New York Historical Collections (November 14, 2025 – March 29, 2026), a showcase of The Historical's vast photography collections as a lens to view the immigrant experience in New York through the faces and places photographers have captured over time.

Democracy Matters (June 19, 2026 - January 10, 2027), an exploration of the original promise of and continuing progress toward American Revolutionary ideals of liberty and equality. The

exhibition will put permanent collection objects from The Historical's collections in conversation with select works from a juried open call to contemporary New York City-based artists. Together, these works explore why democracy matters, elevating community voices and grounding them within the long and ongoing unfolding of the nation's founding principles from 1776 to the present day.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Education is the cornerstone of our mission, and each year, The New York Historical delivers direct services that enhance history and humanities learning to over 300,000 individuals, from pre-K through post-graduate students. More than half of these individuals are New York City K-12 students and teachers to whom we provide quality education programming that builds critical thinking, literacy, and creative problem-solving skills, while encouraging knowledge of U.S. history, appreciation for cultural diversity, and responsible civic engagement. Leveraging our expansive American history collections and our object-based learning pedagogy, our **K-12 offerings** are designed to supplement content learned in classrooms, filling gaps in traditional history curricula by providing diverse, untold American history narratives, enabling students to see themselves in our nation's shared past.

Through field trips, social studies enrichment workshops, workforce development opportunities for teens, early childhood education, teacher professional development opportunities, and digital curricula and classroom resources, The Historical enriches classroom learning and highlights the perspectives, experiences, and contributions of historic figures or populations who have traditionally been excluded along lines of race, gender, sexuality, or class. Our object- and inquiry-based pedagogy infuses art and artmaking into its education programs, drawing direct connections between history taught in schools and visual language students already know. This methodology has been proven to be more effective in reaching a wide range of students with varied learning styles, including ENL students, and trumps rote memorization in enabling students to participate more actively in their own education. Our staff conduct deep and thorough outreach to ensure our programs are promoted across all five boroughs, and that school administrators are aware of our programs' accessibility and affordability.

This commitment extends to our adult audiences, who engage with the Museum as scholars, researchers, or lifelong learners. For example, our **Citizenship Project** provides Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) seeking citizenship with free civics and American history workshops that prepare them for the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Naturalization Test. Our **Master of Arts in Museum Studies** program, offered through City University of New York's School of Professional Studies (CUNY SPS), offers flexible class schedules and scholarships for individuals looking to enter the museum field to ensure all New Yorkers have access to pathways into New York's vibrant arts and culture workforce.

Conclusion

The Historical remains grateful for the City's generous investment in our work, including Cultural Development Funds through the Department of Cultural Affairs, discretionary funding allocated by the City Council, and critical capital funds to support the physical infrastructure that supports our programming. Looking ahead, The Historical will unveil its new Tang Wing for American Democracy, made possible by significant New York City cultural capital funding, enabling us to expand our programs and reach by expanding our physical footprint. Support from the City Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs ensures that our programs have a sustainable future, and we thank you and your fellow City Council Members for your exceptional service.

*For more information, please contact Donju Min, Director of Institutional Giving
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(212) 873-3400 x.300*

**NEWYORKCITY COUNCIL FISCAL YEAR 2026 EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARINGS Committee on
Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Wednesday, May 21st, 2025**

The Public Theater's FY26 Preliminary Budget Testimony: Stages Still in Crisis

Good afternoon, Committee Chair Rivera and Chair Brannan, committee members and staff. My name is Kate Madigan, Government Affairs Coordinator for The Public Theater. I am here to advocate for The Public Theater's survival and for the Council to stabilize the entire arts and culture sector. Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

Art institutions are the core of what makes the big apple so appealing. The Public Theater is grateful for the City Council's commitment to the first substantial baseline increase for our cultural groups in over a decade. A permanent, \$45 million increase for the Department of Cultural Affairs is nothing short of historic; however, more is needed to stabilize NYC's cultural organizations. The CIGs and CDFs alike are facing rising costs related to inflation, funding cuts from the federal government, and disinvestment from private donors and foundations. In 2023, The Public Theater implemented painful austerity measures to protect the future of the organization, but as the goal lines continue to shift and we experience the effects of the headwinds I just outlined, sustainability remains painfully out of reach. Sadly, many of our peer organizations are facing a similar reality.

Given these challenges, every cent from the New York City government is crucial to protecting art and culture non-profit organizations. The CIGs therefore call for a **\$30 million baseline increase** to the Department of Cultural Affairs budget this Fiscal Year 2026. The \$45 million baseline increase ends the annual "budget dance" but the Executive Budget addition does not increase the culture budget, it merely stabilizes it after a decade of disinvestment. Increasing this baseline to a full \$75 million will help fund public programs, cover operating costs for labor, operations, insurance and security, and much more. Safeguarding NYC's public institutions that drive tourism and local economies, particularly as many of them are under threat by the federal government, needs to be at the forefront of the minds of all committee chairs, members and staff when heading into Budget Negotiation Meetings.

In addition to our shared cultural funding request, The Public Theater has submitted various discretionary and capital asks to the Council this budget cycle to support our free programming and City-owned infrastructure. Each Free Shakespeare in the Park production at the Delacorte Theater costs The Public over \$3.5 million to stage. With a typical summer season featuring two mainstage shows, a community pageant, and a Mobile Unit tour to all five boroughs, we invest nearly \$10 million annually to provide free performances to the people of New York City. Our iconic Free Shakespeare in the Park program serves more than 100,000 New Yorkers and visitors each summer—entirely free of charge.

Sustaining this beloved programming, along with our free and low-cost offerings at our Astor Place theaters, has grown increasingly difficult since the pandemic. Despite extensive efforts toward

financial sustainability, The Public continues to face budget deficits that, if left unaddressed, threaten our ability to remain open and serve the city. The theater sector was uniquely impacted by the pandemic and the ongoing economic shifts that followed. It is critical that the City Council prioritize not only a baseline increase in cultural funding, but also The Public's discretionary requests to ensure we, and other theater organizations, can continue fulfilling our mission to serve all New Yorkers.

Despite the challenges we face, we continue to plan for the future. With the help of the City Council, the Administration and the Borough President, we are in the final months of completing our renovation of the Delacorte Theater, a major capital project that improved the existing structure, enhanced theatrical capabilities, and created a space that is welcoming and inclusive for audiences and cultural workers with disabilities. The Public Theater pursued the major renovation project not only to expand accessibility but preserve the cultural legacy of Free Shakespeare in the Park at the Delacorte for future generations. It is not an understatement to say the economic and physical well-being of all New Yorkers is tied to the ability of Cultural Organizations to carry out their missions. Studies have shown that theater creates valuable opportunities for fellowship, empathy building, and cultural understanding – these opportunities recede every day as we become more and more isolated making theater even more important.

In addition to the intrinsic value of our work, The Public Theater has also cemented its reputation as an job creator and incubator for innovative productions, up and coming playwrights, breakout actors, and premiere theater professionals. We employ thousands of artists and cultural workers each year – paying them fair and equitable wages. Our work often moves to Broadway and further strengthens the local economy, generating revenue through ticket sales, tourism, hotel and restaurant visits and more. Two new shows originally produced by The Public are being featured in this Broadway season (Hell's Kitchen and Suffs) and our production of Hamilton is still running and bringing tourists to NYC 10 years after it initially opened at The Public Theater in 2015.

We are grateful for the work of the Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs. Thank you, again, for committing to baseline \$45 million in DCLA's future budgets. Yet, there is more work to be done. Our industry generates nearly \$110 billion dollars in city revenue and yet, the city government's reinvestment rate of less than 1% - with respect, this amount is trivial. Without fiscal action and permanent NYC government investment, the nonprofit component of New York City's arts and culture industry will continue to struggle, resulting in an arts and culture landscape will be less equitable, diverse, and accessible. Should we let this version of the future come to pass, art, culture, and entertainment will become solely a commercial enterprise rather than a public good and ultimately will shut out only those who can afford to pay hundreds of dollars for tickets to commercial productions and cultural offerings. One of the only ways to avoid the bleak reality of this future is to baseline the entire \$75 million to properly fund DCLA and its CIG and CDF recipients and ensure efficient project support to the 1800 non-profits.

Thank you for your time and dedication to the people of New York City,

**Kate Madigan, Government Affairs Coordinator,
The Public Theater, kmadigan@publictheater.org**

*Staten Island Museum testimony by Janice Monger, President & CEO,
to the Committee on Cultural Affairs jointly with the Finance Committee*



May 21, 2025

1000 Richmond Terrace, Bldg A
Staten Island, New York 10301
StatenIslandMuseum.org

TEL 718 727 1135
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Greetings Committee Members,

The Staten Island Museum provides interdisciplinary exhibitions, educational programs, and community events annually, working with more than 60 community partner organizations. In 2024, SIM opened the exhibition, *Taking Care: The Black Angels of Sea View Hospital*, to highlight internationally important history that took place right in Staten Island, including 93-year-old Virginia Allen who helped cure tuberculosis as one of these nurses. SIM's new exhibition, *Breakdown: The Promise of Decay* showcases artists' work to look at the role of decomposition in the life cycle, helping people understand what breaks down, and what does not (microplastics). Founded in 1881, the Museum's collection encompasses over 1 million items spanning art, science and history that we care for. SIM employs 14 FT and 9 PT staff to deliver public exhibitions, education, and community programs that reach 30,000 daily visitors, and 7,500 community program participants annually. A major focus is SIM's school programs that serve 13,000 students, 45% of which are from Title 1 schools, through field trips, in-school lessons and CASA programs.

Investing in culture is investing in safe, public spaces for New Yorkers of all ages from all walks of life. Engaging in the arts and culture supports wellness and health, counteracts social isolation, and enhances civic life. We are also an integral part of the city's economic success. The cultural economy generates \$110 billion in economic activity in NYC - 13 percent of the City's economic activity. Staten Island Museum is a CIG - our 34 CIGs employ 15,700 full and part-time employees and 5,800 union members.

Now more than ever, New York City's cultural institutions need your support. Shifting federal priorities and policies threatens cultural institutions and the public good. The Staten Island Museum finally secured two grants totaling \$565,000 in IMLS funding for preserving important archival and Native American collections - both have now been terminated. Federal cultural funding is essential to the success of the Staten Island Museum and so many cultural institutions. I add my voice to requesting a significant investment from NYC in FY26 to safeguard NYC's cultural institutions. It is always an uphill battle to secure resources for arts and culture.

I urge City Council and the Administration to baseline \$75M to provide stability and demonstrate NYC's commitment to the cultural organizations -- including the Staten Island Museum -- that make NYC great and contribute significantly to the wellbeing of New Yorkers. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Janice Monger, President & CEO, Staten Island Museum
P: 718.483.7113 JMonger@StatenIslandMuseum.org

Thank you, Committee Chair Rivera, Committee Chair Brannan, and distinguished members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and Intergroup Relations and Committee on Finance for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Valerie Lewis and I am the Executive Director of Third Street Music School Settlement.

With a mission to remove barriers to essential arts education, Third Street reaches over 6,000 students annually with music and dance instruction offered seven days a week for students ages 1 to 91 at our headquarters in the East Village, and for K-12 students in 35 under-resourced public schools, public schools, public housing, and community centers across all five boroughs. Third Street awards over \$1.3M in tuition assistance for onsite programs each year, and all of our public school and community-based programs are offered at no cost to students or their families, enabling students who might otherwise lack opportunities to study music and dance to experience the transformative benefits of arts education. We also present over 200 free concerts, workshops, masterclasses, and events each year that enrich our surrounding community.

The arts are essential to the social fabric of New York City. Third Street and our peer cultural organizations here today provide invaluable service to New Yorkers through arts education and cultural programming which fosters empathy and cross-cultural collaboration; supports community engagement and combats social isolation; provides avenues to employment and supports over 100,000 jobs for New Yorkers; and generates \$110 billion in economic activity each year, comprising 13% of the City's economy.

New York City's cultural economy is unparalleled, and to ensure the creative sector is safeguarded, I join my colleagues in advocating for a \$30 million baseline increase to the Department of Cultural Affairs budget. Combined with \$45 million added to the baseline budget for culture in the Fiscal 26 Executive Budget, an additional \$30 million baseline increase would expand access to creative opportunities for tens of thousands of New Yorkers. It would ensure that DCLA has the support and resources to serve New York City's diverse cultural institutions and artists. And it would help build stability and resiliency as federal funding cuts threaten the future of NYC's vibrant cultural sector.

I commend the Council for their longstanding, deep support of arts programs through discretionary funding, which fills the access gap to arts education programs for tens of thousands of New York City students. I implore the Council to expand support for music education and through a new dedicated \$3 million music education initiative aimed at supporting school arts partners and integrating music instruction into youth programs. Third Street has requested \$250,000 from City Council this year to support and grow its essential education programs, and I ask the Council to invest in New York City's youth and ensure that students of all backgrounds can access invaluable arts learning opportunities and their innumerable benefits.

Valerie Lewis, Executive Director
Third Street Music School Settlement



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEES ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES & INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS AND FINANCE RE: THE FY 2026 EXECUTIVE BUDGET

Thank you so much to Speaker Adams, Chair Carlina Rivera, Chair Brannan and all the committee members for the opportunity to speak on the budget proposal for libraries in FY26. My name is Lauren Comito, I'm a librarian here in NYC and the Executive Director of Urban Librarians Unite. I'm here today not only to advocate for our libraries, but for the thousands of library workers across this city who make knowledge, literacy, and community care possible—every single day.

Over the last six years, NYC's libraries have been subjected to a sustained campaign of "quiet cutting". Slowly, and without saying so out loud, the funding has been held flat in the face of steeply increasing costs. Let me be clear: flat funding is a cut. In a moment of rising costs, growing need, the constant threat of tariffs, and sustained inflation, a flat budget means fewer programs, deferred repairs, and fewer workers to meet our communities where they are.

And where are New Yorkers right now? They're turning to libraries in record numbers—for job resources, social services, after-school programs, cooling centers, immigration support, and the simple human dignity of free and public space. Libraries are trying to hold the line on existing services with less, and less, and less—and workers are burning out. In a given hour, staff at the ref desk might make 10 library cards, check in 50-75 books, tell 8 people where the bathroom is, help 1 person print, and have any number of reference interactions. As my daughter says every morning, "Soy cansado." Same kid, same..

While trying to handle the tasks of 8 people with 5 or 6, we are also faced with attacks on libraries and our shared culture are under attack across the country. The Trump administration dismantled federal support for libraries by defunding the Institute for Museum and Library Services. They summarily fired Dr Hayden, our Librarian of Congress. And in so many states, we're seeing book bans, harassment, and attacks on funding on the rise.

But this is New York City. We stand up to book bans. We refuse to defund public knowledge. We take care of our neighbors.

If we want a city where people can learn, gather, and thrive, we must fully fund our libraries. That means increasing investment, not just preserving the status quo. It means valuing the frontline workers who keep our branches open and running.

New York library patrons deserve better than the reduced programs, stressed out workers, and slashed hours they've experienced in the last few years. We deserve a city that chooses care over austerity.

The time to fight for our libraries—and the people who make them possible—is right now. Thank you.

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Cultural Affairs Testimony

Submitted by:

Francisco J. Núñez, Artistic Director, Young People's Director of NYC
May 21, 2025

Thank you so much for this opportunity to provide testimony today. I am Francisco J. Núñez, Founder and current Artistic Director of the Young People's Chorus of New York City (YPC).

YPC has been in existence for over 35 years and currently provides nearly 2400 children aged 8-18 with life-changing music education, academic support and performance opportunities. YPC is a lifeline for our young participants, many who hail from underserved neighborhoods across the five boroughs. In addition to the amazing choral education programs that we provide, YPC offers a phone and screen-free environment where young people sing, dance, laugh, and connect with one another in person. Through our programs, children discover the power of their voice, forge lifelong friendships, and gain the confidence to pursue their dreams and aspirations. This connection is more important than ever as we see children continuing to struggle with the after affects of the pandemic and grapple with anxiety, self-esteem, and social isolation.

YPC has three core programs:

Performance Choruses: After school, children and teens come to YPC's headquarters to participate in our core choral program, learning age-appropriate vocal, music-reading, performance and choreography skills. These ensembles perform publicly throughout the year citywide and participate in national and international choral competitions and festivals. They also receive up to 100 hours of academic and life-skills workshops through our College Bound program, including SAT/ACT prep, financial literacy, and career/college readiness. To date, 100% of YPC's senior choristers have graduated from high school and been accepted to college, compared to 81% citywide.

Community Choruses: Children in YPC's Community Choruses attend after-school rehearsals in their neighborhood hosted by community partners, and perform concerts throughout the year in their communities and across New York City. This program allows students to perform in their own neighborhoods and within their own communities.

School Choruses: YPC brings its nationally recognized music education and choral performance program to children in 16-18 New York City public schools annually.

We have partnerships in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Bronx and Queens. They learn compositions and repertoire in a range of languages and styles as they develop perseverance, confidence, and the determination to succeed. Performing songs from a variety of cultures and traditions sparks curiosity about diversity and promotes a deeper understanding and respect for our differences.

At YPC, we offer far more than a world-class music education. Through our College Bound initiative, we deliver personalized college prep services, such as SAT prep and college essay writing support, that empower every participant to graduate high school on time and gain admission to the college of their choice. This program also provides homework help, college advising, and audition prep and recording for those interested in music scholarships. Just as importantly, we nurture social development, support emotional growth, and create a caring, supportive environment where young people can truly thrive.

Here are the YPC FY26 Discretionary Requests:

- \$100,000 Speaker Request (*All programming including our expanded after school initiative and our new Community Chorus in the Bronx*)
- \$30,000 Cultural Immigrant Initiative (*All programming in large immigrant neighborhoods*)
- \$20k in Queens, Manhattan, & Brooklyn Delegation Funding (*School Chorus programs*)
- \$30k from the Bronx Delegation (*To support our new Bronx Community Chorus*)
- \$100k renewal of our CASA Funding (Councilmembers Ariola, Mealy, Sanchez & Schulman).
**We are also open to expanding to any district that may need an after school cultural program.*

We have also submitted Member Item requests to several Council Members in districts where we offer programming. While a portion of this funding would support new initiatives—such as our expanded after-school program and the launch of our Community Chorus in the Bronx—a significant share is essential for sustaining our existing operations. This support is especially critical given that YPC was among the many organizations affected by recent cuts to National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) funding.

In solidarity with our peers across the arts and cultural sector, we fully endorse the FY26 request for \$75 million in baselined cultural funding, along with the full restoration of all initiative funding. The Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2026 should include increased baseline support for both the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) and the Cultural Development Fund.

We thank you for your consideration of this request.

Good afternoon Chair Rivera and Chair Brannon,

My name is Dr. Abby Emerson, I'm a NYC educator and I am here today as a member of NYC PLAN, the Public Library Action Network, which is a group of patrons and library workers organizing together to amplify, strengthen, and progress the futures of NYC's three public library systems.

San Francisco's library budget is 1.36% of their overall city budget.

Chicago's library budget is approximately 0.7% of their overall city budget.

Now, if we take a look closer to home. At the moment, our NYC library budget is just 0.43% of the overall city budget. That is unacceptable.

What I would like to ask is that as a city we fund libraries at 0.5% - and not just this year, but every year. At NYC PLAN we feel this is a realistic number and would address the major strains the libraries are currently under.

From our research and conversations with library workers, patrons, and union reps, we have found some key areas of concern that a measly .43% can't currently address. We also heard about these issues from the library presidents at the last city council meeting on libraries. Committing to 0.5% (which for this coming year would translate to \$575.3 million) could be used to address these 3 areas.

- 1) The very real building upgrades that are needed: HVAC, accessibility, restrooms, etc.
- 2) Back pay and fair pay for library workers. The existence of out of date contracts and thousands of dollars owed to some workers is frankly quite embarrassing.
- 3) Additional programming for multiple populations that rely on the library to meet their very real needs: immigrants, youth, elders, unhoused folks, working adults, etc. My own local branch is bustling and rowdy with youth after school – how great! Yet, there is currently zero programming for them at this time.

Funding libraries at 0.5% is frankly a small ask. NYers want more from their libraries, which are some of the only public, shared, completely free, democratic spaces we have left in this city. It would be very punk rock to fund them appropriately.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Abby Emerson

[REDACTED]

nycplan.org

SF: \$199 million out of 14.6 billion = 1.3% (<https://sfpl.org/about-us/budget-information>)

Chicago: \$120 million out of 17.1 billion = 0.7%

(<https://www.bettergov.org/2024/11/07/chicago-public-library-bga-policy-2025-budget-snapshot/>)

Prepared Testimony of Adeeba Rana

Branch Manager, Bedford Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library

Executive Budget Hearing Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

Good afternoon.

My name is Adeeba Afshan Rana, and I am the branch manager of Bedford, a Brooklyn Public Library location that reopened just 28 days ago after more than four years of closure.

In those years, aside from learning patience, I learned just how deeply our patrons value the library. They love coming to story time, having a place to study, getting book recommendations—and our teens love finally having a space of their own. One patron shared that although she may move from apartment to apartment, the library where she learned to love reading, where she brought her daughter every week, and now brings her grandchild, might look a little newer—but the feeling of home has always stayed the same.

We are proud to be back. And our community is so happy to have us back.

That's why I'm asking you to meet Brooklyn Public Library's \$44.8 million in unmet expense needs. Without this investment, it will feel to many like the branch never truly reopened. Meeting these needs—staffing, programming, utilities—allows us to sustain the vibrant, intergenerational connection we have with our community. It ensures that future generations grow up knowing that no matter how the city changes, their local library will always have a place and a program for them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Allyson Lynch, teaching artist, dancer, singer-songwriter

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs
Hearing date and time: **Wednesday, May 21, 2024, at 10:00 a.m., with public testimony
at 2:00 p.m.**

I moved to New York City in 1998 to immerse myself in the club and street dance community here. Since then, street dance and club dance have become formidable performance careers in film and tv and on concert stages. I've also taught and worked with a variety of community based organizations including but not limited to Brooklyn Arts Council and Alvin Ailey Arts-in-Education. My arts background is in Hip Hop, street dance, music and vocal performance.

My colleagues and students live rich lives due to dance worker income. We support this city and we support each other. The dance and music community create an improved city life for all.

Recently, when Hip Hop turned 50, I taught intergenerational dance and cultural workshops in libraries in Brooklyn, the Bronx and Manhattan. Together with my students, we created community building and cultural literacy in these sacred spaces.

Funding for libraries and cultural affairs is essential to keep this city vibrant and to pay workers for housing, food and health care.

Subject: Testimony to Committee on Finance (Jointly with the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations) on May 21, 2025 @ 10:00 AM

To whom it may concern:

I would like to join the ask that public library funding be increased from 0.43% to at least 0.5% of the total city budget in this upcoming fiscal year. This would translate to \$78,565,000 (\$78 million) in public library funding in the FY '26 cycle, or a 16% increase in total library funding in this upcoming fiscal year.

