

Committee on Economic Development City Council Hearing on Film Industry Expansion in New York City  
Jointly with the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations and the Committee on Technology  
February 28, 2023 at 1pm  
Testimony by Anne del Castillo, Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment

Good morning, Chairpersons Farias, Ossé and Guterrez and members of the City Council Committees on Economic Development, Cultural Affairs, and Technology.

I’m Anne del Castillo, Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment. I’m joined by Kwame Amoaku, MOME’s Deputy Commissioner for the Film Office, Lori Barrett-Peterson, MOME’s General Counsel, and my senior leadership team.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the current state of film and television production in New York City.

### **MOME Overview**

Since 1947, the beginning of the TV era, the City’s Film Office has been charged with permitting production throughout NYC and supporting economic growth of film and television in NYC. In 2010, our film office operations were merged with NYC Media, the City’s production group and television and radio network, and our agency became the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment, otherwise known as MOME.

In the last six years, MOME’s portfolio has been expanded from two divisions to five. In addition to the Film Office and NYC Media, MOME now oversees the Office of Nightlife, the Press Credentials Office, and the Creative Sector Programs Office, which focuses on economic and workforce development in theatre, music, live performance, advertising, publishing, digital media and video games.

Prior to the pandemic, these sectors accounted for 500,000 jobs and \$150B in economic activity. But more than that, New York City’s creative sectors are at the heart of our identity as a world-class center for creativity and culture.

### **NYC Film /TV Industry**

The film and television industry is the largest economic driver of all of New York City’s creative sectors—the result of over 80 years of strategic thinking, collaboration and engagement among government, industry and other stakeholders.

The global film and television industry actually began in New York City, when Broadway actors were drawn to the celluloid spotlight of motion picture making. But better weather and more

open space eventually drew much of the industry to Los Angeles until City government began an aggressive campaign to lure the motion picture industry back to New York City.

New York City was the first municipality in the country to establish a film commission and a cultural affairs commission. The film office was created to support the film and nascent television industry and simplify the process of filming in New York City. In 1962, the City Council passed a local law to establish a filming permit, and in 1966, Mayor Lindsay created the NYPD Movie and TV Unit. Today, the Film Office and the NYPD Movie and TV Unit continue to help film and television creators from all over the world land their productions in New York City. When governments from other municipalities, states and countries want to see how this is done, they look to New York City.

New York City has been depicted on-screen as a place of wonder and vitality, helping to reinforce the City's culture and positioning on the global stage. The City's iconic urban landscape has been featured in countless productions, making its skyline, streets, and buildings cultural touchstones for people the world over, inspiring millions to visit, live and do business here.

In 2019, the film and television industry supported over 185,000 total jobs in the city, accounting for over \$18 billion in total wages and nearly \$82 billion in total economic output. To put it in context, the film and television industry represents 6.5% of the NYC economy, based on its share of City's gross domestic product

While the COVID-19 pandemic initially forced the industry to a standstill, film and television production was one of the first industries back to in-person work. The triumphant return of the industry is a recovery success story and is a testament to the industry's resiliency and continuous innovation in the face of adversity. At the end of last year, television production had returned to nearly pre-pandemic levels with nearly 80 shows filming in New York City.

When we talk about the film and television industry, often the first thought that comes to mind is the big studios. But the industry actually consists of an expansive range of players, from multinational corporations and world-renowned production studios to independent filmmakers and sole proprietor businesses that support the industry. Large and small, these entities support the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. They are our family, our neighbors, our friends, and they are all New Yorkers, who are earning a living in their city.

Film and television production creates jobs and opportunities for New Yorkers who have never set foot on a set—dry cleaners like Kingbridge Tailor and Cleaners in Brooklyn, lumber providers like LeNoble Lumber in Queens, florists like Jamali Garden in Midtown and legal and financial firms throughout the city that represent clients in the industry. We hear many stories from local business owners who tell us how business generated by productions has helped them grow and survive through COVID. For example, when *In the Heights* filmed in Upper Manhattan in Summer 2019, they spent \$640,000 on lodging, \$673,000 on catering and other food items, and \$537,000 on hardware and lumber supplies.

There are also countless churches, schools, parks, catering halls, and nonprofit organizations throughout the city that have hosted productions and benefitted from locations fees and community givebacks. The Parks Department reported that it received more than \$570,000 in donations from productions.

Productions participating in the “Made in NY” Marketing Credit program—which only captures a fraction of the projects made in New York—has generated \$504,962.48 in donations to 51 cultural institutions and community organizations in New York City over the last five years. The program, which is designed to promote “Made in NY” productions, provides qualified film and television productions with advertising on buses and subways and other City-owned assets. Participants in this program are required to contribute a portion of their budget, up to \$10,000, to a community or cultural institution.

### **Recommitment from Administration/Film Office Vision**

The volume of film and television production has grown exponentially in recent years, largely due to the demand for streaming content. When I first joined the agency as general counsel in 2014, we had just under 30 episodic television series filming in New York City. We now have close to 80 television series filming here.

But increasing competition from other jurisdictions with generous incentives is threatening to undercut the tremendous progress we’ve made in building a thriving industry. In addition to supporting the Governor’s proposed enhancements to the State Film Tax Credit, this Administration has recommitted to the industry to ensure that this great New York success story continues.

Last year, Mayor Adams issued Executive Order 21, requiring each city agency to designate at least one staff liaison and an alternate with the authority to expedite and coordinate arrangements with the Film Office to facilitate on-location production across the five boroughs.

In addition, we convened the first-ever Film and Television Production Industry Council, comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders from film studios, soundstages, unions, trade associations, and workforce training partners to advise the City's production policies and programs.

And finally, we appointed Kwame Amoaku as Deputy Commissioner for the Film Office to promote New York City as a premiere location for production, support the development of infrastructure for production and post-production, and expand workforce development efforts.

Two weeks ago, we joined Mayor Adams and Queens Borough President Richards at a topping out ceremony for Wildflower Studios, a new soundstage being developed in Astoria that will be the first-ever vertical soundstage with 11 stages that will house 1,000 jobs. Currently, nearly one million square feet of production and related space is being newly built or renovated throughout the five boroughs. Other projects include the 'Made In NY' Campus at Bush Terminal in Brooklyn, Pier 94 at Hudson River Park, York Studios in Soundview, and Broadway Stages in Staten Island.

In addition to expanding infrastructure, we continue to work with industry partners to build a strong local talent pipeline for jobs in the industry. The “Made in New York” Production Assistant (PA) Training Program provides free training for underemployed and unemployed New Yorkers seeking work in production. Over the last 15-plus years, more than 1,000 people have graduated from the program and secured jobs in the industry. The PA program served as a model for the “Made in New York” Post-Production Training Program, which has trained nearly 200 New Yorkers in the fields of editing, animation, motion graphics, and visual effects.

We’ve also expanded our programs to include early career exposure, with opportunities for deeper engagement for those who want to pursue careers in the industry. The “Made in NY” Animation Project is a partnership with the Department of Probation NEON Centers and The Animation Project (TAP) offers participants the opportunity to engage in storytelling, gain technical skills in 3D computer animation, and qualify for paid internships in this burgeoning field. MediaMKRS is a partnership with Reelworks, the City University of New York, media companies and The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees to train, credential and prepare emerging talent for careers in media and entertainment.

These programs were developed in consultation with employers to ensure that participants gain relevant skills so that we can build a strong pipeline of New York City talent to continue to build our local industry.

We also provide educational opportunities through programs such as the Made in NY Talks Series and the Public School Film Festival. Presented in partnership with the Center for Communications, the Made in NY Talks Series presents a variety of free programs exploring multiple topics within the media and entertainment industry, where students can learn from and network with industry professionals. The Public School Film Festival presented in partnership with the Department of Education celebrates the talent and diversity of student voices and provides opportunities for middle and high school students to have their work recognized by industry leaders and explore careers in filmmaking.

Overall, MOME has created educational and training programs that reach 6,000 New Yorkers a year.

## **Conclusion**

The success of New York City’s film industry is possible because of the drive, talent and hard work of our local production and small business community, and the collaborative, responsive and flexible approach that City government has taken with respect to production.

We all should be proud of what we have achieved together. Decades ago, we were the first city in the nation to set up a government entity to make film and television production work for everyone.

And look where we are now. We have 185,000 jobs generated from the film and television industry, nearly \$82 billion in economic output, which represents 6.5% of NYC’s economy.

The artists who work in film and television production create images of our city that are unforgettable. Each time someone somewhere sees an image of New York City on a television, at a movie theater, or on their streaming device, our position as a world capital grows.

As we build a future for this industry, we look forward to working with the City Council, city agencies, industry stakeholders, and local communities, and the City Council to ensure continued, sustainable economic growth and job opportunities for New Yorkers.

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss this important economic and creative engine. I'm happy to answer your questions.



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

# Jumaane D. Williams

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**STATEMENT OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS  
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS,  
LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS  
FEBRUARY 28, 2023**

Good afternoon,

My name is Jumaane Williams and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. I would like to thank the chairs and the members of the Committee on Technology; Economic Development; Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations for holding this hearing.

As many of you know, New York City is famous for its iconic landmarks and unique skyline, much of which has been captured on film and television in hit series like CBS' *Elementary*. New York State is second only to California in film production, in large part due to the attraction of New York City. Governor Hochul's recent proposal to increase the cap of tax credits, as well as raise the incentive, for the film and television industry seeks to expand funding and attract production companies that left the state after the incentive credit was lowered in 2020<sup>1</sup>. Famous recipients of New York State's generous film tax credit include the *Tonight Show* with Jimmy Fallon and Netflix's *Orange is the New Black*. While I recognize the film industry's role in our city and across our great state, I find it necessary to question whether such an expansion is really needed.

The current structure of the tax credit program requires that "project credits in excess of \$1 million must be split over two years, and project credits more than \$5 million must be split over three years"<sup>2</sup>. Officially, there is an annual cap of \$420 million but according to records provided by the Empire State Development agency, New York State approved over \$2 billion in total credits over the span of 2019 and 2020<sup>3</sup>. This is an obfuscating tactic that throws into doubt the transparency of our state budget. By allowing credits to be paid over a three-year period, not only are producers experiencing delays in receiving payments but future taxpayers are also left footing the bill.