It is really important to me that our city's libraries are adequately resourced, and I believe it is really important for our communities as well. I live in Jackson Heights, where my nearest library closes at or before 6:00 PM every day except Wednesday, and is closed on Sundays. As someone who has to work later than 6:00 PM most days, this makes the library not accessible to me, and I'm sure I'm not the only one.

The library is invaluable to me, providing me the opportunity to read books that I use for so many different purposes: for fun, to develop hobbies, to learn life skills such as how to approach the housing market or fix a cabinet, and to educate myself about the world around me. Even in a world with the internet, books are so important and the library is my main access point to them.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Anthony Liu (11372)

NEA Testimony

Date: 5/21/2025

To: Carlina Rivera, Chair

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

From: Candice Michelle Franklin, New York City Dance Teaching Artist

Good Afternoon, Council Members,

My name is **Candice Michelle Franklin**, and I am honored to stand before you today to advocate for the restoration of funding lost from cuts to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). I am a dancer, choreographer, music producer, creative director, and the Artistic Director of Jazz Ain't Dead. Most importantly, I am a teaching artist, working with institutions such as the Department of Education (DOE), Jazzmobile, Joffrey Ballet School, Lincoln Center, the National Jazz Museum of Harlem, YAFFA Arts, Harlem One Stop, and Cumbe Center for African & Diaspora Dance.

The arts are not a luxury; they are **essential**. They uplift communities, amplify marginalized voices, further dialogue toward equality, and remind people from **all walks of life** that they are **seen and valued**.

Most of my work is performed free, at no charge to the public, not because the arts are free, but because **arts funding makes public programming possible**. With the arts, we are not just showing dance—we are bringing joy, excellence, teaching history, creating opportunities, and sometimes, on a day celebrating culture through the love of social dance, we have the beautiful, extraordinary power, (simply through the offer of a dancer's hand), **to show people that they are seen and that they matter**.

For example, funded through grants via Jazzmobile in collaboration with Jazz Ain't Dead, my Lindy Hop partner, Samuel "Sammy" Coleman, and I teach swing dance to seniors at local senior centers. This interaction has proven to be more than just a dance class—it is an exchange of stories, a celebration of their wisdom, and a moment for them to show they still got it. By fusing dance, poetry, and live jazz, we create experiences where seniors are not just spectators **but performers, part of the show**, sharing the stage with our accomplished musicians and professional dance artists—shining, living their best lives, doing Lindy Hop and, most importantly, **being seen and having value**, with integral relevancy to our show.

For my second example, I want to highlight the **value of the arts in education**. Recently, Sammy and I taught a whirlwind of 40+ Lindy Hop classes culminating into performances for **autistic children** in the DOE, spanning ages elementary to high school. Through the joy of Swing, we gave students not only a way to experience Jazz music and dance history through their bodies but also proved that **autistic children can learn to dance** and that autistic children **can build social skills in a meaningful way**—giving these beautiful children the opportunity **to shine, be seen, and know even they have value**.

For my last example, I want to highlight the **value of the arts in community**. With an NEA-funded NYSCA grant, I started a community dance company at Cumbe Center for African & Diaspora Dance based in Jazz and Katherine Dunham's technique where adult dancers—from all backgrounds—could train, perform, and rediscover their passion. Some trained in their youth but after college hadn't danced in 15 years and ended up pursuing other careers. Some are in their 60s, even retired professional dancers, while others are women business owners, visual artists, poets, teachers, and even young adults whose sole dance experience came from learning dance on YouTube a.k.a. The YouTube School of Dance.

Through Cumbe's flagship Dance 4 Joy 10-class workshop series, we proved that while technique may not always be on the level of a world-class professional dance company, our performances were rich with power, passion, and purpose—and the execution was fierce! We fused live singing, drumming, and spoken word, while performing, proud of our difference, and **using culture** as the glue. All in all, the Arts beautifully revealed to these adult students that they **can be seen** achieving excellence, that they can express a message effectively, and more importantly, that they DO HAVE THE POWER to create extraordinary work, knowing their work has **real purpose** and **value**.

Because of this, I decided—with Cumbe's Leadership Team and that 2024 NYSCA Grant I was awarded—to create an official dance group, **Cumbe RISE Community Dance Company**, open to all, no auditions required, a win-win, performing free at community events throughout the city—spreading joy, inspiring people of all ages, and proving that THE ARTS BELONG TO EVERYONE.

That being said... **Funding doesn't just support artists—IT SUPPORTS THE PEOPLE ARTISTS UPLIFT**. Restoring arts funding strengthens communities, preserves history, and builds bridges across generations. It is not just a lifeline for artists in this city, but a means for them to **create belonging**, provide opportunities, and **ensure that communities are SEEN and VALUED**—ultimately enriching lives and **improving the quality of life for all**.

So, I ask you—please help restore the lost NEA funding for theater, music, and dance, **the visual and fine arts**, because **when we invest in the arts, we invest in people**.

THANK YOU.

Candice Michelle Franklin, MBA

NYSCA Grant Winner 2024

Jazz Ain't Dead, Artistic Director

DOE New York City Teaching Artist

Faculty at Joffrey Ballet School

Faculty at Cumbe Center for African & Diaspora Dance

Cumbe RISE Community Dance Company, Artistic Director

Guest Instructor at Sarah Lawrence College

Prepared Testimony of Christina Li

Teen Techies, A Program by Youth and Family Services at the Brooklyn Public Library

Executive Budget Hearing Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

Good afternoon,

Thank you for granting me the privilege to speak today on an issue that is deeply personal, yet imperative across various boroughs: the significance of sustained funding for public libraries. We often uphold public education as the foundation of literacy, creativity, and knowledgeable ideas. But as with any structure, a foundation alone is not enough.

A child's intellectual and emotional development demands upskilling and enrichment. This is where public libraries step in. Where education offers a framework, the library offers freedom to explore, to question, and to grow.

Consider this: a child may learn to read in a classroom, but it is often in the library where that reading turns into passion. Exposure to a wide selection of texts cultivates transformation. This leads to greater academic success, higher empathy, and stronger communication skills. The library is where that idea becomes accessible to all, not just to the people with economic means.

Let's not forget the free programs that are offered; designed to meet the developmental needs of youth. I have had the privilege of working within such programs, and I can tell you firsthand; the programs offered extensive joy to the youth. They ignite imagination, sharpen motor skills, and encourage creativity.

Yet the truth is stark: many parents are unable to supplement their children's education; not due to lack of trying, rather, due to a lack of resources. I speak with conviction because I do not approach this from a distance. I sought refuge in the books, programs, and librarians who never diminished my opinions. The library is not just a place, it is a sanctuary. We live in an economy where full-time employment no longer guarantees financial stability. For these families, the public library is not simply helpful, it is essential.

To underfund our public libraries is to incur a long-term social cost. It's to turn away from the very values we claim to hold dear: equal opportunity. In closing, I ask not simply for your support, I ask for your vision to see libraries, not as components of the past, but as blueprints for the future.

Now, I ask for YOU as the investors to invest in the potential of our future generation, knowing that it will be nothing less than the flourishing of an informed, empathetic, and resilient society. Thank you.

Hello, my name is Christina Santiago and I have three library cards, one for the New York Public Library, one for the Queens Public Library, and one for the Brooklyn Public Library. One of my favorite things about being a New Yorker is my free and public access to so many books. I utilize the library nearly every single day, through accessing their digital collections through the LibbyApp, or by stopping by a branch to browse. I received my first library card when I was 6 years old, and I recently renewed my card at 31 years old.

Which is why I want to testify on behalf of increasing the library budget for the upcoming from 0.43% to at least 0.5% of the total city budget. This would translate to \$78,565,000 (\$78 million) in public library funding in the FY '26 cycle, or a 16% increase in total library funding in this upcoming fiscal year. The library does so much good and necessary work for millions of New Yorkers, and they require the funding to be able to continue to do that work. 0.5% of the city's budget should be allotted towards our libraries, because our communities will more than benefit from it.

In addition, the three library systems together are operating under a structural financial deficit mainly from growth in overall expenses due to inflation since 2021, showing how important and utilized they are. The operational deficit for the current level of service that the libraries provide is \$44.6 million, which means the NYC PLAN demand for \$78 million more for libraries in for the upcoming year would translate to \$33.9 million available for a true increase in service or staffing levels from their current state.

It's a realistic but significant number. It would allow libraries to be more fully staffed and to accommodate patron needs.

Thank you for taking your time to read this, and I hope that the New York City library system can get the increase in funding that it needs and deserves. I love the library so very much, and I would love my taxes to go towards making them run smoothly and flourish for not only myself, but for the millions of New Yorkers in the city.

Prepared Testimony of Clementine McLeod

Program participant, Youth and Family Services at the Brooklyn Public Library

Executive Budget Hearing Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

Good afternoon. My name is Clementine McLeod.

Libraries were and will always be a vital part of every community, especially for teens. They're not just a place to check out books—they're a "third space," separate from school and home, that's free and accessible. That kind of space is increasingly rare.

After school, I often found myself spending time at the library, studying or doing homework while waiting for my other activities to begin. I couldn't wait at school—it closed soon after classes ended—and home was too far away. The library became a haven.

In downtown Brooklyn, Atlantic Terminal Mall introduced a policy around 2024 banning teens under 18 unless accompanied by an adult. A friend of mine who went to a nearby high school could no longer go there after school. That left the library as one of the few welcoming spaces left for teens to simply exist.

Libraries matter because they're places where young people can connect, feel safe, and just be. That's why I'm asking you to continue funding spaces like this—because we need them.

Dear Council Chairs Brannan and Rivera.

I'm writing as a member of NYC PLAN to request that public library funding be increased from 0.43% to at least 0.5% of the total city budget in this upcoming fiscal year. This would translate to \$78,565,000 (\$78 million) more in public library funding in the FY '26 cycle than what is currently estimated, or a 16% increase in total library funding in this upcoming fiscal year.

In addition, we ask that the 0.5% of the total city budget be the benchmark for all future library budgets.

Some clarification on this number that may be useful:

- The financial year (FY) 2026 Executive Budget estimate total for public libraries is \$496,760,000 (\$496.7 million). The total municipal budget for FY '26 is \$115,065,051,000 (\$115 billion). So the current FY '26 est. funding for libraries is a measly 0.43% of the total budget.
- The demand from NYC PLAN is that our next mayor increases that number from 0.43% to at least 0.5% (half of 1%) of the total city budget. For FY '26, that would be \$575,325,000 (\$575.3 million).
- Another way to think about this is that we're demanding an increase of \$78,565,000 (\$78.5 million) in public library funding in the FY '26 cycle, or an 16% increase in total library funding in this upcoming fiscal year.

I think this is a realistic but significant number. I believe this would allow libraries, which are relied on now more than ever, to be more fully staffed, and to accommodate patron needs."

The three library systems together are operating under a structural financial deficit mainly from growth in overall expenses due to inflation since 2021. The operational deficit for the current level of service that the libraries provide is \$44.6 million.

So I recognize that NYC PLAN's request for \$78 million more for libraries in FY '26 is above and beyond what the library CEOs are requesting, if \$44.6 million of that is just getting the libraries caught up with inflation for current operations, that NYC PLAN's demand is \$33.9 million more than what the libraries are asking for, because NYC PLAN has a more expansive vision than the library CEOs are fighting for.

We are fighting to

Raising Library Worker Pay

Increasing salaries and benefits for library workers so that they can make a living wage and so that the libraries can actually attract and retain workers.

Creating Staffing Minimums

The union locals want there to be at least 4 staff per branch minimum, but the library administrations are unwilling to add it so far. They aren't even willing to add a staffing minimum at a lower level like 2-3 people per branch, not because they don't think they have enough staff to do that, but because they don't know if they will still have enough next year for instance.

Thank you for your consideration

Dylan Flesch

May 21, 2025

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

I am writing today to lend my support to the NYC Public Library Action Network's demand for increased funding to the city's three library systems.

PLAN's demand is as follows:

We ask that public library funding be increased from 0.43% to **at least 0.5%** of the total city budget in this upcoming fiscal year. This would translate to \$78,565,000 (\$78 million) in public library funding in the FY '26 cycle, or a 16% increase in total library funding in this upcoming fiscal year.

In addition, we ask that the 0.5% of the total city budget be the benchmark for all future library budgets.

We think it's a realistic but significant number. We believe this would allow libraries, which are relied on now more than ever, to be more fully staffed, and to accommodate patron needs

As a resident of NYC and long-time patron and supporter of the NYPL, I cannot stress strongly enough how vital libraries are to everyone. These cherished institutions uplift and support everyone who comes in contact with them. As public goods and the social fabric we depend on suffer increasing attacks from conservatives, I urge the City Council to stand strong, to cultivate abundance, to fund libraries the way they deserve and continue the long tradition of making this city the best place in the country to live and thrive.

Thank you for your time and dedication.

Sincerely,
Edward Ficklin

[REDACTED]

New York, NY 10034

[REDACTED]

Hello, my name is Jaime Cleland and I'm a resident of Brooklyn. I am writing to ask for an increase in funding for public libraries to at least 0.5% of the total city budget for the coming fiscal year. For many years, I have relied on New York's public libraries for research and for recreation, whether viewing videos on reserve at the New York Public Library for Performing Arts or checking out novels to read via Libby. Libraries play an important role in providing needed information, supporting childhood literacy, providing various services, and building community. A budget increase is needed in order to staff our libraries fully and to accommodate library patrons. Please support our libraries at a minimum of 0.5% of the budget, both for the upcoming year and going forward for all future library budgets. Thank you.

Prepared Testimony of Juanita James

Branch Manager, Washington Irving Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library

Executive Budget Hearing Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Juanita James, and I have proudly served Brooklyn Public Library for the past 25 years. Currently, I am the Branch Manager at Washington Irving. I speak not only on behalf of my branch, but also for the dedicated staff, families, students, and seniors who rely on our services every day—no matter what.

As a branch manager, I often step in to cover multiple shifts—sometimes opening and closing the branch myself for days at a time. When staff take a well-earned vacation or call out sick, I scramble to keep our doors open. In some cases, I've returned right after my own time off just to ensure weekend coverage.

This is not sustainable. It's frustrating, stressful, and—frankly—unfair to our staff and the public, who expect and deserve consistent, high-quality service. Stretching our workforce to the brink impacts everything from programming to the safety and atmosphere of our spaces.

That's why I'm urging you to fully restore Brooklyn Public Library's budget—\$44.8 million in unmet needs—so we can continue to serve the public at the standard they deserve.

With restored funding, we can maintain adequate staffing levels, reduce burnout, and ensure that every branch is able to open and close safely and reliably. It would also allow us to keep offering the educational and cultural programs so many Brooklynites depend on.

Thank you for your time, attention, and commitment to public libraries. With your support, we'll continue to be there when our communities need us most—and do it with excellence.

The New York public library allowed me to continue looking for a job when I was unemployed and could not afford a computer. In addition I was able to use the air conditioning to save on energy during times of inclement weather. Losing any sort of funding would be a massive blow to the social fabric of this city

My name is Mariame Kaba and I was born and raised in NYC. I am an avid public library patron and a member of the NYC Public Library Action Network (<https://nycplan.org/>).

NYC PLAN asks that public library funding be increased from 0.43% to at least 0.5% of the total city budget in this upcoming fiscal year. This would translate to \$78,565,000 (\$78 million) in public library funding in the FY '26 cycle, or a 16% increase in total library funding in this upcoming fiscal year.

In addition, we ask that the 0.5% of the total city budget be the benchmark for all future library budgets. We think it's a realistic but significant number. We believe this would allow libraries, which are relied on now more than ever, to be more fully staffed, and to accommodate patron needs.

The three library systems together are operating under a structural financial deficit mainly from growth in overall expenses due to inflation since 2021. The operational deficit for the current level of service that the libraries provide is \$44.6 million.

Our demand calls for \$78 million more for libraries in FY '26. However, \$44.6 million of that is just getting the libraries caught up with inflation for current operations so this means *there would only be \$33.9 million available for a true increase* in service or staffing levels from their current state.

Our public libraries are key infrastructure in this city and they must be adequately funded.

Thank you.

My name is Marlene Santos and I live in the Bronx. Libraries are crucial to the culture of New York City, as they house all sorts of important media. Not only are books available at the library, but so are computers, CDs, DVDs, musical instruments, and so much more. They help bring media access to countless people who would not be able to afford owning these materials, improving literacy and education to all. I work part-time as a direct support professional, and libraries have always been a perfect and accepting place to bring in the adults that I work with (who are people with developmental disabilities). Many of them love reading, coloring, watching videos on the computers, or simply even sitting on a comfortable chair for the duration of their time at the library. Librarians have always been incredibly kind to our individuals, and we would lose so much without them.

I ask that public library funding be increased to at least 0.5% of the total city budget in this upcoming fiscal year so that they can continue to do what they do best. It's a realistic, but significant, number that would be of much benefit to them and in turn all New Yorkers as well.

To whom it may concern,

Libraries are a vital institution in society. We must make all efforts to give our libraries the resources they provide in our communities. Increasing public library funding from 0.43% of the total city budget to 0.5% is not a burden. It's an investment in the city's future.

Public libraries provide resources to all walks of life, going beyond borrowing books. They've become a beacon of cultural events and even provide a safe space to those who need it. Plus, libraries provide a valuable quiet space for people. I wouldn't have been able to finish my degree years ago without the quiet spaces libraries provided for me to sit down and do the hard work semester after semester.

A library is one of a few places that's truly available for all walks of life and it would be a wonderful thing if the city council considered increasing funding so that impact continues. We desperately need it.

Thanks for your time,

-Marvin John
5/24/2025

Prepared Testimony of Dr. Mason Mason

Founder, Noir Yoga – PowerUP! Grand Prize Winner, Brooklyn Public Library

Executive Budget Hearing Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

Dear Members of the Finance and Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Committee of the New York City Council,

My name is Dr. Mason Mason, and I'm writing to express my wholehearted support for the PowerUP! Business Plan Competition and the critical role Brooklyn Public Library plays in uplifting emerging entrepreneurs across our borough. As a recent PowerUP grand prize winner and the founder of Noir Yoga—a Black-owned wellness studio based in Bedford-Stuyvesant—I can speak personally to the life-changing impact of this program, not only on small business owners like me, but on the communities we serve.

PowerUP gave me more than a grant. It gave me structure, clarity, and community. The curriculum pushed me to refine my business model, elevate my strategy, and articulate the vision behind Noir Yoga. The feedback from mentors, the camaraderie among participants, and the support from BPL staff created an ecosystem of encouragement that carried me from idea to implementation.

We officially opened our doors in August 2024, and we're proud to now serve hundreds of community members through accessible yoga, mindfulness programs, and wellness events centered on healing and empowerment.

Entrepreneurship is often imagined as a solo journey, but PowerUP reminds us that thriving businesses are built through collective investment. When the City invests in Brooklyn Public Library and its entrepreneurship programming, it invests in safe spaces, job creation, economic mobility, and cultural vitality.

Noir Yoga exists today because of this public-private partnership—and I know I'm not alone.

I strongly urge you to continue funding Brooklyn Public Library and its small business development programs. These resources aren't just helpful—they're transformative. By supporting PowerUP, you're helping New Yorkers turn bold ideas into sustainable futures.

May 24, 2025

dear council members,

Libraries are the backbone of our communities

My neighborhood library on Corellia Road is very small. But it is busy, vibrant and a safe place for all community members. On any given afternoon, there are families, reading books, teens with a librarian, talking about anime and manga, seniors getting tax forms, folks using computers for job applications, doing research, finding housing, and playing games.

Recently, a couple neighbors and I joined together to help low income folks apply for discounted OMNY cards. Most of the folks we helped were elderly, so we helped them submit paper applications. Sitting at the front of the library talking to neighbors over the course of six weeks, we saw how trusted a space this is.

We ask that public library funding be increased from 0.43% to at least 0.5% of the total city budget in this upcoming fiscal year. This would translate to \$78,565,000 (\$78 million) in public library funding in the FY '26 cycle, or a 16% increase in total library funding in this upcoming fiscal year.

In addition, we ask that the 0.5% of the total city budget be the benchmark for all future library budgets.

Thank you.

Maureen Flaherty

Increase Library Funding to 0.5% of the City Budget

My name is Natalie McGarry, I live in Brooklyn, I'm a member of the NYC Public Library Action Network (PLAN), and my local library is the Flatbush branch.

I'm writing today because our libraries need more funding. Specifically, I think we should fund our libraries at half a percent of the city budget (.5%) which would be about \$575 million in FY2026.

Libraries are critically important community resources to us all, it's not just where they keep the books, libraries are some of the only free democratic community spaces we have left.

We can dream big for libraries, seven day service, extended hours, fantastic classes and story hours that educate and enrich our lives every day. But we can't make these dreams a reality without funding.

The NYPL was able to maintain 365 day service 82 hours a week during The Great Depression! Currently we're failing to meet the standard set by The Great Depression! That's frankly embarrassing.

We can't have seven day service without more library workers, and we can't have more library workers without money for salaries. We simply do not have enough library workers to both have libraries open and support programming at the same time. Libraries cannot hire if funding is in question or likely to change. We must fund our libraries and commit to do so every year.

So please, fight for our libraries. Commit half a percent of the budget to libraries for every patron and library worker in New York City. Increase library funding to half a percent (0.5%) of the budget.

I am writing in support of NYC Public Library Action Networks proposal for the NYPL budget asking that public library funding be increased from 0.43% to at least 0.5% of the total city budget in this upcoming fiscal year. This would translate to \$78,565,000 (\$78 million) in public library funding in the FY '26 cycle, or a 16% increase in total library funding in this upcoming fiscal year. In addition, they ask that the 0.5% of the total city budget be the benchmark for all future library budgets. This is a realistic but significant number that would allow libraries, which are relied on now more than ever, to be more fully staffed, and to accommodate patron needs.

I just had family visiting the city from Louisiana, and took them to both the Stephen A. Schwarzman library branch and the Stavros Niarchos branch. They were, frankly, in awe of both spaces, the way that so much art, culture, resources, and supportive spaces are just available to anyone who walks in. Libraries are some of the most important spaces in our city, and one of the only ones that are truly democratic — you don't need to pay to come in. The system is civic life at its best.

But that doesn't just happen. It is a choice that we need to keep making, again and again. If the city budget is not investing in our library system, it is not investing in New York. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,
Sarah Shachat

To whom it may concern:

I am an avid reader and a heavy user of both the Queens and NY Public Libraries. Libraries serve as a lifeline for everyday citizens and in particular some of the city's most vulnerable residents. It is incumbent upon you to ensure that this vital institution continues to thrive and survive for years to come.