Studies have shown that claims of job creation when it comes to these tax credits can be misleading due to failure to distinguish between temporary gigs and permanent jobs. Additionally, every job created is calculated as two jobs because of a multiplier effect. This effect presumes that "each film shoot job creates one additional job when the film worker spends their earnings in the local community", meaning if there were five temporary single-day jobs,

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<sup>1</sup> "New York Gov. Aims to Boost Film Tax Credits to \$700M As New Jersey Rivalry Heats Up". *Hollywood Reporter*. February 1, 2023. Accessible at:

[www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/business-news/new-york-film-tv-tax-credits-incentives-1235315801/](https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/business-news/new-york-film-tv-tax-credits-incentives-1235315801/)

<sup>2</sup> "Live From New York, It's Excessive Tax Incentives!" *Citizens Budget Commission*. October 28, 2020. Accessible at: <https://cbcny.org/research/live-new-york-its-excessive-tax-incentives>

<sup>3</sup> "Lights, Camera, Extraction! Inside Hochul's Plan to Shovel Hundreds of Millions More Into TV & Film Shoots". *Hellgate NYC*. February 22, 2023. Available at: <https://hellgatenyc.com/film-tax-credits-more-guys-with-walkie-talkies>



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

# Jumaane D. Williams

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then it is listed as ten full time jobs created<sup>4</sup>. Finally, while credits do act as an attractive incentive, given New York City's name and prestige, it stands to reason that many productions would still happen here regardless of incentive tax credits.

Rather than invest in an industry that's already as lucrative as the film and television industry, these resources should be allocated towards our schools, the arts and other creative non-profits. The film industry can grow here through direct investment in the people and a fostering of their creative spark. Thank you.

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<sup>4</sup> "Lights, Camera, Extraction! Inside Hochul's Plan to Shovel Hundreds of Millions More Into TV & Film Shoots". *Hellgate NYC*. February 22, 2023. Available at: <https://hellgatenyc.com/film-tax-credits-more-guys-with-walkie-talkies>



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Good afternoon, Chairpersons Ossé, Farías, Gutiérrez, and members of the Committees of Cultural Affairs, Economic Development, and Technology. My name is Tom Harris, and I am the President of the Times Square Alliance, the Business Improvement District tasked with keeping Times Square clean, safe, and desirable for all. The Alliance wholeheartedly supports the film industry's expansion in New York City and the important culture and nightlife efforts championed by Commissioner Anne del Castillo.

New York City's film industry provides tremendous economic benefit to our neighborhood both directly and indirectly. First, Times Square is home to hundreds of film shoots and tens of movie premiers annually, providing local businesses with critical revenue especially in a post-pandemic tourism economy. As the theatre hub of New York City, the film industry taps into the local Broadway workforce, supporting actors, producers, stagehands and more. Further, these shoots and premiers translate to direct spending in our district.

Second, the film industry provides an important source of advertising for the neighborhood. Based on research conducted by the Times Square Advertising Coalition and the Alliance, 90% of our visitors have seen Times Square in the media in the last 6 months, most commonly through TV and movies. Combined, these direct and indirect benefits help to financially bolster our tourism-oriented neighborhood and promote Times Square as New York's primary culture destination.

Times Square continues to be successful in a post-pandemic world because of its brand as the cultural crossroads of the world. The film industry helps to support this communal experience, driving our local economy while ensuring the neighborhood remains in the hearts and minds of tourists and New Yorkers alike.

Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to reach out if we can be useful.

Sincerely,

Tom Harris



**TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF  
NEW YORK'S FILM AND TELEVISION PRODUCTION LABOR COALITION**

**PRESENTED BY RYAN FERGUSON**

**TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES & INTERNATIONAL  
INTERGROUP RELATIONS,  
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,  
AND COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY**

**FEBRUARY 28, 2023  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
1:00 PM**

Good morning, Chairs Ossé, Fariás, and Guttiérrez, and distinguished members of the New York City Council. My name is Ryan Ferguson, and I am a member of the Directors Guild of America (“DGA”). I am here to present this testimony on behalf of the broader film production labor union community, which represents the vast majority of workers in the highly unionized field of film and television production. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony to the expansion of the film industry in New York City.

Film is not just what we see on the screen, it is a real industry that creates thousands of union jobs with great wages and benefits. Film production and post-production have seen unparalleled growth in New York City over the past two decades due to the Empire State Film Production and Post Production tax credits, and to the unique locations, talents, and diversity that only exist here in this City.

The expansion of our industry is both an economic driver and a jobs creator for New York. Film and TV support tens of thousands of stable, local jobs, and spur billions of dollars in private spending within the five boroughs as well as billions more in worker wages. And these benefits don't just flow to a privileged few; our Unions fight to ensure high wages, full benefits, and robust health and safety protections for the growing number of workers in this industry, which provides opportunities regardless of race, gender, or educational attainment. This program has been extraordinarily successful, turning New York state into a national hub for film and television production.

When the first iteration of the tax incentive was enacted in 2004, New York was a filming outpost, with few productions outside of brief location shoots. At the time, the state's goal was to bring large film projects to New York. Well, not only did New York succeed in attracting those large film projects, but the City is now one of the largest domestic centers for episodic television production. As compared to film shoots, episodic television shoots provide long term stable employment for our workforce. All this expansion led the film industry to become one of the City's largest economic drivers. And fast forward to the COVID-19 pandemic and shutdown, our industry was one of the first to develop a safe, enforceable plan to allow for a return to work, quickly firing back up one of the City's vital economic engines.

To quantify our growth, the film and television production unions commissioned an economic study in 2018. HR&A Advisors calculated that, at the time, the film industry supported 38,300 jobs in the City, stimulated \$5.6 billion in spending within the five boroughs, and spurred \$3.7 billion in New York City wages. By 2017, jobs were up 55% since 2004, growing 4.5x faster than the state economy overall and capturing 1-in-3 jobs added to the sector nationwide. In addition, 56% of NYC film permits issued in 2017 were for episodic television series.

Despite the COVID-19 shutdown, film's growth resumed. To contrast, the members of Theatrical Teamsters Local 817 collectively earned \$41.8 million in wages and made \$13 million in benefit contributions in 2004. By 2022, Local 817's membership had tripled, with members collectively earning nearly \$250 million in wages and making \$84 million in benefit contributions. Such data proves our collective experiences that film production is both an economic driver and a jobs creator for the City.

It is also important that, with the vast growth of New York's film and television industry, there has been a significant increase in diversity within its workforce. As the industry has created new jobs in New York, it's opened the door to all New Yorkers with varied levels of education and experience to build a career and support their families. To that end, our unions are each heavily invested in developing programs that offer opportunities to diversify their talent pools. For example:

- IASTE Local 52, Motion Picture Studio Mechanics is working with Bronx Community College to develop a talent pipeline, whereby students can learn the skills required for entry level work in film and television industry. This training program will help prepare candidates for exciting opportunities in multiple film production crafts.
- United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829 IATSE, continues to provide access to emerging artists, its New York-based scenic artist apprentice program currently has the most diverse group of new workers the program has ever offered.
- International Cinematographers Guild, IATSE Local 600, in addition to participating in NYC area outreach events and inviting students to its screenings, has partnered with Warner Bros. and Sony to place paid interns on productions. Local 600 also provides

financial support to BWI, administrators of the “Made in NY” Production Assistant Training program, through a contribution to its “Working for the Future” event.

- Motion Picture Editors Guild, IATSE Local 700, has invited Bronx Community College students to Editors Guild seminars, screenings, and networking events for the past five years, formalizing that relationship in 2022 by providing funding and member instructors.
- The Writers Guild of America, East has run two full cycles of the “Made in New York Writers Room” fellowship, which is an intensive mentorship program for diverse writers, funded by the City through MOME and SBS.
- The DGA – through its collective bargaining and in partnership with employers – has established avenues for workers to build careers in film and television, such as the studio director development programs aimed at expanding opportunities and increasing diversity in episodic television, and the well-respected New York Assistant Director Training Program which continues to uplift diverse entertainment workers in this industry.
- And SAG-AFTRA has made equity and inclusion a priority throughout its work on behalf of its membership. Diversity is a core principle that SAG-AFTRA promotes and pursues through its seven diversity committees and dozens of initiatives and activations on behalf of its members including Stop the Hate Week, annual sponsorships of various ethnic focused broadcasting conferences, and individual programs to educate and engage members of all communities.

As our industry grows, these and other programs our Unions engage in are driving a new generation of workers to seek out professional opportunities in our crafts. We look forward to

working with you to ensure that the growth of film production and post production endures, so that our industry continues to provide opportunities and economic benefits to all New Yorkers.

I thank the Committee Members for your time and consideration today.



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03/02/2023

Good morning all,

Chairperson Gutierrez, members of the committee and council members, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony regarding the film industry and Intro No. 0847, a proposed bill that limits the number of filming days on any given census tract per permit to only 10 days per month. My name is Gina Argento and I am the President of Broadway Stages, a film and television studio production company in New York. We offer over 40 soundstages, unique locations, parking and support spaces throughout Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island. Broadway Stages provides service and commitment to its clients, community and the environment. With a heritage rooted in tradition and values based on unparalleled client service, we have worked with countless production companies to create some of the most successful feature films, television shows and music videos. Shows using our facilities include The Equalizer, Billions, Blue Bloods, Law & Order and East New York to name a few. We believe the film industry offers many benefits to any given neighborhood, especially when shooting on location.

When productions are filming on location, they will scout commercial and/or residential spaces to use for scenes depicted in the script. Home and business owners are paid a daily fee, typically starting at \$2,500-10,000 per day, for the use of their dwellings or commercial units. When shooting in a restaurant, film crews will pay upwards of \$10,000 per shooting day and incorporate the cost of lost business in their fee. Many times, film crews will choose to film as local as possible in the hopes that they will not have to take up any additional parking in the residential areas. As you can see in the attached document, The Equalizer spent over \$500,000 on location fees which were distributed to local homeowners, churches, and schools, as well as neighborhood associations, parks and hospitals that are not only located in North Brooklyn but at various locations across New York.