I ask that public library funding be increased from 0.43% to at least 0.5% of the total city budget in this upcoming fiscal year. This would translate to \$78,565,000 (\$78 million) in public library funding in the FY '26 cycle, or a 16% increase in total library funding in this upcoming fiscal year. In addition, I ask that the 0.5% of the total city budget be the benchmark for all future library budgets. Here's some background info that may be useful:

- The financial year (FY) 2026 **Executive Budget** estimate total for public libraries is \$496,760,000 (\$496.7 million). The total municipal budget for FY '26 is \$115,065,051,000 (\$115 billion). So the current FY '26 est. funding for libraries is a measly 0.43% of the total budget.
- The demand from NYC PLAN is that our next mayor increases that number from 0.43% to at least 0.5% (half of 1%) of the total city budget. For FY '26, that would be \$575,325,000 (\$575.3 million).
- Another way to think about this is that we're demanding an **increase of \$78,565,000 (\$78.5 million) in public library funding in the FY '26 cycle**, or an **16% increase in total library funding in this upcoming fiscal year**.

I appreciate your consideration of this matter, and look forward to future use of the NY libraries.

Best,

Stacy Smith

- I am a BookMatch Teen at the Brooklyn Public Library. We're a group of teenagers that run a program that provides book recommendations for other teenagers online and at live events.
- I've been part of BookMatch Teen for two years, and I love it deeply. Seeing this rare connection that the library creates is magical. Did you even know the library had this program? I didn't.
- But through this program I have connected with so many teens. I have even live interviewed a five year old boy about his book interests - which turned out to be the horror series Five Nights at Freddy's. Then, my friends and I had to recommend him a collection of creepy children's books and graphic novels, which he excitedly shared with his parents and little brother.
- Today I'd like to share with you all a few moments of how the library has allowed me to connect with other readers through BookMatch Teen.
 - So many people who write to us don't have much to say about the books they like. They give us videogames, music, and movies. They don't read a lot, or have thought that reading isn't really for them. And then we give them books - hoping to inspire reading amongst kids who don't enjoy it as much as us BookMatch Teens. What's a better way to start reading again than being given a book that is perfect for you?
 - One example is a form sent in by Rachel. Rachel gave us a list of video games that she liked. I recommended Nimona by ND Stevenson and wrote:
 - This is a fun graphic novel that follows a villain and his eager shape shifting sidekick as they try to take down the corrupt monarchy of their kingdom. This has the action, adventure, and fantasy of many video games like the ones you mentioned. It also has a movie adaptation, as a plus! (*I've found that's a great way to get kids interested*)
 - I also messaged a girl named Cheyenne, who was losing interest in fantasy books but was looking for something else to read. I recommended her Where I End & You Begin by Preston Norton. I wrote her "This has the interesting and fun plot of many of the books and authors you mentioned, along with the same humor and romance. You did mention that you are not as into fantasy as you used to, but I hope you are able to enjoy the light fantasy in this book and appreciate how it is a tool to tell a much smaller story."
- I hope these examples can show how we have used the tools the Brooklyn Public Library has given us to inspire and connect with readers.

- Inspiring readers and connecting with other people in our community is what the library stands for. The Brooklyn Public Library has given me the opportunity to do this through BookMatch Teen and I am so endlessly grateful to it.
- That's why I was so eager to come here today and share with you all why the library is so important to us teenagers. It gives teens like me the opportunity to use the passion we have for books and reading, and connect with other interns and teens interested in reading across the city.
- It has allowed us to promote reading and literacy, and spreading the love for books in a way that genuinely allows people to find books that work for them.

Hello,

I am a scientist, professor, and mother of two young children ages 3 and 4. I am writing to convey my strong support for continued and increased funding to libraries, particularly to support their offerings for children. When they were smaller, my children went regularly to the infant story time at our local branch (Mulberry St). Now, during warmer months my children visit the library weekly for craft days on Thursdays. In the colder months, the library is the de facto replacement for playgrounds – a place to meet their friends, play, learn, and just get out of the house any day of the week. On many occasions my children and their friends need to leave the library well before they want to, because of its closing time in the late afternoon. As you can see, this is a crucial service for our community and our children. I would be very happy to have more of my tax dollars go to support it.


Please increase the budget to 0.5% or more for the public libraries. The libraries will be especially essential resources to residents in these uncertain times, and they need to be funded appropriately given the inflation that has stretched the library funds so thin.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Heather Mikesell


Brooklyn, NY 11215

I'm writing to share just how much the public library means to me--not just as a resource, but as a vital part of my life.

Every week, I check out new books. I always have the maximum of 10 books on hold, eagerly anticipating what I'll discover next. The library has introduced me to authors and voices I may never have found otherwise--stories that have made me think deeply, laugh unexpectedly, and feel a little less alone in the world.

I'm an active member of three book clubs, and our discussions often revolve around titles we've borrowed from the library. These communities have become essential sources of connection and insight.

Especially in these dark and uncertain times, the library stands as a beacon of hope--a place where ideas are free, curiosity is encouraged, and everyone belongs. It's more than shelves and checkouts; it's a lifeline.

Please know that the work the library does matters. It changes lives. It's certainly changed mine.

The library is one of the few places that truly brings our community together. It's where neighbors from all walks of life gather, learn, and connect. I see kids light up with joy during story time or when they discover a new favorite book--it's often their first doorway into a lifelong love of reading. For remote workers like me, it also offers a quiet, welcoming place to focus and be productive--something that's hard to find elsewhere. And personally, it brings me deep joy and comfort, reminding me that knowledge, imagination, and community are always within reach. The library strengthens our neighborhoods by providing access, connection, and a sense of belonging for everyone.

I'm writing to urge you to continue--and expand--funding for our public library. It is so much more than a building with books. It's a hub of learning, connection, and opportunity that

touches every corner of our community. In times of uncertainty, the library remains a constant: free, welcoming, and accessible to all. It's one of the few truly democratic spaces we have left--where everyone, regardless of income or background, can access knowledge, culture, and community. Investing in our library is investing in the strength, resilience, and future of our city. Please don't let this essential institution go underfunded. We need it now more than ever.


Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Emilia Ferreyra


Brooklyn, NY 11211

My library is a regular part of my life. It is one rare quiet beautiful space away from home where I can read, study, work or just step into to help the time pass until my next engagement. In the city, there is no other place with those qualities that is also free to enter and stay for however long you please.

Beyond just the sanctuary the library provides, I have been an avid user of the library's resources. I love to read both fiction and nonfiction. And I have perused their knitting and cooking books for inspiration on patterns and recipes.

For books that are not physically at my local library, I use the library catalog system to see if it is available at any other libraries close enough to commute to. Barring that, I use Libby to check it out in ebook or audiobook format. And if even then that media is unavailable, I have once used the Inter-Library Loan System to receive a dvd from all the way in El Paso!

Beyond my recreational use of the library resources, while pursuing my degree, I frequently made use of the library's access to online academic archives which were instrumental in composing my senior thesis.

I have also picked up free masks and covid tests that the library once provided.

The library has fed my curiosity and empowered me to become the person I am today.

I have been lucky enough to attend a BPL hosted interview of the author Sandra Cisneros and watch her discuss her life and work.

I have also gone with friends to visit the Jay Z exhibit at the Central Library.

I've attended the annual Rally against Book Bans, listening to musical performances and later, high school students communicate the impact of the library to their lives.

I also support my community as a tutor for adults working on their literacy and later, their ged.

People come together for exhibits and celebrity events, but also to support our right to read books uncensored. And finally, after the library has helped us succeed, we may turn around and help others with library resources.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Alla Makagon

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11235

Growing up in the 90's as an immigrant from Ukraine, the Brighton Beach branch of the library was one of the most foundational and important things of my life. As I began to slowly learn English, the library opened up an entire world of books that felt safe, accessible, and fostered a lifelong passion for reading. One of my earliest memories is walking to the library with my grandmother and loading up on books that went into her little cart, and counting the minutes until I could get home and devour the ones that I had picked up. So much of my childhood (and well into my older years) was spent browsing the shelves and discovering new treasures.

When my daughter was a baby/toddler, we used to bring her to the local library every Friday for the organized storytime. It was an early opportunity to have her socialize with other kids in a safe, fun space which was easy and convenient for us to access on foot. At the time, the library was the only free resource in the entire neighborhood where we could go for age appropriate activities. Each session ended with a riot of bubbles - she's been hooked on the library ever since! It's especially heartwarming for me because it feels like a full circle moment to see her love books as much as I did.

When I was around 9 or 10 years old, I came down with a very severe case of the flu and was stuck in bed for days. My mother went to the library to bring me some books as a distraction, knowing how much I loved to read and lived for my weekly visits that I hated to miss. As an immigrant, she wasn't personally familiar with the children's authors or titles, and just picked a random selection for me. One of those books happened to be the 3rd Harry Potter book - this was the days before the internet when just the first three books were out, and I had never heard of them before. For the first time that week, I completely forgot how miserable I was feeling and inhaled the book cover to cover in a matter of hours. I was hooked!!! When I felt better, my first stop was the library and I was desperate to find the first two books. When I saw them on the shelf... I could still remember that childish excitement and delight to this day. I was so impatient to read it that I made my grandmother stop at the Brighton 2nd park on the way home so that I could start immediately. I still remember sitting on a swing, opening that book with absolute reverence. Our libraries are a safe haven

that that are a vital and invaluable part of the fabric of our community, and have the power to make a massive difference in people's lives. They must be protected at all costs, and I am forever grateful for the Brighton Beach branch, which holds so many important memories for me.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Hashir W

██████████
Brooklyn, NY 11226

My local public library plays a crucial role in my daily life and has truly enhanced my access to resources, learning, and community engagement. It's more than just a place to check out books; it's a hub for personal development and lifelong learning. Here are a few ways my library has been a valuable resource:

Regularly Checking Out Books: Whether I'm diving into a captivating novel, seeking professional development, or simply exploring a new area of interest, my local library provides an extensive selection of books across all genres. The ability to borrow physical books and access digital resources makes it easy to stay informed and entertained without having to purchase every new release or resource.

Online Resources (eBooks, Audiobooks, and Databases): The library's digital offerings, such as eBooks and audiobooks, are an incredible asset. Through apps like OverDrive and Libby, I can borrow books directly to my phone or tablet, which is perfect for reading on the go. The library also provides access to research databases, which is invaluable for college students and anyone involved in academic or professional research.

Special Events and Clubs: My library is not just about books; it also offers a variety of programs that bring the community together. For example, events like Senior Debate or Robotics Clubs offer opportunities for people of all ages to develop new skills, engage in intellectual discussions, and interact with others who share similar interests. I've found that these programs foster a strong sense of community and provide valuable experiences that go beyond traditional library services.

Storytime and Kids' Programs: As an uncle, I'm particularly appreciative of the Storytime sessions for children. They help instill a love for reading early on, while also providing a safe and engaging environment for kids to learn and socialize. The library often has themed events or crafts related to the books, which makes the experience even more enjoyable for young learners.

Homework Help and Tutoring Services: For students, the library's homework help and tutoring services are an essential resource. I've witnessed firsthand how these programs help students grasp difficult concepts and improve academically. It's great knowing that students have access to free, high-quality support right in their community, which can make a world of difference in their educational journey.

Printing, Computer Access, and College Resources: The library also provides essential services like printing, faxing, and access to computers, which can be lifesavers for those who don't have access to these resources at home. For college students, the library offers vital college preparation resources, including access to research materials, test prep books, and scholarship information. This helps students stay on track with their academic goals, and even provides assistance with career planning and resume writing.

Community Space and Support: Beyond the tangible resources, the library serves as a community space where people can study, relax, or work on creative projects. It's also a hub for local events, workshops, and lectures, offering people the chance to learn, grow, and network with others. The library is a place where I can meet new people, take part in interesting discussions, or even just enjoy some quiet time in a peaceful setting.

In summary, my local public library has significantly impacted my life by offering access to knowledge, a variety of programs, and a welcoming space for the entire community. It has empowered me to explore new interests, stay connected to my community, and access resources that I might not otherwise be able to afford. The fact that all of these services are free is truly incredible, and I feel incredibly fortunate to have such an invaluable resource at my fingertips.

The library has played such an important role in bringing the community together, and I've seen it firsthand. One of the most valuable resources has been the private rooms. These quiet spaces have provided me with the perfect environment for focused work, study, or even just a peaceful spot to reflect. It's not just about books--these rooms have also been used by local groups for meetings, workshops, and small events, making them a hub for connection.

The book clubs are another incredible way the library brings people together. I've had the opportunity to be part of a couple of them, and the discussions have been so enriching. It's not just about reading; it's about sharing ideas, learning from others, and connecting with people who might see things differently. Whether it's a fiction club or a specialized interest group, there's always a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect.

Beyond that, the library has provided so many essential community resources. I've used the workshops to improve my skills and even attended a couple of job-searching sessions that were incredibly helpful. The access to technology, like computers and free Wi-Fi, has also been a lifeline for many in the area. In a way, the library has become a place where the community not only comes to read but to grow, connect, and find support.

It's more than just a library--it's a space where people can come together, learn, and build a sense of community.

Final Thoughts: Why Our City Leaders Must Protect and Strengthen Our Community Libraries

Our public libraries are more than just repositories of books; they are lifelines for many in our community. As someone who has benefited immensely from the resources and services they offer, I urge our city leaders to recognize and protect these invaluable institutions.

A Personal Story:

I remember a time when I was struggling to make ends meet. My local library became my sanctuary. Not only did I have access to a vast array of books and online resources, but I also found support through various programs. The staff were always welcoming, offering guidance and assistance whenever needed. It was during this challenging period that I realized the true value of our libraries--not just as places to borrow books, but as community hubs that provide hope and opportunities.

The Multifaceted Role of Libraries:

Staff Support: The dedicated librarians and staff members are more than just information providers; they are community anchors. They assist with job applications, provide resources for personal development, and offer a listening ear to those in need.

Seasonal Extracurricular Resources: Libraries offer a plethora of seasonal programs that cater to all age groups. From summer reading challenges for children to workshops for adults seeking new skills, these programs enrich our community and provide opportunities for growth.

Multiple Locations and Convenient Book Pick-Ups: With several branches across the city, accessing library resources has never been easier. The ability to pick up and return books at various locations saves time and ensures that everyone has access, regardless of their neighborhood.

Printing Accessibility: For many, especially those without home offices, the library's printing services are indispensable. Whether it's printing resumes, school assignments, or important documents, these services are crucial for those who cannot afford personal printers.

A Lifeline for Those Facing Economic Hardships: For individuals striving to overcome poverty, libraries offer free access to resources that can make a significant difference. From

educational materials to job search assistance, libraries provide tools that empower individuals to improve their circumstances.

A Call to Action:

Our libraries are more than just buildings; they are pillars of our community. They support education, foster creativity, and provide essential services to those in need. As our city leaders, it is imperative that you recognize the profound impact libraries have on our community and take steps to protect and strengthen them. Investing in our libraries is an investment in the future of our city.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Jordyn Davis

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11226

My local public library has been an important and enriching part of my life. I regularly check out new books--both physical and digital--and take full advantage of the library's eBook and audiobook collections through its online platforms. It's my go-to place for discovering new authors, learning new skills, and diving into topics that interest me. I've also attended a few community events, including author talks and creative writing workshops, which have been both inspiring and informative.

The free resources provided by the library have had a major impact on my life. From free internet access and printing services to career and resume-building workshops, the library has helped me stay productive, especially when I've been between jobs or working on personal development. The access to quiet study spaces has also helped me stay focused on work or reading when I need a break from distractions at home.

More than just a personal resource, I've seen the library serve as a unifying force in our community. It's a place where people from all walks of life gather--students doing homework, seniors enjoying book clubs, parents attending Storytime with their children. I've seen teenagers gather after school to study or just hang out in a safe environment. During summer heatwaves, the library transforms into a cooling center, providing comfort and care to those in need.

The library doesn't just provide books--it creates a sense of belonging. Whether it's through community events, educational programs, or simply offering a welcoming space, it strengthens our neighborhood and promotes lifelong learning and connection. It's more than a building--it's a cornerstone of our community.

WE NEED LIBRARIES! GIVE THEM MORE MONEY & KEEP THEM OPEN

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From James Finn



Brooklyn, NY 11230

Now retired, I have used support of the Brooklyn library staff to expand the joy of reading and share it with my grandsons.

At least once a week we can walk to a branch near us.

The Kensington branch is a excellent resource for neighbors to share stories with others. The computers are constantly in use.

The staff is very professional with their support.

We have spent hours on the summer

projects, crafts, and 3D Printer displays over the past 4 years. Look forward to this summer Thursday activities with materials supplied by the Brooklyn library.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Theo Grote



Brooklyn, NY 11201

I love reading, and the library is full of free books.

The library provides an awesome space for me to play games with my friends.

Libraries are important because everyone should have access to books. Also, the library provides a free public space for people who need one.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

FOR THE RECORD

From Sabrina Chap

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11225

As a single mom, the library has been nothing short of a sanctuary--a place where my child and I are both seen, supported, and inspired. Having a wealth of books, activities, and resources just blocks away is an everyday miracle.

More than a building, the library has made me feel rooted--part of a greater community and more deeply tied to Brooklyn. It's where I've expanded my own creativity and learning: recording in the Production Studio, taking free classes, and even being selected for the songwriting workshop that reimagined a new national anthem.

The library has not only opened doors--it has anchored my heart in Brooklyn.

The library is where Brooklyn comes together. Being chosen for the national anthem workshop gave me a space to reflect on democracy, share stories with neighbors from all walks of life, and see my city through new eyes--from finally visiting the Immigration Museum to redefining what America and Brooklyn mean to me.

Through the library's cultural programs, my child and I have explored parts of New York we'd never seen--his curiosity sparked, my heart full. With just a library card, we feel rich in experience and possibility.

The library a vital meeting ground--where I've sent friends to free classes, job help, and creative resources. The library doesn't just serve the community--it strengthens it.

At this moment in history, New York's greatest resource is its people--their minds, their voices, their right to think freely. In the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, we must stand for

knowledge, education, and access for all. The Brooklyn Public Library is the best of New York and the best of who we are. Protect it at all costs.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

FOR THE RECORD

From Kiri Blakeley


Brooklyn, NY 11218

Because of a macular hole that required two surgeries in on eye, my vision is extremely bad. I need to use digital books where I can increase the font to an extremely large size. Not even print books with larger font is enough for me. Without libraries having digital books, I simply couldn't use the library. In fact, before Libby, I did not use the library for several years. Without the library, my reading went way down because I can't afford to buy too many books because my career tanked after the macular hole.

Libraries are so important for people like me who have invisible disabilities. My poor vision due to an unexpected macular hole in my 40s could have happened to anyone. Nothing caused it, it's not genetic either. Just poor bad luck. Now I can hardly read (not food for a professional journalist), have to keep my computer time to a minimum as much as I can and still pay my bills. Without the library offering digital books, my life would be so much worse.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

FOR THE RECORD

From Ellen Keohane

 Brooklyn, NY

Brooklyn, NY 11218

My 8-year-old son and I access the Brooklyn Public Library every week. I've been borrowing books from the library to read to him since he was a baby. The library has really fostered my son's love of reading. Reading was initially a challenge for him, but he was motivated to learn because of his love of books. Now in the third grade, he's an enthusiastic and avid reader. In addition to visiting the library in person, my son and I also access audio and e-books online. When he was a toddler, we frequently attended "babies and books" events, as well as music performances in the garden at the Park Slope Library. During the pandemic, visiting the library and picking up new books to read was so important for our mental health. We now live in Kensington so the Windsor Terrace Library is our new "home" library. We love the Brooklyn Public Library! Please don't cut its funding!

We often visit the library to pick up books, as well as to get homework done. As a freelancer who works from home, I also rely on the library as a comfortable and safe space where I can get work done. We value the library and hope it can be supported!

Please protect our libraries! They are a vital part of our community.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Maria Lebedev



Brooklyn, NY 11201

FOR THE RECORD

After being laid off from my job, the library became the place where I began forging a new chapter of my life. I started offering language tutoring sessions there, both for children and adults. The library's thoughtfully designed spaces made all the difference: quiet, welcoming areas for adults, and an intellectually stimulating, joyful environment for children. The staff is extraordinary, knowledgeable, warm, and always ready to help.

It's been deeply rewarding not only to teach in the library but to watch my young students grow attached to it, checking out books on their own, recognizing their favorite corners, and making it part of their weekly rhythm. The library isn't just a place with books and computers and DVDs and printers and private rooms (though it has all of that). It is a place filled with possibility, care, and community.

Even now that I'm returning to full-time work, I plan to keep coming. The library has become a second home to me, one I cherish deeply.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

FOR THE RECORD

From Ping Zhu


Brooklyn, NY 11238

I walk by the Bedford branch daily on my way to work and have been able to pick up reserved books at my convenience. I have rarely been unable to find what I need from the library as far as books are concerned. I've also benefitted from its connection to Kanopy as well as Culture Pass, which makes living in NYC feel like a real joy and privilege.

The talks and book signings at the Brooklyn Central Library I've attended attract like minded people from all over the city. It's a great way to meet others and I've made friends through such events.

The public library is a vital resource for all. In my life, its been an afterschool refuge, work study employer, and sometimes even an emergency bathroom break!

With the cost of living rising everyday, the library an integral pillar of free, accessible education and culturally enriching databases. To further reduce the budget of our libraries would be, amongst many other reductions, the continuing erosion of everyone's quality of life. Please consider finding other solutions other than cutting budgets. It's hard to imagine how this could benefit anyone other than those who likely consider free knowledge expendable.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Sarah Ng


Brooklyn, NY 11221

The library has always been more than just a place to borrow books. It's a true community hub--welcoming, inclusive, and vital to the neighborhood's health. I regularly visit my branch to check out books and use the quiet reading areas, but I've also benefited from the many free programs it offers. From author talks to technology workshops, and even just access to a reliable Wi-Fi connection when I've needed it--my library has been there.

Beyond personal use, I've watched the library bring neighbors together. Whether it's through cultural programs, ESL conversation groups, or simply a friendly librarian recommending a great book, the library fosters a sense of community that is rare and deeply needed. It's a space where people of all backgrounds can feel welcome and supported.

Please continue to invest in our public libraries. They are essential--not just for education and literacy, but for the health, connection, and resilience of our communities.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Su Miao

██████████
Brooklyn, NY 11225

When my family first immigrated to US in 1995, both of my parents worked 12 hours days to provide for my young broke family. The concept of baby sitting or extracurriculars activities were unheard of and we were so poor that we didn't even own a TV until a couple years after. The Chatham Square Library located in the heart of Chinatown NYC was my haven, babysitter, best imaginary friend, and introduction to a much bigger world than my otherwise financially poor upbringing afforded. I remembered as an 8 year old, I learned how to read two scripts of Chinese by reading the entire children's section of Chinese books. And once I started school, my voracity for knowledge grew and it helped me to test out of ESL in my second year at school because I was already reading at a much higher grade level. I could never be where I am in life now without my local public library.

I went to the library unfailingly everyday after school because my parents couldn't afford to put me in extracurriculars. This predicament was shared by many of my friends with similar backgrounds. It acted as a sanctuary and a way for us to keep out of trouble and continued to learn. It was also my only access to a computer for a long time which allowed me to work on my research related assignments.

I think the FREE public library is the singular American invention that has only done good and not harm. And you can't say that about most American inventions... And the whole world benefited from such a great concept.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Patricia Artenberg


Brooklyn, NY 11218

Since my girls were toddlers, they went to our local branches children's room every weekday, before or after the playground around the corner. We had a night time storybtelling before bedtime, reading the books they choose themselves..respectfully looking for and replacing the unused ones themselves.