North Brooklyn has become a huge part of the film industry, which is why Broadway Stages prides itself on being a good neighbor. As a family-owned business that has been an integral part of NYC for over forty years, Broadway Stages values its place as a community-oriented company. We look after the needs of local residents and business by ensuring economic growth and addressing any issues in regard to filming. Some initiatives such as hiring a community relations director and communications advisor allows Broadway Stages to show our neighbors

that their concerns are heard, and their security comes first. Whenever businesses and/or residents reach out with problems such as parking, noise, and lighting, Broadway Stages strives to rectify the issue as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

Other initiatives include Broadway Stages location fee donations. Periodically when a production company uses a Broadway Stages affiliated facility as a location, we will donate the fee directly to a non-profit or community organization instead of collecting it for profit.

Broadway Stages takes pride in partnering with organizations such as the Greenpoint YMCA, Campaign Against Hunger, Futures in Education, NYC Audubon Society, Queens Theater, North Brooklyn Parks Alliance, local schools, community groups and many others. We actively partake in community events, donate to non-profit charities, and sponsor causes that are important not only to our company but to the residents and businesses around us.

When a production moves into our facilities, we promote the use of local business by sharing a curated list of local vendors. Due to union regulations, catering must be provided for film crew members and cast when on stage. Although many may think otherwise, the catering crews are also small businesses that were given the chance to grow their companies by catering to the film and television industry. Catering truck companies such as Hero boy, Movie Kitchen, and Wilson Rivas Catering are all based out of Bushwick Brooklyn, minority-owned and employ local residents. These catering companies are also the same companies who donated their time and supplies to feed hundreds of elderly residents and first responders during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and have also partnered with Broadway Stages for local community events.

Another fact that may be overlooked is that many individuals who are employed by the film and tv industry receive a daily stipend for walk away lunches, especially when filming on location. These funds are allocated to local restaurants or food vendors. Many offices such as production offices, set dec shops, construction shops as well as other departments each have teams of 20 or more workers who order out every day. Restaurants such as Geena Cucina, located in Long Island City and owned by a Greenpoint native, have said that they can feel the difference when the filming crews are on hiatus and cannot wait for them to get back to work. Cafe Grumpy's, a local coffee shop, can also attest to this, making thousands of dollars a month from multiple productions.

Unfortunately, as drafted, Intro No. 0847 would greatly reduce or eliminate the ability to use some locations in the same census area because of the 10-day maximum being proposed. This bill would decrease the amount of money that the film industry pumps into the local economy. Many willing homeowners or businesses would not be able to rent their spaces if any production had already received permits for the maximum allotted time in a particular census area. A financial boost in the economy would be halted due to this regulation. If the suggested bill

becomes law, many of our facilities will no longer be operable since productions will have a monthly limit on the number of days that they can receive a permit around their stages.

Streets such as Kingsland Avenue, Monitor Street and North Henry Street between Norman and Greenpoint Avenues, contain facilities mainly operated by Broadway Stages. With 13 shows currently being filmed at Broadway Stages and our facilities located in an IBZ area, we have thousands of people working daily. Production companies constantly apply for film permits so they can properly access our facilities with the support they need when shooting on stage. Broadway Stages would not be able to offer the transportation support needed for productions working along those roads without the approved permits. Most film shoots require trailers, wardrobe trucks, equipment trucks and parking when at the stage. Our facilities need to be accessible at all times and not limited to 10 days per month.

With 13 shows currently filming across our sound stages, it is a fact that the number of permitted days needed by production to prep and film on the streets outside and around these facilities is much more than 10. We do not see Intro No. 0847 benefiting the community or the film industry, In fact, we see this as another hurdle that may shy productions away from bringing potential jobs to New York.

Broadway Stages is currently facing a 30% decrease in occupancy from last year, resulting in 16 vacant soundstages and a reduction of support to the local economy. Implementing a bill like this is catastrophic not only for the film industry, but for the local small businesses and residents as well.

Optimistic about the NYS film tax credit expansion, if passed we hope to reach 100% occupancy here once again at Broadway Stages as we have for the past several years. For the sake of our industry and the prosperity of the community, we cannot support Intro No. 0847.



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Gina Argento -President /CEO  
Broadway Stages Ltd.

**Written testimony by Houda Lazrak, Director of Development and Communications,  
International Studio & Curatorial Program, 2/28/2023 Hearing**

*Committee on Economic Development jointly with the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations and the Committee on Technology*

Members of the Committee on Economic Development, Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations, and the Committee on Technology, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Houda Lazrak and I am here on behalf of the International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP), where I am Director of Development and Communications.

We are the fourth largest visual arts residency program in the world, embedded in North Brooklyn in a neighborhood in the middle of District 34. We are a small sized CDF organization located in a three-story former printing factory with 35 sunlight studios and two exhibition galleries. Here, we host funded artist residencies as well as free exhibitions and public programs year-round. We are a space dedicated to cultural exchange, generative conversations, and the development of creatives in New York. Each year, over 100 artists come for residencies, and among them, at least 25% are artist filmmakers, or artists working with the mediums of film or video. We provide them with the time, space, and professional support to develop their craft and create new film works. We also present public programming focused on film including indoor and out screenings and talks by artist filmmakers.