As the grew, it was a stopoff after-school to research homework and see familiar faces.

As a Grandmother now, I became acquainted with a 13 year old child freshly arrived from Tibet, and became her English Language tutor.

While enrolled in ESL classes un middle school, her book ha it became enormous, and she would take out about a dozen a day from. Our Library across the street, endearing her to the librarians, who at that time hand cancelled each book with library cards inside.

Her grasp if the Englush language increased exponentially, not to mention her love of English literature. She grewbup to relieve a dull scholarship to Tudts University, where she majored in International affairs, and was sent as a student ambassador to Athens, Grece one summer. I attribute much of her enthusiasm to the kindness of the librarians who encouraged literacy in this initially shy, intimidated young girl.

Exposure to the endless choices our modern libraries have to offer, nurtures curiosity and wonder about the world and its humanity, with our infinite varieties of creativity and wisdom traditions. The transformations it enables enrich us all through the generations.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Lea Abraham


Brooklyn, NY 11215

The library system is part of my DAILY life. I read books that I check out through my local library everyday. I too use various branch locations as quiet places to learn and read. In our city, there aren't many public community spaces left. Libraries are community hubs and provide resources and educational programs. What a shame and a disgrace that our government does not care about the wellbeing of its people!

Yes - I have been to the Greenwood Library branch and took a class on sewing - it was exquisite ! I met many people and enjoyed spending time getting to know them as we learned how to sew together. Too, the library provides cooling spaces during our increasingly warm summers.

Libraries are inclusive community spaces where people can access books, events, and enjoy reading or studying. Why would anyone want to remove the budget for spaces that help further education and literacy not to mention improve health and wellbeing ! Save our libraries! Save them especially for our underserved communities - Can you find a shred of empathy and leave our libraries alone.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

FOR THE RECORD

From Gianina Galatro

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11214

The library is my lifeline to the world! I know that because of the library I will be able to access books and other resources that otherwise would be inaccessible to me.

It's been an incredible place to meet and work on projects together. It's a reliable and calm place to collaborate.

Libraries make me love NYC!

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

FOR THE RECORD

From Diane Loncar

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11215

As a Board of Ed Substitute Teacher libraries are extremely important to me and the community at large. It is a peaceful place to read books and especially the New York Times which has become exorbitantly expensive to buy. The Park Slope branch is also in a beautiful building that is conducive to learning for the community residents.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

FOR THE RECORD

From Dorothy Strauss

██████████
Brooklyn, NY 11229

Movies, tapes, DVDs, audios for the blind, magazines, books, and computer access are available for everyone for free. I receive e-mails from the library on things I can attend virtually. There is no other place with so many items available for all people for all ages. As a senior, I could not function without it and especially for virtual events.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

FOR THE RECORD

From Malcah Yaeger

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11215

Someone moves to a new town, and knows right where to find / or create a community. right where to find books to read and people to talk to. Your library , in addition, provides concerts and lectures to inform people in the community! Your librarians are doing everything right!

Book clubs create community! exercise classes create community! lectures bring people in, who will want to discuss the lectures afterwards. Libraries are a hotbed of community! Your librarians are stellar!

For older adults, we're grateful! but the fact is that most of the work that the librarians are doing will bring in the youth, and help to create a viable 21st century educated public!

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Annie Brinich

██████████
Brooklyn, NY 11218

I got to the library a few times a week. I have your kids and it's a great place to bring them, and it's easy to borrow books for myself as well.

Libraries provide critical places for kids to interact with their neighbors.

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FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Sara Sloan


Brooklyn, NY 11218

I'm a retire on a fixed income. I read a lot, mostly library books. I can't afford to buy books but I love to read. BPL makes that possible

Libraries are great gathering places for diverse communities

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Claire Beaufort

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11222

I regularly use the library to check out books, movies, and resource materials to use in my home business. My local branch has been a great resource for me in so many ways. I use the common areas for working pretty often, and have been able to learn so much using the resources available to check out.

The programming they provide is so essential! I see so many people actively using the libraries resources not only when I visit a branch but also just out and about in the city or on the subway. The children's programs and senior programs especially seem great!

Libraries are such important places for learning, resources, development and community! They are equal opportunity places where anyone can access information and learning materials, which is so integral to our city. Cutting funding to such a valuable commodity would be such a blow to our borough and city. If anything, invest in them more!!


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Alyssa Alexander


Brooklyn, NY 11203

My library used to be my safe space. From 9th through 12th grade, I went every week. Before that, I had already been going often as a kid. It was where I went when I didn't have internet or a printer at home--it gave me access to everything I needed to complete my schoolwork. Now, as an adult, I still use the library regularly through the Libby app for eBooks and audiobooks, as well as for free exam prep resources. It saves me money and keeps me focused. The library also helped me build my professional development. I was able to volunteer, gain hours for graduation, and even experience my very first interview.

I attended the Poetry Festival and a Harry Potter event at my branch, and it was incredible to see people of all ages come together around books, creativity, and learning. The library is a true community hub. It's one of the few places where I see children, teens, adults, and elders all sharing the same space peacefully. I'll never forget being in the tech room and joining a spontaneous dance battle--meeting new people and playing games I'd never tried before. I even saw my first advanced printer that could print solid objects. The library makes magic moments like that possible.

Growing up, the library felt like a candy store to me. So many books, always clean, peaceful, and full of possibility. If the library closed, I would be soooooo hurt. It's the only place I've ever felt truly focused when I study. It's more than just a building--it's a safe haven, a learning center, and a home for so many people like me. Please continue to protect and strengthen our libraries. They are the heart of our communities.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Viviane Hays

██████████

Brooklyn, NY 11220

I check out books for the book discussion groups I attend at Sunset Park branch. I'm currently taking a course in Chinese paper cutting art at Mckinley branch, and have gone to see movies at Bay Ridge branch. All these have greatly enhanced my life as a senior.

I'm part of the book club and volunteer with the Friends of the Library group. All the wonderful programs for children and teens, as well as for other members of our neighborhood are a huge plus.

Our libraries are community and learning centers. So much more is offered than when I was a kid taking books out of the NYPL libraries, though that was a wonderful and magical experience even then.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Beth Crane


Brooklyn, NY 11237

I borrow books and ebooks from the library regularly- it makes it more sustainable to be part of my monthly book club, and I love going to the library to pick up / drop off books. I do a lot of my printing at the library, and it's so convenient to be able to pop in, and not have to own a printer of my own.

I volunteer as a homework helper, and I love watching how children and parents benefit from the library. Every time I go in there are kids playing with each other in the play area, a tutor and his students, and I have a few regular folks who check in. I help 2 brothers each week - one is a math whiz but has to be coaxed into reading, the other is very comfortable with reading but needs prompting to write neatly and thoughtfully. Their mom does her own work or naps. I help a 1st grader sound out tough words while her sister does her own homework on the computers.

Seeing the same people, week after week, makes me feel like we're all a part of the fabric of our neighborhood.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.


FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Nikhil DeSouza


Brooklyn, NY 11233

Books are a lifeline to a world of knowledge and understanding. The public library system and more specifically the Brooklyn Public Library, democratizes the sharing of this knowledge by providing a free gateway for all to engage. I routinely use my library to check out ebooks and audiobooks to expand my interests and knowledge.

My library and the wonderful staff that support us is a hub of activity and assistance in the community. It's where children go to expand their horizons and explore. It's where people go to access services and the internet. It's where people go to beat the summer heat. It's the heart of the community and where everyone is equal and assisted without judgment or preconditions.

I unreservedly support our public library system. In a world where knowledge and depth of understanding is undervalued, the library provides a path to greater independence and intellectual curiosity. Instead of spending money on wasteful programs and services, we need to invest in our libraries and by extension our future generations.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Benjamin Prickett


Brooklyn, NY 11220

I broke my social media addiction last year by getting back into reading. I couldn't have done it without the library's vast selection of works both physically and digitally. I've noticed how quickly physical media ages in broken down paperbacks, and I know how important it is that the library continuously update their catalogue. I also regularly borrow DVD's from the library since it's way too expensive to stream most movies and shows these days.

I regularly run into my neighbors while visiting the library and have great conversation. It's also a great place to go to get cool in the summer without running up my own electricity bill.

As the cost of everything increases, access to free media and educational material is more important than ever. Please don't make me buy every book and movie I want to experience.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Mariah Perez

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11214

My public library is part of a tradition that I started called Saturday sister library day. Every Saturday rain or shine I take my little sister to the library to enjoy any event they have that day like legos, story time, ready set kindergarten and more. She loves going to these events, playing with the computer, coloring, and best of all picking out books in English and Spanish.

My library brings the community together by hosting events like movie for adults, all the children events, English classes and much more.

The library needs more funding for the children who have no other place to go after school. This is a safe place for many.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Anna Thompson


Brooklyn, NY 11217

When I was in my early 20's I was so poor, but trying to expand my skill set in world of computers. I attended a free course at the Brooklyn Public Library - they even let me work on one of their computers, as I did not have my own. The instructor was so knowledgeable and kind. I learned about sound mixing, a subject I had no knowledge of prior. Later, I took an intro to Photoshop class. Now, I use Libby on a daily basis and take my daughter to story time on the weekends.

Growing up, the library played such a crucial role in my life. My schooling was not great or consistent, but I was allowed to walk to the library and check out books. It was so formative and I am forever grateful, and forever changed. Knowledge is power! We must protect libraries.

Yes - story time is wonderful for connecting young parents.

Growing up, the library played such a crucial role in my life. My schooling was not great or consistent, but I was allowed to walk to the library and check out books. I loved getting lost in fiction, and researching topics i found fascinating. Once I burned a hole in my comforter by pulling it over my lampshade, attempting to hide the light from my parents (it was past my bedtime). The library was so formative and I am forever grateful and forever changed. Knowledge is power! We must protect libraries.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Patricia Childs

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11234

I love to read and truly appreciate the opportunity to make frequent use of the Brooklyn Public Library.

Yes, as it offers classes for all ages and fosters community.

I have been a library member since I was 8 years old. It fostered a love of reading and learning.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Ruth Katcher


Brooklyn, NY 11205

I can't think of any institution -- with the exception of public schools -- that matters more in the community than the public library. Simply having access to books, more than I could possibly afford to buy, vastly enriches my life. I brought my son up in the library, and our near weekly visits, usually to the Brooklyn Heights branch and the Grand Army Plaza children's room, helped him develop a love of reading and learning, much more than school itself. Especially for my own passion for Jewish literature and history, I find the library indispensable. I discovered book holds during the pandemic, and I love being able to put a book on hold and not have to travel to a distant branch to pick it up. As a freelance editor, I also appreciate the library as a workspace, and I occasionally use the meeting rooms and electrical equipment in the Information Commons.

The occasional book swap in the Clinton Hill branch is a lot of fun, and I think Tracey Mantrone at that branch does a great job of managing high traffic, much of it involving small children and caregivers (which I think is great!). The garden area outside is very nice, and I frequently see people gathering at the tables, chairs, and benches.

I remember years ago, working on the top floor of the Grand Army Plaza branch, deep into editing a manuscript as the snow drifted past the treetops. It was magical.

Then when my son discovered the bound copies of classic comics -- Peanuts and the like -- we were back in that same room. Some of my earliest memories involve the library in the small town where I grew up, and what a joy to pass along to my son that same love of the library and the riches to be found there.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Helen Georgas

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11225

I am a librarian at Brooklyn College and yet I still check out books from the Central Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library on a regular basis. On days that I am work from home, I will often bring my laptop to the library so I can work in a clean and safe space and in community with others. I am energized by being around other neighborhood folks.

I love seeing the art exhibits in the lobby and throughout the building. They have clearly been curated with so much care. And I know they take a lot of work and money! I love seeing everybody - children, parents, caregivers, everyday folk in my community - taking advantage of the library's resources and services. It's a safe and lively space for everyone. Being in the library makes me feel more connected to my community, an especially important feeling when we live in such divided times.

Please, please, please, when every other resource (parks, libraries, museums) in the country is being systematically attacked and defunded, it is so important to continue to fund our city libraries. They are a vital part of the community and an important resource. Where would we be as a borough, neighborhood, city, without the Central Branch of BPL, for example? The cost of everything goes up and up every year and so please support our libraries by funding them accordingly.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Lynn Wirtz


Brooklyn, NY 11222

WATCH "FREE FOR ALL" the Independent Lens doc on the history of libraries, and how they help create an educated contributing society. That pretty much says it all.

Greenpoint is my library and the librarians there are wonderful, as are all the librarians I've met at other Brooklyn branches. Our communities know that their libraries are there to help and support them whether it's with literacy, community and belonging, keeping a neighborhood safe and cohesive, or finding books! Libraries are communities and we need their stability now more than ever.

People are having so much taken away right now. The investment in keeping all libraries fully funded and open will pay off in stronger more productive communities with less deterioration and isolation. It's a no-brainer!


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Jeremy Block


Brooklyn, NY 11226

I get almost all of my books out of the library. I prefer ebooks, and I'm glad the library offers them, but sometimes I just stop in the local branch and browse the shelves.

My friend has a toddler who loves going to the local library branch. Books are a delight for her.

The BookMatch is a delight and a wonder, and more people should use it. Unlike algorithms on the internet, this one has a soul (or at least I take it at its word that a librarian is making choices, and not a computer, heh.)

There are always people there browsing or using the computers. If the library wasn't open, where would they go? not somewhere as enriching, most likely. The loss of third places in our society is a grievous wound. The library is one of the few places you can go for free.

No hero in history has tried to restrict access to books and libraries. That is the domain of villains and fools.

I think a lot about if free public libraries didn't exist, and someone tried to invent them. Conservatives would lose their minds. "it's stealing from artists!" "why should my tax dollars pay for someone else to read trash?" "no such thing a free lunch!". I use this thought experiment to support my hypothesis that conservatives are wrong about everything. They have no good ideas and no good policies. Don't listen to them.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Hannah Griffith


Brooklyn, NY 11237

The public library is so important in my life. Personally I use the computers, internet and take out books from the library. Professionally as a childcare worker it has been amazing for the kiddos I work with they are able to take out books about topics they want to explore and attend story time and other children's events that are critical to their social and emotional development. Working at the children's museum-bower park library is also a key resource for the community not only to check out materials but to check out museum passes and other important resources.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Claudia Mallea

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11218

I attend library programming at least a few times a month. when I was out of work for several years after a stroke in my early twenties, I went straight to the bpl events page for classes and events. and I just never stopped. I have my biweekly writing workshop at the library and regularly attend lectures and readings

in elementary school my dad took me to the central branch to meet with a reference librarian for help on my first research paper. I remember thinking that librarian had the coolest job in the world and now i'm a librarian


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Beth Kurkjian


Brooklyn, NY 11201

The library has played such a big role in the lives of my family. I have taken both of my boys, as toddlers, to storytime and they have checked out hundreds of books over the years. My youngest (now 11) is a particularly voracious reader and we go to the Brooklyn Heights library at least every other week to take out new titles. My older son (17) met an SAT tutor at the tables this spring. The library is vital to our lives and to the lives of New Yorkers!

I took a Ukranian jewelry workshop. This helped me feel connected to my culture's rich artistic history. It is hard to read such horrors in the news; a workshop like this was so uplifting and attended by a wonderfully diverse crowd.

I deeply miss the library in Carrol Gardens, which has been under construction for more than a year. I used to stand in line to go see Miss Jodie with my little one. She would play guitar and read to the babies with such charisma. I think the teen zone is great and I can't wait to go to the library more (in Carroll Gardens once it reopens). Oh! And my younger son has done a bunch of the art projects that come in bags (with directions and supplies)--so thoughtful during the summer months!


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From amy friedman


Brooklyn, NY 11210

I strongly feel we need our libraries, it's here and now we can't lose them. Everybody still reads paperback large print books and e-books. Please don't take away our libraries. Young and old still like to come and read in the library.

Thank you,

Amy Friedman


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Lindsay Anderberg


Brooklyn, NY 11209

I regularly check out books from my local branch. I also love that when a best seller comes out I can add it to the waitlist. At some point the book pops up on hold as a fun surprise (sometimes after waiting months because hundreds of other brooklynites want the book too)! My daughter (2nd grade) loves the library for a quiet place to do her homework and for the free activities-- Legos and crafts are her favorites. When she was a baby, we took advantage of weekly story times at the library. And when I was a struggling 20something student piecing together jobs, I turned to the library for free tax help. There are so many ways that the library provides services and support to every day New Yorkers.

When I was a new mom, I loved bringing my baby to story time on the weekends. It was a great way to meet other parents in my neighborhood and for my baby to socialize with other babies and small kids. Before I had my own kid, I spent 5 years as a volunteer in BPL's Reading Troubadour program, so I was often the one supplying the storytime to other people's kids and getting a connection to parts of my community it wouldn't have encountered otherwise. It made me feel like a neighborhood fixture rather than just someone living in the neighborhood.

Libraries are about books, but about so much more than books! They provide community services from our youngest to oldest, our most vulnerable to our most well-off. They are truly centers of community; one of the few places where we are all equal neighbors.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Claudette Semple



Brooklyn, NY 11234

I have joined the Brooklyn Public Library since 1990 and have enjoyed the experience of reading books of all genres. Sometimes when I can't afford to buy a particular book I would borrow. Even when I had no computer I was able to access the computer at the library. I have also introduced my children and family members to the resources at the Public Library.

The library is very good for the children to visit after school instead of playing at the sidewalk


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Rashad Elfgeeh


Brooklyn, NY 11215

The Brooklyn public library has been helpful to me and my family in every stage of my life.
I'd wish it to be helpful to others as well.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Kendra Augustin


Brooklyn, NY 11232

I have insurance and Fair Fares and my taxes done all because I used to go the library and use their laptop and saw a single stop sign. I read on average about 13 books a month via Libby (e, audio, physical) from Pulitzer prize nominees, to weird girls, to classics, to translations. And all this intense reading immersion has helped make living under a government who wants to strip us of everything human, good safe, caring somewhat bearable! And I'm paying attention to who the good people are and I'm learning about how people in the past have dealt with our conditions. Oh and there's AC and bathrooms and outlets and places to sit.

Yes. I keep telling people that you don't have to be lonely..the Library is too active for one to not have anything to do. I often see yearning for third spaces and there is nothing more third space then the library.

I have insurance! Still!!!


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Kristin Guest


Brooklyn, NY 11216

I use the library multiple times a month. It's just a few blocks from my house and I always enjoy going in. There are always lots of families using the children's area as well as teenagers and adults doing homework or other work. My Clinton Hill library also has knitting circles, book clubs and other in person events that allow me to get to know my neighbors. The library is one of the city services I'm so happy my taxes go towards!

Like I mentioned, my library has clubs for adults. I see a group of people from all walks of life come in for a knitting circle that is so heart-warming. In this age of disconnection and too much screen time, having one of these few community places left is so important!

Please protect library funding! The library instills a love of reading and a connection to community. It gives a place for people to be! It gives a place for teens that might not have somewhere safe to go to do homework and discover literature. The libraries are one of the gems of NYC!

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Betty Galarza

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11234

I use library resources on a regular basis. I participate in the book clubs and activities. I borrow books often. The library is a regular part of my schedule.

The library has activities for all age groups and is a safe place anyone can use to sit and read.

I was part of the friends group in my local library and enjoyed volunteering.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Jillian Gaeta


Brooklyn, NY 11201

Going to the library is such a joyful experience for me. I love it when my book holds arrive and I get to pick them up. I'm a teacher and it helps me to get new non fiction books to help with my lesson plans in a cost effective way.

One of the 8th grade students I tutor says that him and his friends go to the library on a Friday afternoon to hang out. He enjoys it because the library has events for teens. This is such a healthy safe way to spend time and if the budget is cut kids won't have access to these resources


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Klarke Johnson


Brooklyn, NY 11213

The free public resources at the library impacted and enhanced my life tremendously. I heavily relied on the library for resources for the past 13 years after I had my first child. I looked for resources for myself as a parent and for children. During COVID I was there to pick up library books all the time and that continues.

The library has a variety of events that bring the community together. When I had my daughter we were at the library weekly for play activities the library offered. It was awesome seeing my daughter interact with other little ones as a toddler.

The libraries are a resource to the community. They also provide a safe place for children to be and families to congregate.

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FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Mary Farrington

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11238

The library is a very important part of my life. I always have a library book--these days, mostly eBooks. The events at the library are wonderful. I have especially enjoyed talks by or about authors, but also attend the library's concerts and exhibits. But most of all, I love being a volunteer with one of the English conversation groups. I have met the most amazing people, who are learning English. I get joy from trying to be of help to them and also by getting to know them. They are such impressive and interesting people.

The library offers so many different kinds of programs to all members of our community: children, seniors, students, adults needing a new skill. It is truly a special and unifying place. The librarians and staff are so knowledgeable, helpful beyond belief and kind.

My husband came to this country from France after World War II at the age of 14. He spoke not a word of English. The Central Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library became what he called his "oasis." There were French books and records that kept him engaged as learned to speak English. Let's keep the library an oasis for everybody.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Jean Artenberg


Brooklyn, NY 11218

Since my girls were toddlers, they went to our local branch's children's room every weekday, before or after going to the playground around the corner. We had a night time story telling before bedtime, reading the books they choose ...proudly looking for and replacing the unused ones on by themselves.

As she grew, it was a stopoff after school to research homework and see familiar faces.

As a Grandmother now, I became acquainted with a 13 year old child freshly arrived from Tibet, and became her English Language tutor.

While enrolled in ESL classes in middle school, her book habit became enormous, and she would take out about a dozen a day from our library across the street, endearing her to the librarians, who at that time hand cancelled each book with library cards inside.

Her grasp of the English language increased exponentially, not to mention her love of English literature. She grew up to receive a full scholarship to Tufts University, where she majored in International affairs, and was sent as a student ambassador to Athens, Greece one summer. I attribute much of her enthusiasm to the kindness of the librarians who encouraged literacy in this initially shy, intimidated young girl.

Exposure to the endless choices our modern libraries have to offer, nurtures curiosity and wonder about the world and its humanity, with our infinite varieties of creativity and wisdom traditions. The transformations it enables enrich

us all through generations.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Linda Wexelblatt

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11201

I have been an active user of libraries all my life. Whether it is to check out a book, download an audio book or an ebook, or attend events at the library. Free access to newspapers, magazines, books, etc. insures that our democracy functions with an informed and aware electorate. Babies are brought to the library to begin their love affair with reading, school children do their homework there (some don't have internet access at home) and seniors find many useful materials and programs including large print books. After public safety and public schools there is no better use of our tax dollars. Keep libraries open and free!!

As a place where computers are free and available and air-conditioning is provided and warmth in the winter, libraries are not just books. They are community shared spaces. I see seniors there every day reading the newspaper and meeting friends at book clubs.

From the time I sat on the library steps in my home town in the summer waiting for the doors to open, until today, 70 years later when I picked up my weekend reading from my local branch, there has never been a time when I didn't need the library. Audio books during the pandemic kept me sane!