In 2022, we embarked on a five-year capital campaign to improve our facilities. Among the priorities of the campaign is the creation of a digital editing suite. In an old building like ours, the first small step to better serve filmmakers was to install high speed wifi, which we did in 2021. But now, we are focused on the much larger project in order to fully support their needs. We seek to install state of the art production and post production hardware and software in our building's second floor, available to our residents 24/7 for free. We want to offer them the means to succeed in their filmmaking careers and know that a digital editing suite will significantly increase this possibility for artists.

The need for a digital suite was identified based on the direct feedback from our residents, particularly with the vocal advice of Maliyamungu Muhande Gift. Gift is a young Brooklyn-based, Sundance-acclaimed filmmaker from Congo, whose work explores the global history of the Black diaspora and anti-colonial change. She was in residence at ISCP for six months during which she directed the films: *Kobikisa* and *Bursting Bubbles*. *Kobikisa* was presented in a solo exhibition at ISCP, turning our gallery into a space of healing and self-empowerment. The film shows Gift receiving acupuncture and massage treatments at the Life Wellness Center in Bed Stuy, Brooklyn. Through it, she aims to normalize and celebrate images of Black trust, tenderness, and healing. Thanks to the ISCP's exhibition, which screened the film for the first time for over 200 visitors, *Kobikisa* was picked up by Aubin Pictures, a production company and media distributor focused on films that catalyze social change. We are eager to follow the trajectory of the film and artist, and the impact it will surely have.

To further promote the voices of BIPOC filmmakers in New York, whose work has historically been underrecognized, the need for capital funds is essential. As an arts residency, our role is to champion artists in their professional journeys, and equip them with the right tools to truly make the most of their potential. For filmmakers, this cannot be done without the availability of the likes of a fully soundproof space; hard wired internet; large screen high resolution monitors; cameras; switchers; computers; projectors; sound boards; microphones; lighting equipment and

consoles; and editing software such as Abode Suite, Lightroom, After Effects, Premiere Pro, and Dreamweaver, to name a few. For our capital campaign, we require funding for all of the above in a space that can accommodate at least four individuals working at once. With increased capital funding from the Department of Cultural Affairs, ISCP would be able to bolster the careers of many more promising BIPOC artist filmmakers by offering resources tailored to their medium. The value of a digital suite onsite for filmmakers cannot be overstated. The long hours and large teams needed for filmmaking, the costly fees of studio rentals, and the disadvantages that arise when artists don't have access to the latest software, can severely hinder artists' capacity to bring their visions to life. ISCP aims to be a space where BIPOC artist filmmakers thrive, a go-to destination for future aspiring film creatives. We hope to fulfill this goal with the support of the Department of Cultural Affairs.

Thank you all for your dedication to this crucial industry.

Hello, my name is Tyrel Hunt. I work as the Director of Marketing at Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning (Also known as JCAL), in Queens New York. I am also a filmmaker, working on my second feature film "The Sound of Southside". Through both my job at JCAL and my efforts as a filmmaker, I have witnessed the impact that the medium of film can have on a community.

I ask that the city make a concerted effort toward allocating funds to BIPOC filmmakers, and the organizations that serve our communities. I believe that this investment would result in a more creative and vibrant New York.

At JCAL, I help to produce the annual 10 Minute Film Festival - where emerging BIPOC directors are showcased and receive cash prizes. We run this event on a shoestring budget. Still, our festival has become a place for underrepresented filmmakers to showcase their stories and find community. JCAL, and many other organizations are doing the **work**, and we could expand our reach and impact with the city's help.

While there are programs like "Made in NY" which provide incentives for big budget movies to film in NYC, the city is in need of more incentives for microbudget filmmakers, and more funding for the festivals which showcase their work.

I am one of these filmmakers. Film has taught me to be resourceful and collaborative. With my most recent film, I raised over \$50,000 and happily paid it right back to the many artists and small businesses that were a part of the film. Due to my film's budget, I do not qualify for opportunities like the Made in NY marketing credit, which requires a film budget of at least \$400,000, or the New York State Film Tax Credit Program, which requires a budget of at least \$1,000,000.

These restraints discourage many local NYC artists from creating, or prompt them to make their films elsewhere.

My film's story will focus on the resiliency of art in the city, a theme that I believe in wholeheartedly. There are many other artists with stories to tell. Please allocate funds to BIPOC filmmakers, and give us a chance to tell them.



## **Statement in Support of New York Film & TV Economic Impact**

LeNoble Lumber provides set construction material to the Film and Television industries in New York. We are just one of hundreds of small New York businesses that provide goods and services to these industries. We depend on the continued vitality of New York Film and Television productions for our existence.

Our story begins in 1965, in Hell's Kitchen, with one man and a station wagon delivering lumber to film and TV productions. Today we are still a family-owned business and have grown to around 100 employees, of which 85% are residents of New York. Since the initial passage of New York State's Film Tax Credit, the number of movies and TV shows made in New York has grown exponentially. As a direct result of that growth, LeNoble Lumber has more than tripled the number of its employees. In 2022, our payroll for employees who are New York residents was more than \$11 million dollars. Money that was spent in New York by New Yorkers for food, housing, utilities, clothing, etc. Those New York employees paid more than \$875,000 in New York State and New York City Income taxes. In addition, LeNoble Lumber paid more than \$1,600,000 in New York State and City taxes.

In 2022, LeNoble Lumber paid more than \$2.8 million in rent to New York landlords, more than \$130,000 in New York tolls, more than \$350,000 for fuel from New York gas stations, more than \$320,000 in truck repairs to New York service stations, more than \$250,000 in food from New York restaurants, more than \$200,000 to New York accountants, lawyers and other professionals, more than \$290,000 in utilities, more than \$300,000 to New York companies to maintain our facilities and equipment, more than \$55,000 in New York truck registration and tax. Those are just a few examples of where the money we receive from Film and TV productions goes. It goes to New York State and other New York businesses.

And we are just one business, offering just one service to the film and television industries. There are hundreds of New York businesses that cater to these industries. Hundreds of businesses that have grown and hired more New York workers. Lumber yards, hardware and paint stores, prop houses, lighting and electrical suppliers, truck rental companies, restaurants and caterers. Hundreds of businesses that in turn spend money at other New York businesses. Hundreds of businesses whose very existence depends on the continued growth of movies and TV shows that are "Made in New York".

February 7, 2023  
Matthew Dienstag  
Owner and Co-President  
LeNoble Lumber Co., Inc.  
[Matt@lenoblelumber.com](mailto:Matt@lenoblelumber.com)



# QUEENS WORLD FILM FESTIVAL

Donald Preston Cato

Queens World Film Festival

New York City Council Hearing Notice [2/28, 1pm, Film Industry Expansion in NYC

Thank you for having me today. I am Donald Preston Cato the Co-Founder and the Artistic Director of the Queens World Film Festival, a 501c3 nonprofit in Queens. The 2021 Impact Study on NYC Film Industry focuses largely on production. That's fair, it generates the lion share of the revenue but It is time to discuss expanding support of film festivals so that we continue to provide NY independent artist the opportunity to screen their work in NYC rather than leaving the state to find an audience.

We are not a 'One-Off-Event.' Queens World provides year-round events that feed the talent pipeline including education programs that have served 1,218 students producing 91 short films of every type that you can imagine and some you cannot. Works-in-Progress screenings, Encore Screenings across the city and a thriving Internship Mentoring Program that has provided 262 interns from ReelWorks Media Makrs, Ladders for Leaders and others with professional training that prepare them to enter the industry. 98% of our interns and students are non-white and many come from backgrounds that have not prepared them to envision a career pathway in the arts.

The Listening Tour is a Queens World project that serves the community and seasons young filmmakers. Since 2021 we have been gathering small groups of people together to video tape their thoughts on HOPE and RESILIENCE. To date there are 25 segments ready to be delivered to the Queens Memory Project, our preservations partner. Every new intern must produce a segment of The Listening Tour and we mentor them through the process of completing a short form documentary that brings more unheard voices forward. An incredible quote from this collection of personal testimonies resonates through our organization: "Hope is nothing without Resilience."

Our annual event is a crowd favorite in Queens. The 12th annual Festival held in November welcomed over 4,000 people to the borough with 157 films from 27 nations. 45% of our audience came from outside of the Borough and 19% came from out of state. We bring the world to Queens and Queens to the world. We have screened 1,832 films from over 90 nations. People want to screen in Queens and when they do, they let everyone know. Our media impressions for fiscal 2022 was 520M noted in publications like: Northern India Herald and The Jerusalem Post.

We are proud to report that in 2021 Queens World was on the MovieMaker Magazine's list of top 50 Festivals and on their 2022 list of top 20 festivals for First Time FilmMakers.

However, we have no home.

We urge the City Council, especially the Queens Delegation to expand the support for and creating a home for Queens World and you will encourage filmmakers to screen their work here. And not just in one concentrated area, but across our incredible city providing inclusion and accessibility to filmmakers from all 5 Boroughs. By supporting Queens World you will also create opportunities for ongoing education and support for the filmmakers of tomorrow. You will be providing a safe place for young artists to move our entire industry forward with new and innovative technology and storytelling practices. You will truly be supporting the filmmakers and film lovers of tomorrow.



Testimony of John Williams, Co-Founder and CEO & Charles Reynoso, Director of Education, Reel Works before the NYC Council Committees on Economic Development, Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations, and Technology  
-Oversight - Film Industry Expansion in New York City  
Hon. Amanda Farias, Chi Osse, and Jennifer Gutierrez, Chairs.

February 28, 2023

**JCW:** Thank you Chairs Farias, Gutierrez and Osse and committee members for this opportunity to testify about how **Reel Works** is partnering with industry to train New Yorkers from all communities for careers in film and television.

My name is John Williams and I am the Co-Founder & CEO of Reel Works, a Brooklyn based nonprofit that has mentored and trained thousands of New Yorkers through free filmmaking and workforce development programs for over 20 years.