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Huntly Cooper



Brooklyn, NY 11215

I am at my local branch multiple times a week. It is an essential free community third space for me. It has provided a safe and tranquil place for study, reflection, and development. I am reading again, more than I have since I was in middle school, because of the access to materials both in physical and ebook format.

When I visit the Central branch of the BPL, I witness intergenerational usage of the space. I see kids interacting with one another outside their homes and their caretakers being able to socialize. I see so many solo individuals using the safe, clean, and well supplied space for personal growth -- whether that be studying, reading for pleasure, attending events, or simply having a tranquil moment. And when there are art exhibitions, I see fellow Brooklyn natives gather with pride and excitement over this gem of a library. I have grown up in this neighborhood and see this library as a staple of my experience of how the city and its residents take care of and make space for one another

I need to know we're looking out for one another and not only for profit -- and that's what the library system stands for to me.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Patricia Martin


Brooklyn, NY 11209

For those of us looking for a job, the library is essential. Not everyone has access to computers & there is no other way to job hunt.

Absolutely, my neighborhood has a varied range of people in age & background. The library is a resource of education for children, improving language skills for neighbors born outside the US & a gathering place for seniors and those without A/C in the Summer.

Please do not cut funding. The staff at my local library need their jobs & we need them.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library
to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations
May 21, 2025

From Lynn Norton

Brooklyn, NY 11205

As you will read in the comments below, having the local library just blocks away was one of the reasons I moved to Brooklyn! It was not only the helpful staff, and not only the opportunity to find all the books I wanted, but also the opportunity to attend art classes and music performances that made me realize what a treasure it was. You will read this again below, but I just have to say that the Brooklyn Library system has been my saving grace!

The local library has given me an opportunity to attend art classes and music performances, meeting and being welcomed by the amazing library staff and kind people from the community. Outside of my daughter and her family, I did not know anyone when I moved here, so the Clinton Hill branch gave me a chance to not only find the books I was longing to read, but also meet so many wonderful people from the community!

When I was making a decision in my early 70's to move to Brooklyn from the mountains of Arizona, I listed two priorities: my daughter and her family, and the amazing Clinton Hill library just blocks down the street, along with the Brooklyn Central Library a 30 minute walk away. Living in that rural area, I did not have the incredible opportunities I do here to get every single book I have wanted to read, and to join art classes to be "gathered up" in a warm and welcoming community. And I've been able to join and to sometimes bring my granddaughter to the high-level music programs offered. The Brooklyn Library system has been my saving grace! As leaders, I encourage you to support and do all you can to strengthen this invaluable and important resource in this beautiful community.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Yuming Feng


Brooklyn, NY 11235

The local library is very important for our neighborhood. I used to borrow some books there, now my kid has to use materials for school work. The retired people spend a lot of time there, sharing their life experiences to the younger generation also develop their friendships there. We love our local library.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Deja Roy

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11212

A lot of my early memories were in the library because my mom was always an avid reader. As a child, the library became a safe haven for my imagination. It's where I was able to truly fall in love with reading and how my mind is able to bring life to the words on the page. I remember going to the library to study and practice spelling words for the regional spelling bee. I would always take advantage of the free wifi and computer time before it was normalized to have wifi at home and a mini computer for a phone. The library has played a pivotal role in shaping me into who i am today.

I've witnessed the library be a safe space for not only me but other kids who wanted a little escape from the norm.

The removal of libraries will impact generations for years to come. Not only are you taking away valuable resources from our communities in the present, but you're also impacting the direction and halting further development of our nation. I come from a neighborhood that runs rampant with food insecurity, gang violence and drug abuse. Sometimes the library is the only place for the children in my community to go to find solace.

Close your eyes. Imagine yourself as a child. Think about all of your dreams, ambitions and goals. Think about where you would go to find peace. How does it make you feel? Now, think about how you would feel if the one place where you found solace is taken from you. Imagine being that same child with all of those aspirations and little to no resources to assist you in turning your dreams into reality. Imagine not having the support of your parents. Imagine not having any friends to confide in. Open your eyes.


Children are the future and the choices we make now have a domino effect on what will come of our country. The long-term effects will impact our economy, our history and even our livelihoods. Children are the future and if we truly believe in that, we need to stand up for what they deserve.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Fran Tarshish


Brooklyn, NY 11218

The Windsor Terrace branch in particular and the Brooklyn Public Library in general is a plays a vital part in my life. As an avid reader the library gives me access to all of the books that I want to read. Now that I am retired, I have the time to read as often as I want and to explore subjects that I am interested in, and neither would be possible without the library.

While I do not take part in the local library's community activities, it is obvious whenever I go how vital the Windsor Terrace branch is. The computers are always busy, if it's after 3:00 PM the library is full of kids from the elementary school across the street, Story Time is always full, and the room with the Lego activity is full of parents and kids.

On Fridays you see kids taking out stacks of books for the weekend. You also see small groups of people have discussion groups

At a time when society seems to be getting more and more fragmented, the library offers a space for people to come together in a safe environment. It also gives people access to knowledge that is priceless.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Mary Russell

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11201

The Brooklyn Public Library at Cadman Plaza offers a bookclub where thoughtful in person conversation on the mutually agreed upon monthly book offers a valuable stimulating community experience to this senior who

Moved to the area recently .

Yes my library offers many activities from arts to dance to listening to author lectures. It is a positive space in a troubled world and sanctuary for all ages. It is an anchor in the neighborhood promoting positive interaction

Without this type of stimulus we will all be poorer in body mind and spirit. Promoting dialogue and broadening of ideas by its very nature it is the best of influences

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From wendy rosa


Brooklyn, NY 0

My local branch has supported my needs by providing resources for myself and my family. My daughter who is 16 loves walking to the library and getting books out on educational topics. It is so important to keep this and other branches funded to provide more support to the community.

They provide a variety of culturally competent programming to support everyone in the community (from the youngest to the oldest).

My favorite time at my local library is showing my daughter how to use the library. Now she excited to walk with me and get books on educational topics.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Susan Levy

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11235

BPL has been a large part of my life since 1961, when I came to Brooklyn at age 13. Its resources got me from 8th grade through college, and as an adult I've borrowed books and attended programs. The library even became my life's work; I became a BPL librarian in 1977 and retired in 2009.

I am so proud that BPL has been at the forefront of the resistance to the current censorship campaign that's been going around the country. We did it at the city level in 1985 when a library-produced gay pride booklist generated opposition from some local religious groups. (I think that's the only time in my life that anyone has called me a "pervert" on the phone!) and we're doing it now nationwide. Free access to education, information, and recreation-- that's what a public library's all about.

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FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From BRODERICK PRICE


Brooklyn, NY 11230

There is nothing in this world of obsessive consumerism, violence, and lies more important to the preservation of my soul than my library, THE BROOKLYN LIBRARY. I can put in requests for important rare research materials and can acquire an abundance of e-books at the touch of my fingers with LIBBY. All this universe of information, entertainment, INSPIRATION and hope for free! THANK YOU.

I am an artist and it's a lonely mission. To have found by reading recent histories of modern art that other artists have experienced very similar feelings and conclusions about art as I have has been heartwarming and inspiring.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Giovana Morais


Brooklyn, NY 11210

I go to my library at least once a week. i get physical book, e-books, audio books, DVDs and everything else is available. I usually go in person when I want a different place to work from. I also convinced my friends to create a library card after I talked a lot about the culture pass. It is my favorite place!

As I start to see people over and over and create connections wit them, I feel more that I belong to my neighborhood.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Hamza Nagra

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11223

Its a daily part of my life, as i can study freely and quietly in the library as compared to my home. It help us to get new books and get the knowledge about the naturalization and english learning classes. I mean its a complete package and without it i may have suffered a huge financial crises.

It serves in a variety of ways. It helps for the community to get to know each other and i personally have made new friends from my library community. I see a lot of teens and students who get involved into the games and events here in the libraries.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Sherri Poall

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11201

I regularly go for books. It's a great resource for discovering new authors and the size of the system enables me to choose from 1,000s of books with an easy hold policy.

It is a vital third place in our community that brings different groups of people to together which is so vital post COVID. It is one of the few community spaces where you don't have to spend money to enjoy what is on offer.

I love the Brooklyn Heights branch! Great selection, beautiful setting, and a beacon of community in our neighborhood.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Rochelle Killingbeck


Brooklyn, NY 11201

I cannot afford to buy all of the books I need to read to improve my health. I read books to learn more about nutrition and exercise to supplement my doctor's advice. As a result, the library is - literally - helping to save my life. The ability of the public to be able to borrow books, documentaries and other items from the public library is one of the strongest indicators of a free and democratic society. Thank you for your support.

I attended a yoga class. It brought together patrons from various backgrounds and helped us improve our lives. I cannot afford to enroll in a sewing class. The library offered a no-fee, 5-week sewing class for beginners. I began to learn how to sew and made a bag. I learned how to hem pants and - now - am able to buy pants that are too short, but release the hem and re-sew it to make longer pants. I am 6-feet tall and cannot always afford to buy pants from the few stores that sell long, or tall, sizes. Thank you.

I cannot afford to buy all of the books I need to read to improve my health. I read books to learn more about nutrition and exercise to supplement my doctor's advice. As a result, the library is - literally - helping to save my life. The ability of the public to be able to borrow books, documentaries and other items from the public library is one of the strongest indicators of a free and democratic society. Thank you for your support.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Megan Lang

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11226

The library's existence is one of those things that makes the neighborhood feel safer and more cared for. It's easy to take for granted until you need it. I use my local library regularly to check out books I'm interested in, but it has also been really important when my home internet goes out, and I've stopped into other branches to escape both summer and winter weather when I'm in between tasks in the city. The value of the library to each community and to the city as a whole is hard to quantify, but I would notice if it wasn't there in the times when I really need it. A friend recently visited from another city and the thing she wanted to see was our main library branches (BrooklynPL&NYPL)

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Marisa Mercadante


Brooklyn, NY 0

I use my library regularly to check out books. The library has allowed me to take risks with my reading, and therefore read much more than when I was buying books, because I don't have to worry about wasting money on a book I'll end up hating. I also use the library through the Libby app to always have a book on my phone to keep me occupied on crowded subways.

The library has enabled me to participate in a local book club started by my friend. The library's extensive catalogue makes it easy to always get our book club picks. The book club has brought me closer to my friends, helping us stay in touch despite our busy lives and always giving us something to talk about.

I also was very moved by the programs and the deep sense of community and fraternity I felt during Night in the Library and look forward to attending again in the future.

Libraries are the last remaining third space in our society and they offer incredibly important services. Our communities need them, and we need to support them in every way possible.

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FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Patricia Diven

████████████████████

Brooklyn, NY 11201

I visit my local BPL at least three times each week. In addition to the books/DVD check outs, I rely on the laptops. Using the laptops for job pursuits, classes on line, paying bills, and general Internet access. I enjoy the quiet and getting out of the house.

Yes I enjoy musical events especially at the Central. I appreciate all the classes offered although I have yet to sign on - knitting and meditation are on my list. Also movie night.

I have been visiting my local library since I was 15. Valuable resources in a quiet/safe environment . A must for all ages.

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FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Marguerite Summer

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11225

When I was a new parent, exhausted and isolated. I went to the "Babies and Books" storyline at the Crown Heights branch with librarian Ms. Christina. This weekly visit was a lifeline for me to get out of the house and have contact with neighbors. Now my kids are avid book worms. We look forward to visiting the library every week. It's such an important place to us all!

It's an intergenerational place, which is uncommon in my opinion.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Ling Tan



Brooklyn, NY 11232

As an avid reader and life-long learner of all kinds of subjects, it'd be a huge strain on my budget to purchase every book that I'd like to read given the economy. I benefited tremendously during the covid years from eBooks, and have since turn back to more print versions to get away from screens. It's a reprieve for my eyes, nourishment for my mind and a saver for my space.

My local library is always alive with people of all ages and walks of life. The staffers/volunteers there are always helpful. I don't usually stay for long but enjoy the calming atmosphere where I know no matter where the visitors are from, they all share my curiosity and love for knowledge.

Books are magic. They are portals to infinite worlds, intricate and vast; fuel for personal growth, intellectually and emotionally; sources for connections, real and imagined. We all know impoverished bodies lead to all sorts of physical problems. Impoverished minds are equally, if not more so, detrimental to our healthy being. In this day and age, where we are inundated with clickbait and cheap thrills, our average attention span is comparable to that of a goldfish, and the prevalence of AI--flawed and unreliable though they are, not to mention their burden on resources and the environment compared to books--starts to substitute the vestige of critical thinking of so many people, it's more important than ever to hit the brake before it's too late and reevaluate our priorities as an individual, a community and a state. Funding public services that strengthen the body and mind at a population level is the most important investment any forward-thinking leader should commit to. And public libraries should be part of that vision.

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FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Hazel Skelton

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11220

When my children were younger, I took them to the library for educational resources to enhance what they learned in school. They took out books and videos to help with their home work and their research projects. Education is very important to a civilized society and the public library help to provide that education. Today, my children are law abiding and tax paying citizens. I give some of the credit to the local libraries that we still visit regularly.

Just in April 2025, I received important assistance from resumehelp@bklynlibrary.org.

The library is like a second home to a single mother who wants to make sure her children have additional resources to compliment the children's education. A library also provide a safe space after school.


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May 21, 2025

From Kary Farris


Brooklyn, NY 11214

I used to bring my toddler to Storytime at my local library and was able to meet the librarians and other moms. My toddler enjoyed it so much that she started to recognize the librarian and would greet her whenever we visited the library. I've also been able to take an art series class with many other people in my community and learn a new skill.v

My local library is a great place for preteen and children to hangout at after school especially since after school programs and daycare can be so expensive.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Samantha Imhoff


Brooklyn, NY 11203

The Library has been my savior since I arrived in this country in 2002. The trained Librarians helped with materials to prepare for my GED.

My children loved the libraries so much we would visit them to see what was different. They are now 21 and 17

Why are the libraries in the neighborhoods that need them most being put constantly at risk? Leaders are very aware of the communities pockets power and still decide reach for the jugular of needy? Please -- fund what will create change!!!!

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Holly Mitchell

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11218

The library allows me to read books and ebooks, new and old, bringing so much art and information my life. I've also found a singing group that meets at the library that is practically therapeutic. I've also used trusty resources such as printing and free Covid-19 tests.

The library is the center of the street I live on. There are always kids there with their families, making good memories of reading and learning and being in community like I did going to the library as a child.

Libraries are a vital in the city. There aren't enough places to go that are meaningful, inter-generational, and open to people regardless of class.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Boris Gorin


Brooklyn, NY 11236

Every time I walk into the library all I see is local patrons around the neighborhood bettering themselves by reading more , I also see patrons who don't have access to a computer and Netflix borrowing DVD's and even learning new things on the internet and educating themselves!

Many programs have helped people at my local library to learn something new and even gave them a chance to meet new people and have more friends

A while back I got to teach a class on basic photography and simple editing techniques for 5 weeks on Saturdays and I must say the patrons who attended my classes/ workshop enjoyed themselves immensely and got to learn how to take better photos as well as meet new people plus I personally enjoyed seeing them learn and explore their point of view on every day things that most people don't see

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Susan Broemmelsiek

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11209

I recently lost access to my library account because of an issue with my computer. It was so upsetting because I'm an avid reader with several books on hold and three pages of books on my "wish list." I sent an email using BPL's "Contact Us" page asking for help in recovering my information so I could sign in again. I didn't really expect to hear back for at least a few days, but one of the hard working BPL employees contacted me the very next day. I emailed them the information needed to find my account, and almost immediately got a reply back with my precious account number! I was overjoyed!

Dear City Council, please don't cut funding for our wonderful libraries! They mean so much to our communities, especially students and children. Please don't force them to cut back the hours they're open!

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Gideon Leek

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11216

I love to read and watch movies and the library has an amazing selection of new and classic titles. They come right to my local library. I'm also a remote worker and it's lovely to be able to go work at my local branch and get out of the house.

There are tons of events. But even if you are shy or don't want to get involved it's just a nice place to be around other people. I run into my friends at the library all the time. I even have had my taxes filed there.

The library is a non-partisan, open, free space devoted to the knowledge and ideas. It's incredibly important and always will be.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Erin White

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11230

I've gone through some hard times lately at home and when I've been depressed, I've gone to the library on a Saturday morning, sat down with a book, and found a quiet, clean, safe space to stay all day and read. It's peaceful. The bathrooms are free and clean, there are water fountains, and the staff are always kind.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Martina Costa


Brooklyn, NY 11201

As a 34-year-old who regularly borrows books and occasionally uses the printers at the Brooklyn Heights branch, the library has become a key part of my routine. It's a beautifully maintained space where I can focus, study, or just enjoy being surrounded by books. I appreciate how accessible and well-kept the resources are--it makes a difference in encouraging me to keep reading and learning.

The Brooklyn Heights Library creates a real sense of community. It's a place where people of all ages and backgrounds come together--to read, work, attend programs, or just enjoy a quiet, welcoming space. It's irreplaceable. You can feel that it brings people closer, and in a busy city, that kind of connection matters.

The Brooklyn Heights Library has always felt like a quiet anchor in the middle of a busy city. Whether I'm borrowing a book, printing something last-minute, or just sitting down to focus, it's a space that supports my daily life and well-being. It's not just about access to books--it's about access to peace, learning, and community. I hope our City Leaders continue to protect and invest in libraries like this one, because they truly enrich our neighborhoods and bring people together in ways that are hard to replace.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Sarah Hanson


Brooklyn, NY 11234

My bimonthly visit to my Mill Basin branch, four blocks away, is one of my greatest joys. I see the children's story hour, patrons happily selecting titles, and I carry an armload for myself and an armload for my high school students.

The children's literacy events, the Clinton Hill book club, my teen students talking about events at local branches.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Elena Shamburova


Brooklyn, NY 11203

Brooklyn public library is amazing. With current prices for one book I wouldn't reading books at all without a library. I check out books regularly, I borrow a ton of audiobooks and e-books.

I'm planning to visit English classes regularly and hope to find a new community here. Currently, I'm in a LEAD program and so happy with this opportunity. .

The library is playing a big role in my everyday life and in my future

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Pamela Galvin



Brooklyn, NY 11218

My local library is a place of refuge, where I see staff I have known for years and where I can take out many, many books.

The local branch library in my community is a gift for crafting and socializing!

Our local libraries give us important places to raise children safely. We are educated by the library through their public programs and book recommendations


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Charline Cantave


Brooklyn, NY 11203

I came into this country to live in Brooklyn NY with all my dreams up but not a good level of English comprehension. My family was very helpful but didn't have enough time to spare to teach me. I felt so lonely and lost. I couldn't find a job without knowing basic English. I went to the Library on Nostrand Avenue one day to hide from the heat because I was waiting for the bus which was delayed and it was about 90 degrees. The place has a good AC and smells so fresh. The staff welcomed me and opened for me a safe zone where I felt that I belonged. I came back over and over and I started reading books and using computers. It helped me to learn the language. I would take kids book home and watched learning videos in the library. Going there quickly became a routine. I had somewhere to go every day except Sundays where it was closed. I felt special that a nice, free place with professionals able to help me without asking for money was available for a stranger like me. I received my library card for free. I got to borrow books and go home with them for free. And I could use the computer connected to the internet for free. That library felt like home after a few weeks. When I relocated to my new house I was nicely surprised to find another library on Linden Boulevard. Same service, same respect, same cleanliness, same welcoming attitude. A few years have passed since I've been in a library because now I speak and write English so well that I went to college and got my associate degree. I am married and I am mother. I will never forget what libraries have done for me. They have light my candles in my darkness time and I wish they will continue to spread the same care to other people in need of a safe and welcoming place to thrive. Thank you.

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FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Madison Skinner


Brooklyn, NY 11226

BPL and specifically the Flatbush branch has been integral to my life in Brooklyn. Not only do I read more, listen more and laugh more, but I love the events that BPL puts on. In particular, the Pauli Murray doc and the James Baldwin exhibit were inspiring and taught me new things. Please invest in BPL more as it is an absolute blessing!

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Chuckry Vengadam

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11215

I regularly check out books from the library because I don't like to spend a lot of money on books I don't need! The library's an important resource for me, and more than that, for many kids growing up in the neighborhood.

I grew up attending my local library often. I'd go and read for hours after school. It was a special haven for a kid like me. If we lose funding for our libraries, many kids will gradually lose access to this world.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Julia Vázquez

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11233

I use my local library on a consistent basis. I have benefited from basic computer classes. I also use the library for books on drawing, watercolor and crafts. My local library provides book reading to babies. Our children need this resource for their school work and research. Our libraries need funding like other organization do!!! Why not help?

My local library has resources available for drivers. In addition to weekly activities such as crochet with brings the community toon a significant manner; book reading clubs, events and activities for children and teens.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Carol Katz


Brooklyn, NY 11230

I'm 82 and I've used the Brooklyn Public Library from the time I started school. It's always been a second home to me, and I've always felt comfortable in the near silence and the propriety of the library. Even though I still miss the card catalogs, I still love the library.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Grace Hague



Brooklyn, NY 11201

The library is my go to spot for accessible and affordable printing! Any time I need to print something I know my local library chapter has my back. I work long 70+ hour work weeks in the film industry and often can't get around to errands during the week. Now that Sunday operating hours have been restored I can comfortably fulfill all my printing needs over the weekend!

The library is one of the only spaces I can go to access wifi without having to pay for anything. As a working class New Yorker it's become an instrumental third space that I rely on when I need to use my laptop outside of my apartment!

The Library shouldn't just be a budgetary afterthought---as one of the most impactful public resources that New Yorkers rely on it deserves to be funded to thrive, not just funded to the bare minimum!

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FOR THE RECORD

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May 21, 2025

From Karla Lima

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11237

The Brooklyn Library has been a part of life for 25 years now ! I've gone there to grab books, study for exams, and do homework.

It is a safe space for our community, for students and parents that don't have a calm work space at home. It's a place where parents can bring their children to enjoy books, games, and internet access. It's essential in our community !

City leaders should protect our community libraries because they are essential to the neighborhood, bringing education to people outside of school.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Jennifer Conry


Brooklyn, NY 11209

From October 1, 2021 to April 15, 2025, I borrowed and read over 700 books on my Kindle. 700+! I dreamed of becoming a Librarian when I was a girl. My greatest joy is a book. When I receive notice that a book I've been waiting for is ready for me, I experience a thrill of delight! I'm also disabled, primarily home bound and on a fixed income. With a voracious appetite for reading, it's not one that I could possibly afford to feed without the Library. The Brooklyn and New York Public Libraries are wonderful gifts for all New Yorkers. Open 24/7 365 days a year, for me people like me. I haven't left my recliner and yet I feel I have visited around the world, through time, history and imagination. Best of all, the world comes to me!

I remember walking home with a stack of books, tucked up to and under my chin, at the beginning of Summer vacation. I was 9. Not usual behavior for 9 year old when school is out. All I could imagine was days of uninterrupted reading! I needed books then. To escape and to imagine, to travel and learn and connect. I need them even more today.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Wai Kay Law

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11225

Having just moved to New York finding the public library really helped me gain a sense of belonging. It's a place I depend on as an anchor away from all the new stuff happening around me, and it was also the only printer I had access to when filing my many many pages of taxes. Reading has truly kept me sane and it wouldn't be possible with the financial barriers I have without the public library network.

The libraries are already underfunded, short staffed, and not the most updated. If they can't be improved please at least keep them the way they are!!! Libraries were my sanctuary growing up and have gotten me through college and employment. I know it's a similar place for many others as well. Thank you.

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May 21, 2025

From Rose Internicola



Brooklyn, NY 11231

If it were not for the library I wouldn't have any books to read and the access to the public computers has been invaluable

I've used the library as a cooling center in the summer and as a place to find warmth and companionship in the winter

I can always find a kind soul at the library


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May 21, 2025

From Holly Mitchell


Brooklyn, NY 11218

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The library is the center of the street I live on. There are always kids there with their families, making good memories of reading and learning and being in community like I did going to the library as a child.

Libraries are a vital in the city. There aren't enough places to go that are meaningful, inter-generational, and open to people regardless of class.

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Dear City Council, please don't cut funding for our wonderful libraries! They mean so much to our communities, especially students and children. Please don't force them to cut back the hours they're open!

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May 21, 2025

From Gideon Leek

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11216

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There are tons of events. But even if you are shy or don't want to get involved it's just a nice place to be around other people. I run into my friends at the library all the time. I even have had my taxes filed there.

The library is a non-partisan, open, free space devoted to the knowledge and ideas. It's incredibly important and always will be.

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May 21, 2025

From Erin White



Brooklyn, NY 11230

I've gone through some hard times lately at home and when I've been depressed, I've gone to the library on a Saturday morning, sat down with a book, and found a quiet, clean, safe space to stay all day and read. It's peaceful. The bathrooms are free and clean, there are water fountains, and the staff are always kind.


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May 21, 2025

From Martina Costa


Brooklyn, NY 11201

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The Brooklyn Heights Library creates a real sense of community. It's a place where people of all ages and backgrounds come together--to read, work, attend programs, or just enjoy a quiet, welcoming space. It's irreplaceable. You can feel that it brings people closer, and in a busy city, that kind of connection matters.

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May 21, 2025

From Sarah Hanson

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Brooklyn, NY 11234

My bimonthly visit to my Mill Basin branch, four blocks away, is one of my greatest joys. I see the children's story hour, patrons happily selecting titles, and I carry an armload for myself and an armload for my high school students.

The children's literacy events, the Clinton Hill book club, my teen students talking about events at local branches.


Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Elena Shamburova


Brooklyn, NY 11203

Brooklyn public library is amazing. With current prices for one book I wouldn't reading books at all without a library. I check out books regularly, I borrow a ton of audiobooks and e-books.

I'm planning to visit English classes regularly and hope to find a new community here. Currently, I'm in a LEAD program and so happy with this opportunity. .

The library is playing a big role in my everyday life and in my future

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Pamela Galvin



Brooklyn, NY 11218

My local library is a place of refuge, where I see staff I have known for years and where I can take out many, many books.

The local branch library in my community is a gift for crafting and socializing!

Our local libraries give us important places to raise children safely. We are educated by the library through their public programs and book recommendations


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Charline Cantave


Brooklyn, NY 11203

I came into this country to live in Brooklyn NY with all my dreams up but not a good level of English comprehension. My family was very helpful but didn't have enough time to spare to teach me. I felt so lonely and lost. I couldn't find a job without knowing basic English. I went to the Library on Nostrand Avenue one day to hide from the heat because I was waiting for the bus which was delayed and it was about 90 degrees. The place has a good AC and smells so fresh. The staff welcomed me and opened for me a safe zone where I felt that I belonged. I came back over and over and I started reading books and using computers. It helped me to learn the language. I would take kids book home and watched learning videos in the library. Going there quickly became a routine. I had somewhere to go every day except Sundays where it was closed. I felt special that a nice, free place with professionals able to help me without asking for money was available for a stranger like me. I received my library card for free. I got to borrow books and go home with them for free. And I could use the computer connected to the internet for free. That library felt like home after a few weeks. When I relocated to my new house I was nicely surprised to find another library on Linden Boulevard. Same service, same respect, same cleanliness, same welcoming attitude. A few years have passed since I've been in a library because now I speak and write English so well that I went to college and got my associate degree. I am married and I am mother. I will never forget what libraries have done for me. They have light my candles in my darkness time and I wish they will continue to spread the same care to other people in need of a safe and welcoming place to thrive. Thank you.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Madison Skinner



Brooklyn, NY 11226

BPL and specifically the Flatbush branch has been integral to my life in Brooklyn. Not only do I read more, listen more and laugh more, but I love the events that BPL puts on. In particular, the Pauli Murray doc and the James Baldwin exhibit were inspiring and taught me new things. Please invest in BPL more as it is an absolute blessing!


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Chuckry Vengadam


Brooklyn, NY 11215

I regularly check out books from the library because I don't like to spend a lot of money on books I don't need! The library's an important resource for me, and more than that, for many kids growing up in the neighborhood.

I grew up attending my local library often. I'd go and read for hours after school. It was a special haven for a kid like me. If we lose funding for our libraries, many kids will gradually lose access to this world.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Julia Vázquez

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11233

I use my local library on a consistent basis. I have benefited from basic computer classes. I also use the library for books on drawing, watercolor and crafts. My local library provides book reading to babies. Our children need this resource for their school work and research. Our libraries need funding like other organization do!!! Why not help?

My local library has resources available for drivers. In addition to weekly activities such as crochet with brings the community toon a significant manner; book reading clubs, events and activities for children and teens.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Carol Katz

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11230

I'm 82 and I've used the Brooklyn Public Library from the time I started school. It's always been a second home to me, and I've always felt comfortable in the near silence and the propriety of the library. Even though I still miss the card catalogs, I still love the library.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Grace Hague


Brooklyn, NY 11201

The library is my go to spot for accessible and affordable printing! Any time I need to print something I know my local library chapter has my back. I work long 70+ hour work weeks in the film industry and often can't get around to errands during the week. Now that Sunday operating hours have been restored I can comfortably fulfill all my printing needs over the weekend!

The library is one of the only spaces I can go to access wifi without having to pay for anything. As a working class New Yorker it's become an instrumental third space that I rely on when I need to use my laptop outside of my apartment!

The Library shouldn't just be a budgetary afterthought---as one of the most impactful public resources that New Yorkers rely on it deserves to be funded to thrive, not just funded to the bare minimum!

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FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Karla Lima

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11237

The Brooklyn Library has been a part of life for 25 years now ! I've gone there to grab books, study for exams, and do homework.

It is a safe space for our community, for students and parents that don't have a calm work space at home. It's a place where parents can bring their children to enjoy books, games, and internet access. It's essential in our community !

City leaders should protect our community libraries because they are essential to the neighborhood, bringing education to people outside of school.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Jennifer Conry

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11209

From October 1, 2021 to April 15, 2025, I borrowed and read over 700 books on my Kindle. 700+! I dreamed of becoming a Librarian when I was a girl. My greatest joy is a book. When I receive notice that a book I've been waiting for is ready for me, I experience a thrill of delight! I'm also disabled, primarily home bound and on a fixed income. With a voracious appetite for reading, it's not one that I could possibly afford to feed without the Library. The Brooklyn and New York Public Libraries are wonderful gifts for all New Yorkers. Open 24/7 365 days a year, for me people like me. I haven't left my recliner and yet I feel I have visited around the world, through time, history and imagination. Best of all, the world comes to me!

I remember walking home with a stack of books, tucked up to and under my chin, at the beginning of Summer vacation. I was 9. Not usual behavior for 9 year old when school is out. All I could imagine was days of uninterrupted reading! I needed books then. To escape and to imagine, to travel and learn and connect. I need them even more today.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Wai Kay Law



Brooklyn, NY 11225

Having just moved to New York finding the public library really helped me gain a sense of belonging. It's a place I depend on as an anchor away from all the new stuff happening around me, and it was also the only printer I had access to when filing my many many pages of taxes. Reading has truly kept me sane and it wouldn't be possible with the financial barriers I have without the public library network.

The libraries are already underfunded, short staffed, and not the most updated. If they can't be improved please at least keep them the way they are!!! Libraries were my sanctuary growing up and have gotten me through college and employment. I know it's a similar place for many others as well. Thank you.

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FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Rose Internicola

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11231

If it were not for the library I wouldn't have any books to read and the access to the public computers has been invaluable

I've used the library as a cooling center in the summer and as a place to find warmth and companionship in the winter

I can always find a kind soul at the library

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FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Ivan Rawls


Brooklyn, NY 11206

The library is a needed space, when the daily hustle and bustle needs a cool down, meaning cozying up with a book and enjoying a moment of peace .

Yes! meeting and seeing people in your community where there's a common interest, reading!

For younger people to experience a space where thier creativity can be explored by reading or hearing stories.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Emily Fink



Brooklyn, NY 11238

The BPL has been so central to my children's love of books over the past 14+ years. We visit every week and pick up a new batch. Sometimes I'll swing by and pick up a few extra flashy-looking titles, if I start seeing the kids getting too attached to their devices!

Recently, I have been visiting the thoughtful and inspiring exhibitions in the main branch, like the Jay-Z show last year. When my kids were little, we attended weekly storytimes and lego play sessions at the Clinton Hill branch.

Please DO NOT CUT library funding. Don't play the budget game. Access to well-supplied, well-run libraries are vital to everyone-- to my middle-class family, and particularly to those in tighter economic circumstances who need access to computers, job training, and of course, books!

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Charmaine Dorma

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11203

By going to different events I have learned many things because of going to the library and seeing other part of Brooklyn I have never seen before while browsing the branches.

People are going to the library for summer program and they are going to the library for that reason.

Spending money on the library's and the workers.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Gail Cohen

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11224

I go to the Brooklyn public library constantly, if it's not Brighton Beach I go to Gravesend or Gerritsen Beach . I actually went to Kings Bay branch for my first time . I'm a life long Brooklyn resident and remember going to Brighton branch for my very first library card . I enjoy going and taking out fiction books to read very often and I use the computers to print documents also . The public library system is a crucial part of many children lives , from many programs they offer to just going after school for a quiet place to do their homework . Funding to public library's is necessary and should be reduced or eliminated .


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Suzanne Dikker


Brooklyn, NY 11211

I use our local library for printing and storytime

I met so many friends through play days at my local Leonard Library. Incredibly fun memories

Libraries are the beating hearts of our communities. They are not just places for books and stories aren't just in between the pages: They are places for people and their stories.

Libraries keep our children safe and cool and socialized in the summer, they provide safe havens and buffers against loneliness.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Emmanuil Shamailov


Brooklyn, NY 11229

Access to free public resources at my library has significantly enriched my life in a number of ways. Regularly checking out new books has kept me intellectually curious and continuously learning, even outside of formal education. My library made it easy to find reliable information, especially during busy or challenging times.

I have met many friends and joined clubs/events through the local library

Libraries and education are the foundation of civil liberty.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Tamara Plummer


Brooklyn, NY 11226

it's a sober place to have fun! I always discover new and interesting books. And the ability to rent a conference room for remote work cuts down on the coffee shop bill and still get me out of the house so that I'm not isolated.

the library has everyone! From the unhoused, who've been kicked out of most places to the expensive laptop toting college student to the nanny or mom's club. When I want to see all of what NYC is I go to the library. And the employees really create a loving environment for all these people.

I recently had a work from home day where I was out running errands and then needed to hop on a couple work calls. I was able to reserve a room on the spot and get work done. I was hungry and supported the cafe in the library which has a cause close to my heart as I sat eating my sandwich I saw a tired man who is probably down on his luck having a warm place to sit along side little kids hanging with their nanny and other business looking folks. In a world that is stratified and divisive there are few places where I can experience this kind of common diversity, plus I discovered Beverly Jenkins and I'm so glad I did get this wonderful writer's book. I was able to share her work with a friend. And when I was working on my music teacher's memorial the library offered affordable printing options. I was so overwhelmed I had to keep coming back to the desk because I was completely confused, no one loss their temper, they just helped me.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Nadine Einhorn



Brooklyn, NY 11238

I am an avid reader and go to the library once or twice a week. I take out books, along with entertaining feature film DVDs and DVDs about nature. I also attend free concerts in the Dweck auditorium. In addition, I attend various educational programs on a variety of subjects. The Central Library is a haven for learning, growth and community.

Through unique indoor and outdoor programming, Central library is a hub for community gatherings that enrich lives.

It's shameful that NYC libraries are in a position where funding is even questionable. Please protect and honor our library system.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From A A

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11207

Our libraries have been helping the community for years. We care about our education even if the selfish city thinks we don't. These third spaces enrich us by providing classes, safe spaces for everyone. It's really sad that the city continues to not support libraries.

It helps our people find spaces to learn & create. The kid who is having issues could go to the library and find what inspires them. When I need a printer I know where to go. I use Libby for audiobooks.

I've been a huge advocate for libraries no matter where I move I make sure to get a card and visit the space on my free time. If I need to study, the library is my go-to. Stop taking away from people who needs these spaces now & forever.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Margaret Rowe


Brooklyn, NY 11215

I am an avid reader and use the Brooklyn Public Library very regularly to borrow books and ebooks.

I belong to a book club and I am able to use the library's hold system to order almost any title.

I have visited public libraries throughout my life and I believe they are a very important and enriching resource for the community.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Rosemary Schamann


Brooklyn, NY 11215

I love my library and frequently take out books . I like to feel the paper as I turn the pages I do not like kindle or any other forms I like books and find it upsetting when I am following a story and the next book has been taken out and placed on kindle really pisses me off Do not close our library and not everyone wants kindle

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Thomas Rayfiel



Brooklyn, NY 11215

Libraries are the last free place. When I go to the Central Library or one of the many neighborhood branches, I feel one with my community in a way I rarely feel when visiting any other institution. Here are kids doing their homework after school, people looking for jobs, older students, studying, lovers of literature (like myself)...all the faces of Brooklyn! We are united in using this quiet, welcoming space devoted to knowledge and decency. This is where I want my tax dollars to go.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Marietta Menchini


Brooklyn, NY 11209

I love my library. It is a lifeline to my community and a breath of fresh air to my daily life. If not for books and the ability to visit my library, I would be isolated as a senior in my community. Whenever I visit my library, I see many people of all ages enjoying the ability to meet and share with others in our community. I use ebooks daily to stay connected and exercise my brain. My bookclub shares this ability to stay connected and alert. I could not enjoy my present retirement without my library.

Whenever I visit my library, I see many people of all ages enjoying the ability to meet and share with their neighbors in this community. Story time is very well attended. My bookclub enjoys being able to access ebooks to continue our reading adventures.

My memories of the library go way back to when I was a child. Being able to find a book that I wanted to read and take it home with me to read over and over again ---- such a beautiful memory. A memory that I then shared with my children. My library has and continues to bring me great joy every day.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Judith Ruland



Brooklyn, NY 11217

Visiting Pacific Library is a short walk for me and I check out books and attend special events. I volunteer to read to the children at Storytime on Wednesday mornings; the highlight of my week. The staff is friendly and helpful and the monthly book display is of interest!

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Arthur Pollard



Brooklyn, NY 11225

I regularly check our books or use Libby for audio books

The library is one of the last places people can go and just be without spending money.
They provide such great resources to people

When I was young my friends and I used to walk to this library and use the computers to
play games and just be kids.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Ely Milian



Brooklyn, NY 11218

The library is a safe space I can rely on when i want to be creative, when i want to write, to be in community, to be around knowledge and to educate myself in an array of important and interesting topics. Having grown up in Puerto Rico without a library system, it's a space I've grown to love and appreciate for its convenience, functionality and widespread catalog.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Saradine Nazaire


Brooklyn, NY 11234

My local library supports my ebook and audiobook obsessions. It is also a place where I go to print necessary documents, peace and quiet, and find recipes.

My library holds events (the people's ball), host competitions (PowerUp) and gives everyone a true third space when it all are disappearing

The library was where I nourished my curiosity as a child and became fluent in English. And as an adult, its where I find respite from an ever capitalistic ans transactional environment. Please continue to sustain that safe haven

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Kristen Walsh

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11209

I regularly check out books, 500 since 2021, of all publishing dates, often receiving some from "Storage." It is a staple on my weekend to go to my local branch and browse the shelves.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Thierryana Moss


Brooklyn, NY 11218

Moving to New York has been hard and somewhat isolating but I was able to check out books when I got here and that helped fill the time as I was adjusting to the city

I'm apart of a crafting group at my local library . It's helped me foster a community close to where i kive

My first craft meeting at my local library I was so nervous , but everyone was so welcoming and made me feel at ease and now I go every week


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From ROSILYN WRIGHT


Brooklyn, NY 11207

My local public libraries are a important part of my retirement life. I check out books that I enjoy. If I do not find it in one library, I can get it from another. The activities that I participate in are Library Book Club, Virtual Bowling, Creative Aging Art, Arts and Crafts and Crochet Club. I also join in many other events that are of interests for adult learning and for social or community awareness.

As mention in the previous question, I have joined the New Lots Book Club. I receive newsletters on different social, resources and training throughout the community. Important neighborhood board meetings are available.

The events that are provided through the local libraries have helped maintain my active lifestyle. I have kept abreast of community events both political and resourceful through the library newsletters. The Brooklyn Public Library is a world of knowledge and filled with eventful activities that are vital to neighborhoods throughout Brooklyn.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Tony Tucker


Brooklyn, NY 11236

My local public library has a part of life, Due to the accessibility of being able to read books, Use the computer and internet and also for social gathering as well. It was a safe heaven provided to me as a younger to now my adult life.

Yes I seen my local library play a role in bringing the community together.

My favorite memories was me as a kid using the computer playing computer games, I remember I used to play this game called Roller Boy. It was like a generic Super Mario game but it was good. We need to keep the public libraries open for the future generations to have access to books, computers and internet, Especially for the low income communities which is needed.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Janette Cooke


Brooklyn, NY 11215

I love to read a wide variety of books and, through the Brooklyn Public Library, I have access to many, many books -- fiction and non-fiction. I regularly get books from the BPL either by going to the library in my neighborhood or by downloading a book. In fact, I will soon go to my neighborhood library to pick up a travel guide that I requested. This guide will help me to decide if another country is appealing to visit.

Books enrich my life by exposing me to different ideas, information and cultures. I also stop by my local library to read periodicals that I don't subscribe to.

I recently attended a fascinating lecture at the Brooklyn History section of the Brooklyn Public Library. I learned so much about the founding of NYC from the lecturer, the moderator, and other audience members. Learning about history helps me to understand the background for today's circumstances.

The Brooklyn Public Library is a vital part of my life. My neighbors, my City and I are strengthened by the free availability of information. We, especially, need this free access during these times when there are others who would limit what we, a free people, can read, view, see, hear and learn about.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Elizabeth Kuhn

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11201

I hate e books. I want something I hold in my hand, even when the pages stick together! I love to browse the shelves. On hot days I love to enjoy the cooling along with a good book. Libraries are an essential part of American freedom. As I explained to a Muslim during the Salmon Rushdie crisis: Any reasonable adult may consider any idea they wish to consider no matter how blasphemous, no matter how crazy, no matter what.

See above.

Libraries are safe spaces in a world that grows more terrifying each day. Stand up for freedom. Keep our libraries open. Do not let a few deny the rights of others by not allowing books they don't happen to like.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Andrew Lampert



Brooklyn, NY 11215

My daughter relies on the library for every aspect of her schooling. She borrows assigned books to read in English and Spanish class. She does research for history and science class. She goes to the library to do her homework, and she goes with friends who do the same thing. Our whole family borrows physical books and ebooks. The library has always been a central component of our lives.

The library is clearly a community hub that people across the board use in our neighborhood. Everytime we go in it is bustling, a combination of children, parents/caretakers and adultys who are there reading, using the computers and doing all other sorts of things. The library offers so many opportunities for inclusiveness, from clubs and events to simply being a cool resting place during the exhausting hot summer. I can't imagine where any of the users would go or what resources they would rely on without the library in their lives.

Do our city leaders use the library? If they do, then why would the libraries be endangered? I would like to ask our city leaders to visit a few branches and spend a little time talking to the people who are there. This means employees and users. It would be even better if they city leaders borrowed books and spoke to their constitutents. Libraries are a great place to hold public forums. I would encourage all of our elected officials to make regular trips to the library.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Helen Moe


Brooklyn, NY 11206

Aside from all the reading I do, I have used the library as an emergency center when my home computer was hacked. I was at the library literally (no pun intended) on a daily basis to check my important emails, etc.


Safe haven during these difficult times. A pleasant respite after neighborhood shopping. Saw great music concerts. Met Oliver Stone, controversial director of political movie.

Education is more important than ever,

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library
to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations
May 21, 2025

From Alexis Gargagliano


Brooklyn, NY 11233

Our family uses the library every week, to check out new books, to see friends, as a quiet work space. I love how the library feeds our curiosity and is one of the last vital community centers in existence. It feels like a space where all kinds of people can come together to learn and grow and be connected with ideas.

We do use the library for books and the kids will meet friends there, and in the summer it is a cool place to sit and read. But I also notice that other people seem to be there needing the computers, needing the information, or the services and I'm always so grateful the institution is there to hold them up.

Just before the city shut down before COVID-19 quarantine, unsure of what was to come, I brought the kids to the library and we checked out about 30 books, which carried us through those early days. And when the libraries opened up and we were able to return those books and request new ones I didn't just feel relieved for new things to read, but reassured that this institution that I believe in and count on was alive and ready to carry us through. And then they also became a place where we could pick up masks and covid tests and essential things to keep our community safe and that was the first time I realized how many different functions our libraries serve. They are brain centers--able to transmit information, provide care, inspire creativity, and provide joy and solace and safety. My library is essential to my family.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Chia Kwa

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11226

The library is an essential resource for me. I borrow books not only for entertainment, but to upskill in my field so that I can continue to be employed.

It has also been invaluable as a community area where I can be around other people, in a temperature-regulated environment, without being expected to spend any money. When I was a kid, my parents would drop me off at the library and I essentially babysat myself with books!

I remember my dad taking me to the library to pick out the books we would read that week. I want to pass on that habit of self-education to my own children one day. Libraries keep kids out of trouble, and prevent them from turning into trouble themselves.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Leah Block

Brooklyn, NY 11238

When I moved into my new apartment and did not have Wifi for the first week, I relied on the Central Library branch of the BPL for all of my internet needs. When I was unemployed, I relied on the same branch for its Business & Career Center -- expertise from librarians, a quiet place to apply for work, and abundant resources on potential paths that I could take. The library's resources were instrumental to me finding my current job at Meta.

I often see groups of nannies with toddlers in the atrium of the Central Library. Nannies and caretakers get to socialize with each other while the little ones have a safe, supervised place to run around and socialize with other little ones. It's also adorable to pass through the atrium and see all of the toddlers running around on their chubby little legs.

Eric Adams took millions of dollars in bribe money while simultaneously slashing the library's budget. This was a black-and-white moral failure that must be atoned for. Libraries were closed on weekends while our Mayor was on private jets enjoying bribes. Fuck Eric Adams & SAVE THE LIBRARIES!

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Katie Crisona



Brooklyn, NY 11209

We live down the block from the library and bring our 3 kids on the weekends. We love going to the kids room and bringing in new books and playing with other kids from the neighborhood. We just moved to our neighborhood and it has been a lovely place to meet new families. Its already so disappointing that its not open on sundays. We would be heartbroken if there were anymore cuts to the library.

We live down the block from the library and bring our 3 kids on the weekends. We love going to the kids room and bringing in new books and playing with other kids from the neighborhood. We just moved to our neighborhood and it has been a lovely place to meet new families. Its already so disappointing that its not open on sundays. We would be heartbroken if there were anymore cuts to the library.

open the libraries on sundays!!!!


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Joseph LaQuinta


Brooklyn, NY 11209

The internet is fine. TV is mostly crap except for PBS which is also facing funding cuts. At age 91, the only thing that gets me out of my abode is my trips to my local library. There is something about the printed word that gets me going. Books are exciting, amusing, informative and a source of mental and yes , physical energy. Some mornings, thinking about my trip to the library is the only thing that gets me out of bed. It's a place to read and meet others of my age and interests. You might suggest a Senior Center but it;s just not the same. With all the things our tax \$ support in our city, the Library is one entry that covers all ages, backgrounds and ethnic persuasions.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From MARIE LAYNE

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Brooklyn, NY 11226

Brooklyn Public Libraries have been a crucial part of my self and my children lives. Because of Brooklyn public libraries I was able to help educate myself and my children with a vast amount of knowledge about everything under the sun. The Brooklyn Public libraries also provided services such as story time and a variety of community information the still allows my family, friends and community to stay informed and educated about the then and now of our times.

My recent library visit involved workshops to help the community deal with mental health and provided resources to access vital information.

My favorite memories was Saturday morning story time that all three of my children participated in and allowed us to gain friends along the way that shared our same ideas and passion.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Stephanie Silhavy


Brooklyn, NY 11231

While waiting for my closest two libraries to reopen (Red Hook and Carroll Gardens), it has been a lifesaver to have the Red Hook Interim library. I recently had surgery and convalescing for weeks. I quickly discovered my love for reading again and having the library to check out reads, show my now big kids things to read that are important for background information, and to have this at our fingertips while disconnecting from phones, has been a lifesaver and also saves valuable space on our home shelves!!

The toddler get togethers in Red Hook has been a steady and relied upon value for my children and my daycare!!

Our libraries are the single most important community builder in our neighborhood that is open to everyone!!


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Latoya Fable


Brooklyn, NY 11207

During the pandemic the option to take our digital books was very beneficial.

The children in the area have somewhere to go and beneficial events to take part in.

I enjoyed the knitting club and book club helped me and my daughters bond and explore the library books.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Talya Striph

Brooklyn, NY 11218

I LOVE MY LIBRARY -- not only can I request and pick up books close to home (on an INCREDIBLY efficient app, by the way), but NO ONE owns a printer anymore, and I can print easily at my library for just 10 cents a page! And I know that money is going back into my community. I'm about to start taking watercolor classes FOR FREE, something I've wanted to try for a really long time, but been too scared to take the plunge on. They're going to provide me materials and lessons at no cost! That's amazing. Plus, they always had masks during the pandemic, and they offer a quiet place to work when I don't want to work from home.

I am part of a book club, and I know that multiple members get their books from the BPL. Plus, whenever I go to print, I end up chatting with a neighbor about whatever is going on. I've seen the library put on incredible exhibits that people line up to see, creating cultural conversation in the community (like the Jay-Z exhibit).

Libraries are where I grew up -- I remember always being excited to go to my local library to pick out books with my mom. It's a place where our kids can live in abundance, and so can we. These resources allow us to expand so many parts of ourselves -- from learning to creativity to our own skills. It's imperative that we allow our communities to flourish by funding our local libraries.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From alex richards

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11226

The library has always been a part of my life, but never more so than when I became a mother. Reading to my kids is one of the best memories that I have, and if it weren't for the library, I wouldn't have had nearly as many books to choose from. I must have checked out a thousand picture books from various branches of the Brooklyn public library over the years. As they have gotten older, I don't get as many picture books, but I still pick up books regularly. Especially for my son. Do you have any idea how many graphic novels a 10 year old can go through? And do you have any idea how much that would cost if I had to BUY those books for him? It would be in the tens of thousands. To give you an idea, he just finished chapter 800 of his favorite manga series. I can't imagine where we would be without the public library. We rely on it. In addition to the children's section, I often check out books for myself, and love attending author events and classes at University Open Air. The library is the gift that keeps on giving. Please, protect the library's budget!

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Barbara Branch

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11209

It has been part of life for practically all of life. Reading as a child. Then as a Mother I took my daughter to the library every week with arms loads of books.

When I became retired I was lost for a while not knowing what to do. The library once again saved me just going there sitting with people, getting to know the librarian

Books are the most important thing in a person's life they open and expand your expectations


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Melissa Gardner


Brooklyn, NY 11218

My local branch is in Windsor Terrace. This location is across the street from a school and in a residential area, thus making it a vital resource for students after school to study and have a safe space to congregate as well as explore and learn information they might not have access to. Personally, the library hold/transfer system has enabled me to have access to the full catalog beyond what this branch can normally provide and allows me to save time and subway fare. I also use the printing services which allows me to affordably print resumes and other important documents.

I cannot stress enough the vital services the library provides to all citizens regardless of income. It is one of the last true egalitarian institutions in our society and we must preserve it at all costs.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Zachary Ford

Brooklyn, NY 11209

I live one block from my local public library. One of the reasons we purchased our home is because it is located so close to our public library. I am in my branch at least once a week, often more, and not a day goes by that I don't utilize something that is a direct result of my library. I check out books from my library every week and maintain a holds queue of 15 books (the max!) at all times.

My library offers free, fun, and engaging classes, like art lessons and language courses, that allow me to expand my knowledge, learn new activities, and meet people in my community. I walk by my library at least three times a day (it is on the route that my dog and I walk multiple times a day) and each time I pass I am filled with joy at the number of people inside. At all times of day the library is full of members of our community who are using the computers, reading, checking the news, and accessing classes and resources. It is a vibrant hub for our community and an essential resource.

It is heartbreaking that we still have to make the case for why libraries are essential to our beautiful city. They are vibrant community hubs that allow people to expand their knowledge, cool down on a hot summer day, connect with members of their community, and find their next great adventure. And our librarians do so much for us! They are brilliant at their jobs and make every visitor feel welcomed. Every time I walk by my library I am filled with so much joy.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Martine Sainvil

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11210

I rely heavily on the Brooklyn Public library for books, e-books, audio books, DVDs, and online resources for continuing education. The availability of these materials is invaluable to my personal growth and my professional advancement. These materials have helped me with improving my economic prospects.

The library is so important to the neighborhood as a resource center for information and also during the pandemic in helping distribute test kits. It was the only place that I was able to get those.

As a life-long NYer the library was and continues to be one of the greatest resources available to me and makes the world accessible and more equitable.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Sharon Cohen


Brooklyn, NY 11229

I regularly read ebooks on Kindle from the BPL, NYPL, and QPL. I attend music and crafts programs, and the Share Fair at my local libraries (Kings Bay, Sheepshead Bay, Central). A group of my book club friends are doing the 10-week Quilling craft program with Oleg right now, and enjoying it very much. My mom in assisted living, who is an avid reader, gets large print library books delivered.

We book club friends have made new friends with other senior ladies at the craft events. Local seniors getting to know each other and meeting up at the library is a wonderful way to fight senior loneliness. We lose friends when they pass away, or move away to live near their children, and we need to continually enrich our social life.

I will always remember and be thankful for the special needs preschool socialization program I brought my autistic son to at the Mill Basin branch. At that stage in his life it was the only time he got to play with other kids.

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FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Jill Powers

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11235

I have appreciated my public library since I was a child. Whenever I move to a new area, the first thing I do is get my library card. One of the things I love about Brooklyn, is all of the available branches and the extensive programming! It's a great way to meet new people and have a social life that doesn't cost anything. Whenever I hear about a new book, I check my library first.

I love that the library brings together people that I would not have met otherwise as I work from home.

Recently, my Branch has started a "share fair" which has helped me reevaluate what I need in my home. I have donated to salvation army in the past and will continue to do so, but I love that the library is setting this up for our community.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Kirsten Adorian


Brooklyn, NY 11221

I regularly check out books from the library, have used the printers at my local library and regularly attend events (like movie screenings, author book talks, etc).

When I was applying to my most recent job, the education available at the library as well as the job search resources and classes were invaluable. I largely thank my career shift to the access I was given at the library.

I do all the time. I have a friend who was able to organize a mask-friendly craft circle at numerous Brooklyn library locations. I send friends to the library for job search resources all the time. I have friends that do remote work at the library as it's a safe and calm environment (but also a nice place to be surrounded by people).

The library offers programs like the Bard Microcolleges and outdoor college to ensure all parts of our community can access all levels of education. Libraries are an essential part in not only access but equity.

There have also been times in the past where I worked jobs throughout the city that didn't have central workplaces, like bike messengering. I was always able to take shelter from the weather, use a bathroom or refill my water bottle. I see nannies bring children to the library all the time, as a former nanny, having a place to congregate with others in your line of work while keeping children both safe and entertained is essential.


Libraries are a democratic hub and I'm so grateful for Brooklyn Public Library in particular. I now work for Bard Microcollege at BPL and I see every day the wide variety of informational haven that library provides. My students regularly talk about the wealth of opportunities and tools they have because of the library, the way that the programs housed within the library change their lives in meaningful ways.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Rosemarie Bugenis


Brooklyn, NY 11223

I am so thankful for the public library system. Since I was a child, I have been borrowing books. My husband and I continue to do so here in our senior citizen years. I especially am thankful for the availability of library computers and other resources, especially for those who do not have a computer at home.

The library offers special programs, such as book discussions, knitting, arts and crafts, story time for children. I have attended some of these occasionally. It is beautiful and SO important that people can visit the library for help if they do not understand English or if help is needed with other issues, such as completing an application or for job searching. I am very touched that the library has offered "cooling locations" when there have been heat waves.

I was in the early grades of elementary school when my teacher took our class on a "field trip" to the library. I was so excited to have my own library card and to borrow books. Every time I pass that particular branch, that positive memory resurfaces. When my son was a toddler, we visited the library frequently to borrow books. That was an exciting and happy time for both of us. I continue to be very grateful for Brooklyn's public libraries.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From sharon bailey



Brooklyn, NY 11215

The library has been and continues to be a lifeline to those who cannot access its resources on their own. See who is making use of it to see what the city will be like!

5cents for a pencil and a dime for loos leaf+the card catalogue and off you went!


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Olivia Merchen


Brooklyn, NY 11237

I regularly go to the library - sometimes it's to get books that I've been wanting to read and other times it's just to peruse the shelves and see if I can find other books that might interest me. I love discovering new books and the library has a vast resource of new and up-and-coming authors ready to be discovered.

I often go to the library in the middle of the day and there's always a lot of people working peacefully, perusing the shelves, and sometimes there's a reading group that I believe is adults learning how to read. I think the influence the library has in the community is invaluable as it's one of the only nondenominational institutions that actually brings people of all ages and walks of life together.

Libraries are for everyone. They're a reflection of the community. They're resources for knowledge and connection for everyone, regardless of age, race, finances, political party, etc. It's abhorrent that they want to cut funding to an institution that only provides resources and joy to the community.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Kris Naudus


Brooklyn, NY 11218

I regularly read over 100 books a year, and a big part of making this happen is the books I get from the library. I read novels, non-fiction, comics; a lot of this would be absolutely unaffordable to me without being able to get them for free from the library.

Last year I took a coding course at the NYPL -- I know this isn't the Brooklyn Public Library, but I have to imagine that the classes that BPL does offer are just as valuable to its students. College is expensive, taking individual classes is expensive, and the library systems here in NYC make learning affordable to average folk.

My niece is four and just starting to learn to read and there's no way she'd be able to do that without all the books my mom gets for her from the library. She especially loves Mo Willems.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Anne Marie Gussman

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11201

The Brooklyn Public Library was so important to me as a child. I came from a family without a lot of money. I was an avid reader and my parents could not afford to buy all the books I wanted to read! The library was a magical place to me enabling me to indulge my love of reading. Now that I am retired I benefit from the various activities at my local branch and I love to see all the children enjoying the benefits of the library.

The library is a safe space for the community. Providing books and other services that are vital to the community. I cant imagine life without the library

My first job in High School was working part time in the Sunset Branch. It was unbelievable that I was paid to be surrounded by books!!

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Laura Rivera



Brooklyn, NY 11229

Thru exercise for seniors. Plays i wouldn't never have gone to the city but library provides great educational entertainment. Art programs. Senior info day. I would be lonely and depressed at home without the library.

I get to talk to like minded people in their programs. Ones I would never meet on my own. I need the library..

Because they keep me informed and included in society. Not locked up alone because I can't afford to go out

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Michael Korn

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11209

I'm just an old dude that likes to read so I'm just glad that the resources exist. And need to continue to exist. Funded fully!

Thank goodness my air conditioner is still in working order but for people without access to one, it is truly a lifesaver. And if I can overcome my anxieties about joining groups, I might finally check it out this year.

A Free Public library is one of the most important institutions in a democratic society. To cut funding now in the midst of the Trump administration quickly moving to undermine ALL democratic institutions wouldn't be a wise move. So please reconsider any cuts to the library.

In fact, the budget should be increased so they can fund programs that helps strengthen the fabric of our city. A strong, resilient and active library can be a bulwark to counter the intentions of an administration that's hellbent on dismantling institutions that seeks to promote the growth of its citizens. A free, active and engaged citizenry is an antidote to autocratic overreach. So fully fund the BPL. We cannot afford to cheap out because the stakes are too high. Thanks!

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FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Kim Travis



Brooklyn, NY 11207

Ebooks are my life right now. I don't have much extra money so I don't mind waiting on hold to wait for an ebook from one or many of my favorite authors. When I need an inexpensive print copy, the library I go. Even the color prints at the library are less than other places. Let's not talk about the free wifi and the air conditioner. Communities need public libraries..

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Emad Toom



Brooklyn, NY 11217

I live in park slope where central library is located, and i like to go there to borrow books and read ,i think it's very educational place and need to be kept funded and not cut down of it's activities or hours

our communities, it's very vital for everyone seeking knowledge and resources to gain skills to help going forward in life and it hosts a lot of activities to bring communities together

Libraries are vital and very important to all people especially students and need to be kept available to everyone seeking education and knowledge and not to cut down it's activities.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Felicia Francis

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11234

I don't know where to begin. The library has become an essential part of my reading journey--not only by providing the books I need, but also by introducing me to titles I never expected to enjoy. I never considered myself a "library person" before, but having access to such valuable resources changed that. Once I started using the library, I was all in--I even purchased a tablet just so I could borrow e-books and keep reading wherever I go.

It would be a tremendous mistake to take away any of the services the library offers. In fact, I believe the library deserves even more support and resources. Even the business resources are vital to community members. Please reconsider any decisions that could negatively impact this vital community space.

Oh my goodness--it's so much more than just a library. It's a meeting space, a quiet place to study, and a hub for vital resources. Babysitters, students, and families go there not only for information but also for a safe and welcoming environment. You can even access free notary services. It's a space of connection, support, and opportunity--a true pillar of community life. For many, it plays a pivotal role in their daily lives. Taking that away would be a disservice to the people who rely on it.

Libraries are vital to the community. They're there when you need them--and for some, they're a constant, essential space. Cutting resources or taking them away is like removing a pillar of support from the very foundation of our communities.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Arely Valle


Brooklyn, NY 11228

I'm currently studying for my CPA exams and having access to my local Brooklyn library is crucial for my success! I go there to study almost everyday!

Yes all the time, and honestly when my family was homeless everyday after school I was at the library until they closed. Through my entire life I have used the Brooklyn public library I have this beautiful memory when I was so young my mom took me and my older brother to the library and I remember this was the time they gave you a plastic bag for book! So that's how true of a Brooklyn public library fan I am!

I volunteered at the library when I was 12-14 and it gave me structure, I met two other volunteers who were older than me and one got into Brown University! I had people to ask about colleges and now here I am with my BBA. The main librarian was Latina and that representation of women who look like me in a leadership role truly helped me gain the confidence to even go for my CPA!


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Liz Garcia


Brooklyn, NY 11208

The Arlington Library is a staple of the neighborhood. It has been crucial in bringing together families and children during the weekly classes for story time and Brainy Babies. I had no idea such programs existed and it would be detrimental to remove these programs and they improve our children and by extension our neighborhood.

The bilingual classes for children are amazing. They incorporate language, music and art to help kids who may otherwise not engage feel confident to do so. My daughter starting going to these classes and was terrified to interact with other kids but these classes have helped her

Libraries are the last vestiges of what's good about community. It's a place to gather, share and learn; a place where you don't need to buy anything but you can still get so much from it. Our society can only benefit from libraries and the services they provide. I used to love going to the Arlington Ave library and now I'm grateful I can take my daughter there. Another generation learning and improving Brooklyn.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Riva Gilman


Brooklyn, NY 11210

I'm a senior and I going weekly to the quilling craft series at Sheepshead Bay branch, where I made new friends, keeps me mentally and physically active. I constantly check out books at my Midwood branch for my book club. Library programs elevate the quality of life for all people on a fixed income like myself and ordinary people of all ages in the neighborhood.

At the age of 5 in the 1960s, I loved the child-sized shelves, tables and benches available to me in the Children's Section of the Kings Highway library branch; a whole floor of it!


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Rachel Linder


Brooklyn, NY 11224

I cannot believe that when new books come out, the library has it. The other advantage is that there are libraries located in areas close to me. Some of them have beautiful classes that we can participate in.

There are many teens doing their activities on the computer. In my neighborhood which is mainly Russian, the library has many sections of Russian books which is amazing. The library is filled with older adults as well, reading the newspapers. The library is never empty. There are arts and crafts classes.

We need libraries. School children need to be there to work on the computers.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Maura Smale

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11238

I have been a heavy user of the Brooklyn Public Library since moving to Brooklyn 26 years ago. When my child was young we spent so much time in the childrens section of multiple branches, and my family and I use the library for fiction and nonfiction information, as a space to engage in quiet work, and we also attend the fantastic programming at the Central branch often.

Our library is a gathering point in all weather, and a safe quiet place for students to work with plentiful access to the internet. As a CUNY employee I'm especially grateful for the important role that the public libraries in NYC play in supporting students in their entire educational careers, from K-12 through college.

Libraries are essential! I couldn't imagine our city without them.


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to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Chimere McKether


Brooklyn, NY 11226

The Brooklyn Public Library has influenced my life greatly because I check out books and DVDs. I love to read and watch movies. BPL also has free programs I can sign up for which are beneficial to me. I love the fact that they have Creative Writing Workshop because I'm interested in writing and I love to write. I can't afford to go back to college due to financial hardship. I also use the free wifi access to do research and work on my phone. The library is my friend. I feel safe and it's my go-to spot whenever I need anything from there.

I can't imagine Brooklyn Public Library not being available. I would be truly devastated. Please don't add anymore cuts. I need Brooklyn Public Library because it is my life line!

This summer, there is a six-week workshop at Cortelyou Brooklyn Park Library running though June 24-July 29, 2025 about depression and anxiety, which is beneficial to help people who are struggling with these issues. Programs like these enrich lives and transform them.

My message is this: our community libraries keep people out of trouble and it is a positive outlet to help those in need when searching for resources that will transform their lives for the better.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Sunny Liu

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11205

The library has always been a place where I've turned for resources for knowledge. I've been able to read countless books and magazines through the library which I otherwise probably wouldn't have been able to financially.

The library is where I go for community such as this sewing club at my local branch. It is a place some elders in my neighborhood go to as a safe space to gather. It's also been a place I used as a cooling center when I was a kid and we couldn't afford to turn on the AC throughout the day in the summertime.

The library has always been a safe space for me. I've used it as a cooling center in the summer. I've used it as a teen for its programs to help me make friends. I've used the library for a wealth of knowledge through its free books and magazines. I've also used the culture pass to give me access to places I otherwise wouldn't have visit. We need to protect our libraries for our communities to gather and to learn.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Yuliya Oliynyk

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11230

My local public library is an important part of my and my son's life because it gives us access to resources and opportunities I wouldn't otherwise have. We use it to borrow books, study in a quiet environment, and attend community events or workshops. It's more than just a place to read--it's a space where we can learn new skills, meet people, and stay informed.

I've seen my library play a powerful role in bringing the community together by hosting events that welcome people of all ages and backgrounds. From storytime for kids to book clubs, job search workshops, and cultural events, the library creates a space where people can connect, learn, and support each other. During times of need, like bad weather or crises, it's even served as a safe, warm place for people to gather. It's one of the few places that's truly open and accessible to everyone, and that makes it a cornerstone of our community.

One of my favorite memories that shows how the library brings our community together is when I took my son there for the first time. He was so excited to see shelves full of books and to be around other kids who were just as interested in reading. Watching him light up as he explored the children's section and saw other children reading and enjoying stories made me realize how the library is a shared space where learning and curiosity are celebrated. It wasn't just about books--it was about being part of a community that values reading, imagination, and togetherness.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Max Huibregtse

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11206

The local public library is the only place I can sit and work without having to pay; it also allows me to print things easily and affordably, which in turn has helped me both complete schoolwork and apply for jobs.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Rita Jules



Brooklyn, NY 11231

I routinely borrow books for myself and my son, and find myself at the library almost every week. I love the idea of a free, shared space devoted to learning and open to all. I would much rather donate money to the library than buy a copy of a book for myself. The institution is fundamentally a public good, like a city park or our public school system, and deserves full government support for the immensely important role it plays in our communities.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library
to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations
May 21, 2025

From Judith Meiselman


Brooklyn, NY 11217

As a child I studied at the Linden Blvd branch of the Brooklyn public library. Each week my friend Judy and I would take out four books and promptly exchanged them for four more the next week. I did my major research report on snails for my zoology class at Erasmus High School at the Grand Army Plaza branch.

Now, as a long time resident of Park Slope , I have delighted in using the Grand Army branch as an endless resource of fiction and nonfiction. I love seeing the variety of people in the community quietly absorbed as they read or use the computers.

When I worked in Manhattan I often went to the Performing Arts

Library to listen to music or mark my students' papers. In these culturally challenging times the public libraries are especially needed to validate the role of literacy for all provided by our NY libraries.

Recently I was happy to attend a memorial for Robert Hershon, a Brooklyn poet and editor. It was held in an intimate space at the Grand Army Plaza Library. Such notables as Sherman Alexie spoke to honor his mentor , while around the room paintings by his daughter Elizabeth adorned the walls. What a wonderful way to commemorate a Brooklyn poet by using the public library.

I have another favorite memory of seeing and hearing my friend Martin Koenig showing a film he produced on Bulgarian village dancing at the Performing Arts Library at Lincoln Center. I knew him as a talented dancer but it was a thrill to see the cultural context which inspired his art.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Daniel Lado

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11229

The library has helped me used resources to pass my college courses, which would have been harder without it. The interactions with job officials in the business department also helped in my earlier years in finding work.

The libraries has helped a lot of new immigrants learn english with the help of the We Speak Nyc classes. Also with the programs to help find jobs for them, which in turn helps the economy in NYC.

Last month our branch had over 80 people in one building to just hear jazz musicians play. Something most do not have a chance to do because it can be expensive to listen to real jazz players.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Monica Pascual


Brooklyn, NY 11221

My husband and I visit the library every week, we check out books and DVDs, there's also a free local newspaper we like to read, we also look at the flyers and the calendar of library events, occasionally we need to use the bathroom, it's also a great place to make photocopies or print documents from a computer when we need to

Our local branch offers a lot of free resources for everyone in the community. Also, everyone who works there knows everyone who goes to the library often, it's a nice place for everyone to enjoy

It's very important to have public libraries in the neighborhoods, there are resources for everyone and for all ages, having access to so many books and resources for free it's great

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Jacob Goldbas



Brooklyn, NY 11237

I use the Washington Irving Library in North Bushwick on a daily basis for books, Internet access, and Professional Research help and advice

I absolutely see the Bushwick Irving Library bringing communities together -- the children's programs especially at Bushwick Irving integrate Hispanic and White caregivers and their families -- every day

I would be so lonely without the Bushwick Washington Irving Library.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Zev Frank


Brooklyn, NY 11221

The public library drastically improves my life. I have access to so many books and the ability to learn so much I would not be able to otherwise, and eBooks dramatically add to the accessibility of so much valuable literature as well. It is also an invaluable community space. In a time and place where there are so few places for children to be able to congregate and enjoy fun and educational programs, it is necessary to our community to have this space and it strengthens.

I practically grew up in my local public library. I was there every day after school until my parents could pick me up, I knew all the librarians and had read nearly every comic book and middle grade fantasy cover to cover. The clubs and activities available gave me a community, a safe and accessible place to be a kid with no prohibitory monetary threshold. I also came away from that with a love of reading and skills that had a real impact on my performance in school, leading eventually to being able to secure an academic scholarship that allowed me to go to my top choice school. If you want strong community, kids enjoying learning and gaining important life skills, and vital resources to be accessible to community members of all ages, it is absolutely imperative to fund and support local libraries.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Idriss Barnes

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11213

The library has been a cornerstone of my life since childhood. As an adult and a graduate student, I've found solace in its study spaces, enabling me to focus on my studies and complete assignments for my degree. The library offers a somewhat peaceful haven away from the noise of my apartment, allowing me to concentrate without the distractions. They mitigate the need to go to a bustling coffee shops or the need to travel to Manhattan for my school's library.

The libraries in Crown Heights and the central library, where I frequently visit, host a diverse range of community events, workshops, and educational programs. Notably, they organize various back-to-school activities for children, and the book mobile is always present at other community events.

Libraries are crucial for connecting people with their communities and providing resources for continuous learning. They offer supportive resources and programs for all ages. The city should prioritize protecting libraries from closure and constructing luxury apartments in their place. Additionally, leaders should recognize the significance of libraries in fostering human capital development.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Anugya Sood


Brooklyn, NY 11221

Brooklyn Public Library has been an essential part of my life ever since I've lived here. I spent two years unable to walk and was completely disabled and during that time BPL's virtual arts and crafts classes helped me feel connected to a community, gave me the opportunity to learn new skills, and helped me feel efficacious and less worried about not being able to engage in my ordinary activities. I have also relied substantially on BPL's book collection through the Libby app, which has made reading at home with my kindle much more accessible. I have read books that I never would have read because they were recommended by BPL through the Libby app and I read much more than I would because I am able to access a massive library of eBooks. Finally, I really like things like BPL's reading BINGO cards, which really compelled me to diversify the types of books I read.

Having attended many of BPL's arts classes, I have found that seeing the same people over and over again has helped establish a community of people who would likely never spend much time together. I am in my twenties and I had the opportunity to connect with retired and older individuals, people who were parents, and people of all kinds of backgrounds that live in my neighborhood. I really don't think I would have the opportunity to meet such people otherwise and engaging in a common activity like learning to paint really helped me connect with others.

BPL is an amazing resource and it truly seems like a leader in bringing the public library into the modern era. I think it's role in bringing the community together is essential especially in a time when people so many people feel so disconnected from their neighbors.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Helena Derrigh

██████████
Brooklyn, NY 11234

We visit our local library so often that we privately joke that we could work there. Brooklyn Public Library provides such a wealth of materials that it is a priceless asset to any patron, whatever one's main interests or goals. Not even an affluent person could easily afford to purchase anything remotely like the number and range of offerings available for borrowing - or spend the time to discover their existence. The Library widens the horizons of every patron -- every citizen can learn and study, free of charge. Our society pays lip service to the importance of education, but the Library truly serves this ideal every single [business] day, for all the hours its budget allows. Again, the Library's services are priceless.

Our local library's librarian offers assistance with applying for the new ID NYC card, which I think is an amazingly helpful thing to do. There are programs for children and for various interest groups. Special rotating displays are engagingly and imaginatively created, and they make the most of the library's holdings even in times when austerity prevents the acquisition of newer items. Library staff are respectful toward all patrons and show great patience toward people who are clearly very disadvantaged and utilize the Library as a safe space to inhabit for hours at a time. The Library not only deserves full funding for its provision of essential "brain food" to the community, but should receive additional support in consideration of its role as a cooling center during heat waves, and a warm location during cold spells, and a haven for people who may be homeless and otherwise thoroughly deprived of safe human company. It can plausibly be argued that today's BPL staff are also, to some extent, social workers and, if not psychiatric counselors, still a source of solace and social contact for a great many needy persons.


Our City Leaders are called upon to defend the Brooklyn Public Library as a bastion of clear thinking and of the hope of upward mobility, most especially in this climate of insecurity and untrustworthy national leadership. We all need exposure to calm logic to counteract the vitriol and punitive pettiness which characterize the prevailing socio-economic and political landscape and which constitute the worst of the threat to public libraries, universities, and personal integrity on all levels. In short, we desperately need BPL now more than ever, and we always did need it very much indeed.

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From S Maxfield


Brooklyn, NY 11201

The Brooklyn Public Library is so important to us! My twelve-year-old and I regularly check out books for fun and for homeschool. We also use several different library branches regularly for work space or to play a game between appointments and events. The library is such an important resource, not least because it's a clean, quiet, public space where we can regroup without needing to make a purchase of any kind or feel rushed.

When my kid aged out of his playgroup, he and some other kids in the same situation met at the library weekly to play games in one of the conference rooms. It was an important transition for them, and the library was a great neutral space for the kids to be together.

We regularly visit two local branch libraries, and each one is always full of people. Folks are reading, working on computers, sitting quietly, entertaining young children, charging electronics, you name it. If anything, we need MORE libraries, MORE hours, MORE services, and MORE dedicated budget funds. Libraries are unique and vital spaces for NYers, a true public good that should be expanded, not reduced!

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Thomas Greenland


Brooklyn, NY 0

I love to request books and dvds from the Brooklyn library. I can find all kinds of really cool stuff that might be out of print or hard to find. It's a wonderful asset for people like me interested in literature and films.

I see lots of regulars in the library. I often watch dvds I've borrowed with my wife &/or daughter.

The public library is one of the greatest, and most affordable assets in NYC. Please show your support for us using the library by giving them the funds they need. Thanks!

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FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Julia Pai


Brooklyn, NY 11226

I love to check out books at the library! I also use it as a place to print out documents, since I don't have a printer at home.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Naomi Alexis


Brooklyn, NY 11213

The library has always been a home away from for me as a kid and now I'm thrilled my daughter feels the same way. Growing up in the vast cultural cityscape of NYC has made my life a dynamic mosaic of art, literature and knowledge and the library has been a huge part of that. We check out books weekly, request interlibrary loans for research as I study for my secondary degree, enjoy events. My daughter is exploring art inspirations, like Manga through a portal to Japan that only the library can offer. She reserves books, has them sent to our closest branch and checks them out. We love the library. We value what it brings to our lives. We want more funding, longer hours and more programming!

There are amazing events that bring us closer to our community at the library. We are perfecting our knitting and crocheting with new friends and going to other kids events for my daughter.

The library is one of our remaining third spaces. Community needs space to thrive and connect to build solidarity. Protect our libraries! Expand and increase funding! This cultural locus, human service hub and nurturing institution makes NYC what it is.

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FOR THE RECORD

Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Yvette Grant


Brooklyn, NY 11206

I work in book publishing, and the best way to keep up with new releases and older classics I missed (but not overwhelm my tiny apartment with books) is to get print and ebooks through the Brooklyn library!

The library provides so many services for people in my neighborhood (East Williamsburg and Bushwick) to improve their lives through education, language learning, job resources, and more. It's a community hub that makes its citizens better!

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Trevor Ross

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11201

I consistently check out new and classic titles from my BK library. I love picking up or dropping off books at my local branch because it gives me an opportunity to find new ways I can volunteer in BK. I'm planning on volunteering to help kids with homework in September through a program I found at the library.

It's a meeting place, a safe place for kids to learn, and a great location of educational events about our shared history. They also host incredible events like The People's Ball. I'm upset I missed it this year, but I hope they do it again next year.

Now more than ever, it's imperative to support access to the truth as well as diverse perspectives.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Anna Yang


Brooklyn, NY 11220

I frequently check out books - physical copies, e-book, and audio books. The cost of purchasing a books has gone up way too high, making libraries essential to maintaining an educated class. It is also a place of community, which is always needed.

I've seen my local library educate people about government benefits and who qualifies for them, such as obtaining free WiFi. Spreading the word of benefits is essential, especially in immigrant heavy communities.

With cuts to the Department of Education and the rise of cost of living, it is more important than ever to support libraries. Stop hurting the working class even more. Bring more funding to libraries.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Diane Kirschner


Brooklyn, NY 11215

I love the central branch of the Brooklyn Public Library, which is my local branch. Not only is it an inspiring building, it houses a rotating buffet of delights - from exhibits, to events, to books and videos to browse and borrow, to spaces that can be used for local groups and opportunities to build community. You can also reserve books and materials, do research, celebrate the resources of our borough.

Our library hosted The New York Theatre Workshop's Mind the Gap program, bringing seniors and teens together to share an experience writing plays. For 12 weeks we met at the central branch for a few hours to explore the world we share from our particular perspectives. At the end of the program, the library's theatre hosted a professional reading of our plays where our families and friends came to learn what we'd been up to all these weeks. It was thrilling! I've also attended cultural music programs, readings, interviews with authors, etc.

I am a native NYer and grew up in Brooklyn coming to this same central library to do my research with the wonderful librarians helping us out. I've watched the library go through changes to try to bring in new audiences, keep current with technological changes and provide services like passport renewal, learning english, creative writing, and many more opportunities. I love my library. It enriches my life - giving me access to things I personally cannot afford on my own and I am extremely grateful and urge you to continue to invest in and fund this precious resources.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Jessica Tezen

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11211

Access to the free public resources at my library has greatly enriched my life by offering a welcoming space for learning, connection, and personal growth. Libraries serve as essential community hubs, providing opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to engage with knowledge and each other. Throughout my journey, whether checking out books for leisure, conducting research while earning my master's degree, or simply engaging with others in the community, the library has been a consistent and valuable presence.

From using free internet access for job searches and educational pursuits to attending enriching events with my nieces and nephews, the library has been a reliable and inclusive resource. My grandmother took advantage of the free English conversation gatherings and my teenage nephews took advantage of the dmV resources that were available.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Carrie Farrell


Brooklyn, NY 11201

We're lucky to live close to 2 branches (Dumbo & Brooklyn Heights) that offer lots of children's programming my 5-year old son loves - including story time, musical performances, crafting sessions, and events in nearby Brooklyn Bridge Park. I'm also a frequent user of printing services and e-book loans.

My son is disabled and not able to participate in most classes and activities offered around Brooklyn (many of which are also expensive and not easy for us to drop in and out of without ongoing registration). It can be daunting for us to come into new activities and settings, but I always feel comfortable at library events because I know we'll be not just accommodated, but welcomed, regardless of my son's age or abilities.

Our closest library (Dumbo) recently closed for a few months for repairs/renovations, but the programming did not stop. They worked with local businesses to bring children's story time sessions to markets, cafes, Jane's Carousel and other beloved spots around Dumbo. Their commitment to the community is so appreciated.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Veronica Kutys



Brooklyn, NY 11225

I check out ebooks and audiobooks frequently now to keep enhancing my personal development. Before I had a job, I used my library to finesse my resume and apply for jobs.

I've gone to the library in the hot summer months for a break. I've seen families love seeing their cultures represented in all the programming the library offers.

Libraries are cultural centers and its abhorrent than anyone wants to take away the free access it gives the community. Libraries and librarians should be protected.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Joel McQueen



Brooklyn, NY 11203

The library is life jacket in the face of social media storm.

The library bring my community together through its cultural events.

As a teenager I spent countless hours reading and daydreaming about a better life. The library was my second home.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Caroline Ghigliotty


Brooklyn, NY 11201

All libraries are special and are an important part of our communities. I am fortunate to be a member of the one in Brooklyn Heights that is now partnered with the Brooklyn Center for History.

I have the luxury of being able to go there for books and DVDs, as well as getting books online through the easy to use Libby app.

Cultural programs such as the music ones I've attended are an added plus!

We need our city leaders to support and strengthen our community libraries because they serve the needs of the young and the old without discrimination.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Ari Libove-Goldfarb

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11218

I enjoy checking out books and reading ebooks from the library. I particularly like being able to check out cookbooks to try out new recipes before committing to owning yet another cookbook.

I work at a university library and when I share the digital resources from the business center and education programs my students are so impressed and amazed by the tools you have to offer.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Laurie La Rose



Brooklyn, NY 11236

About 99% of the books I read are borrowed from the library, both hard cover and digital. I always go to my library first before going to a bookstore to purchase books. I check out at least 2 - 3 books per month.

My library card is very important to me. So important that when my son was a toddler, I signed him up for a library card so he could check out his own books. Libraries are essential for happy and healthy communities.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Loretta Santino

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11219

Currently I am taking a knitting class in the library side room weekly. It's great to get together with other women and share skill and stories

I am an avid reader. It's wonderful to have so many book choices that are free especially to seniors on fixed incomes.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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May 21, 2025

From Sarah Plemmons


Brooklyn, NY 0

I get nearly all my eBooks and audiobooks from the Brooklyn Public Library. As an avid reader and publishing professional, it would be nearly impossible for me to keep up with my growing industry's market if I didn't have access to my local library's selection of books.

I have attended several of BPL's events, including the People's Ball and Night Out. Community events like those at BPL have been some of the most rewarding and fulfilling experiences of my life in New York. They've helped me feel more connected to my community, connected me to community resources, and been a forum for important conversations and a launchpad for wonderful friendships.

I grew up in a town without a library and felt unbelievably disconnected from my community. Now, I work in publishing and have maintained a love of reading and community that is uniquely fostered by libraries. BPL has been one of the cornerstones of my community and my life since I moved to Brooklyn. I literally cannot imagine what my life here would look like or if I even would have stayed had it not been for the community the library offered me when I most needed it.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,
and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From kristia coombs



Brooklyn, NY 11203

The library consistently provides me with:

Books (eBooks and physical), free tech classes, a cooling center in the summer, water, free tampons, a quiet place to read/decompress. I also work on my online posts for my business/use the business services.

I meet new people when I come to classes or sit in the common area. The “Night in the Library”, James Baldwin’s exhibit, and last year’s Jay Z exhibit brought so many people (from Brooklyn and beyond) to the library.

The library (and the park across the street for that matter) helped me through mental illness and related difficulties. When you’re broke and alone, these places are the only refuge.

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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Connie Chang

████████████████████
Brooklyn, NY 11233

I am an advent Libby app user and love the variety of audiobooks and e-books available from the Library. I love the Macon branch, and how quick and easy it is to check out physical books. I also recently started playing piano again, and it was great to be able to check out piano music from the library rather than spend money on new books. I know I've only scratched the surface and the resources the Library is able to provide, and it's exciting to know there's so much available to me.

With the skyrocketing cost of living, the library has been an immense resource and free public space for my community. My friends and I go to different libraries weekly to spend time together on our goals and enjoy life outside of needing to spend money. The weekly library sessions have been a highlight in my life and make me feel part of the neighborhood. It's amazing to witness the library provide a variety of tools - from story times for kids, tech trainings, career resources, and designated teen spaces. There's something for everyone.

Libraries are the backbone of every community. When I was growing up, I would go to the library every Sunday with my family because it was a safe space that we could hang out in without needing to pay to be there. Libraries are the connective tissue that bring people together and hold the collective memory of the community.


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Testimony in Support of Brooklyn Public Library

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and International Intergroup Relations

May 21, 2025

From Aileen Zhou


Brooklyn, NY 11223

Last year the library did a "Browse the Branch" event where they did a sticker rally to encourage people to visit all the libraries in Brooklyn. As someone who was born and raised here, I never realized how much a community there is until I participated in it. I saw neighborhoods and areas that wasn't just some fancy shop in Manhattan. I really got to know so much more if Brooklyn and now I know there's a library always nearby no matter where I go. It's a space I can always go to when I want some peace and quiet. A place I can sit down and draw in. The library doesn't demand anything of me, it only gives. Besides borrowing books, I also love going to the events they provide to the public for free.

When I was doing the browse the branch sticker rally, I got to see so much community activities happening in each branch. In the Kings Highway one i saw a man playing the accordion to entertain families. They also had vaccines and tax preparation. In the one by Jamaica Bay there are arts and crafts groups. I've seen so many parents and children enjoying the library together. I've also started going to events provided by the library and have gotten to learn a little bit of wood working and also life drawing. I've seen them giving out trees for people to plant and 3d printing machines to encourage kids into technology. There's just too much to list out

The library is the one of the few institutions we have where people can go and feel community. In a city with ever declining 3rd space, it's the only place people can truly go to where they can just exist. It's a safe haven and a shelter for a lot of people. Please don't let our city lose one of the best thing this city has to offer its people.

Submitted electronically to bklynlibrary.org and hand delivered to City Hall.

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shirley Lewis

Address: _____

I represent: Chocolate Factory

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/21/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LUCY SEXTON

Address: 64 Bleeker St

I represent: New York for Cultured

Address: Arts

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/21/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Justin Perez

Address: 1611 W 163rd St, NY, NY 10032

I represent: Brnx River Art Center

Address: 1087 E Tremont Ave, Brnx NY 10460

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/21/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: AKIA Squitieri

Address: 2880 Baily Ave Bronx NY 10462

I represent: BRONX RIVER Art Center

Address: 1087 E Tremont Ave Bronx

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☒ in opposition

Date: 5/21/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Candice Michelle Franklin-Cox

Address: 243 East 123rd Street #1A

I represent: NY, NY 10035

Address: Myself + my projects

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/21/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sara Ruer

Address: 218 E 18th St, New York NY 10003

I represent: Dance/NYC

Address: Same as above

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

5/21/25

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Abby Emerson and Melody Emerson-Simpson

Address: 485 Madison St. BK Felix Emerson-Simpson

I represent: NYC PLAN

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Beth Allen

Address: 41 Flatbush St E 1 SB10

I represent: Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance

Address: same

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SEPHANIE HILL WILCHFORT

Address: _____

I represent: MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Address: AND THE CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

GROUP OF NEW YORK CITY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DT McDonald

Address: 420 4th Ave BKlyr

I represent: Dance Pavade

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/21/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Norah Yakya

Address: The Met Museum

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Constance Lesold

Address: 89 Sterling St, BKlyn 11225

I represent: _____

Address: _____

*Budget -
Libraries &
Cultural Affairs*

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

NYBG
(C16)

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Angel Hernandez - Director of

Address: NYBG Govt relations

I represent: New York Botanical Garden

Address: 2800 Southern Blvd, Bx, NY

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: FRANCINE GARBER-COHEN

Address: 599 E. 7 ST, BKLYN 11218

I represent: THE REGINA OPERA COMPANY

Address: 599 E 7 ST BKLYN

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/21/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gonzalo Casals

Address: _____

I represent: EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David Freudenthal

Address: _____

I represent: Carnegie Hall

Address: - culture

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Cultural Hearing Date: 5/21/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sami Abu Shumays

Address: 137-35 Northern Blvd.

I represent: Flushing Town Hall

Address: 137-35 Northern Blvd.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 21 2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Solida Fasmy

Address: 159 141 normal road Jamaica NY 11432

I represent: Brooklyn Public Library

Address: 10 Grand Army Plaza

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Johnny Garcia Alexander

Address: 107 Grand Army Plaza

I represent: Brooklyn Public Library (Self)

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jessica

Address: 107 Grand Army Plaza

I represent: Brooklyn Public Library

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Maria Soledad

Address: 107 Grand Army Plaza

I represent: Brooklyn Public Library

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joseph T. 18000

Address: 1010 G. Grand Army Plaza

I represent: Brooklyn Public Library

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BSAIDA tasim

Address: 10 Grand Army Plaza

I represent: Brooklyn Public Library

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Adeeba Khan

Address: 967 Franklin Ave

I represent: Brooklyn Public Library

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JUNITA James

Address: 366 Irving Ave

I represent: Brooklyn Public Library

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/21/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Carol Benovic-Bradley

Address: _____

I represent: Queens Public Library Friends Ridgewood

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/21/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: George Otken

Address: 125 Broadway Street NY NY 10007

I represent: President Local 11482, 3037

Address: (BL Public Library workers)

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

Culturals

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/21/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Katherine Kusick Carey

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: Member, Local 1502, DC 37

Address: (Brooklyn Museum Educator)

Librarians

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/21/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dhr Hyslop

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: President, Local 1321, DC 37

Address: (Que Public Library workers)

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/21/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ELIZABETH BEVINGTON

Address: _____

I represent: New York Public Library

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Melissa Peralta

Address: Washington Irving

I represent: Brooklyn Public Library

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Juanita James

Address: 316 Irving Ave

I represent: Brooklyn Public Library

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Miranda Massie

Address: _____

I represent: Climate Museum

Address: - Culture

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/21/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anthony Marx

Address: New York public Library president

I represent: NYPL Admin panel

Address: 476 5th ME

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5.21.2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CINDA JOHNSON

Address: BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

I represent: 10 GRAND ARMY PLAZA

Address: BROOKLYN, NY 11238

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kate Madigan

Address: _____

I represent: the Public Theater

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Maren Berthelsen

Address: _____

I represent: Supernova Space

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kristen Barrett

Address: _____

I represent: New 42

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Angel Savransky

Address: _____

I represent: 92NY

Address: _____

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