**CR:** I am [Charles Reynoso](#), Reel Works Director of Education. I want to thank Chair Farias for awarding Reel Works a CASA grant this year to bring our award-winning filmmaking programs to J.H.S. 123 in The Bronx. Through programs like these, Reel Works teaches young New Yorkers to tell their stories through filmmaking. For some, it can spark a passion that leads to careers in film and TV.

In 2019, Reel Works partnered with The Mayor's Office of Media & Entertainment, CUNY and leading media companies to launch MediaMKRS - a career development program that has engaged, trained and mentored nearly 500 New Yorkers for careers in film and television.

- Nearly 400 high school and CUNY students have received multiple paid media internships at companies such as: NBCUniversal, Warner Bros Discovery, and Paramount.
- 87% of our alumni have found full time jobs in media companies.

**JCW:** Also in 2019, Reel Works partnered with Netflix and IATSE Local 52 to create The Studio Mechanics Boot Camp - an 80 hour, hands-on, union led program designed to prepare trainees to work on lighting crews. Eight young men and women graduated and were permitted to work on sets like: The Gilded Age and Law and Order: SVU. Since



then, we have trained over 60 New Yorkers for union careers. 97% of all our trainees have worked steadily in their crafts earning union wages and benefits.

Over the next two years, Reel Works will partner with seven union locals to train nearly 200 New Yorkers in fourteen crafts including: grip, electric, set dressing, hair styling, make-up, scenic design, camera, casting and accounting.

Expansion of NYC's film industry requires a trained workforce. Reel Works is building a bridge between New York communities and the film industry that will help diversify and strengthen the workforce.

**CR:** The City can support the expansion of the film industry in several ways including:

- Funding programs like MediaMKRS to extend career exploration and career training opportunities to all communities;
- Designating film as a priority industry in the City's workforce development programs including Summer Youth Employment and Work Learn & Grow; and
- Supporting Reel Work's education and job training programs with initiative funding to cover intern wages and support services.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

**Walton Hauling**  
a division  
F 718.383.1701  
Khariéh Bros Inc.  
171 West Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11222



T 718.383.1700  
of

waltonhauling.com  
D.O.T. # 098568

2/27/2023

We are writing today to express our opposition to proposed legislation that would require the Mayor's Office to cap the number of days film crews can shoot in particular census tracts to no more than ten per month. We are a North Brooklyn based business that provides transportation for the film and TV business. This proposal would be harmful to us and the businesses around us. Film production brings a huge amount of revenue into our great city, and is great for local businesses. Walton Hauling is owned by two Brooklyn-born brothers: Tommy and Al Khariéh. Tommy worked as a mechanic in Brooklyn and Al was a local small business owner for years until they saved up enough money to buy Walton Hauling. Through all of their hard work they've grown Walton Hauling into what is today; increasing the fleet from 25 to 150 trucks. Walton Hauling shops for parts and other supplies only at local businesses, and employs local residents. The film industry is the lifeblood of our business and many other businesses around us, and we want the city to encourage as much filming as possible in order to keep local businesses like us thriving.

Sincerely,

Tommy Khariéh  
Owner  
Walton Hauling

Good Afternoon,

My name is Abdula, and I'm here before you today to tell you about myself and my experience working for the film industry as a truck driver for Theatrical Teamsters Local 817.

I was born in the Bronx and raised by my mother, who was a single parent of four children. My mother, an EKG technician for approximately 30 years, worked hard to provide us with the important things we needed in life. A mother who taught us principles, values, manners, and education to survive as decent individuals. Growing up in the Bronx was not easy, as I allowed myself to become a victim of my environment at an early age. I became more involved in the world of crime and incarceration.

In April of 1999, I was arrested and charged with criminal possession of a firearm and drugs, which led to my conviction of 210 months in federal custody and 3 years consecutive in the state. Although it's not always easy to tell someone that I was incarcerated for many reasons, it doesn't define the person that I am today. While I was incarcerated, I had to begin setting goals for my future, and one of those goals was to become a truck driver. On November 16th, 2016, I was released from prison after serving 17 1/2 years. I worked multiple jobs to stay afloat with the focus of achieving my goals as a truck driver.

I have been in the trucking industry for approximately four years. I worked for multiple companies, looking for the one that suited me the best. Not every company is for everyone, and a driver must be passionate about working for that company. Unfortunately, I've worked with some companies where I couldn't find that passion and love. My fiancé Ailene, saw that I was unhappy and getting frustrated with this company, and after we spoke, she knew that I wanted to make a change. She was able to connect me with John McDermott, who at that time was running a trucking program at CWE. John referred me to Brian Salomone, who is the Vice-President for Local 817, and after my conversation with Brian, he explained to me the history and how Local 817 operates.

Working in the film industry for Local 817 has become my dream job, which I never knew existed until I started working here. It's a high-paced job where all the truck drivers must be precise with their parking, location, and setup. The procedure is as follows: once the crew members arrive at our location, we immediately unload the trucks so they can get to their location and begin working. At first, it took me some time to get used to it, but my first Teamster Captain was very understanding and used to always tell me to relax and that everything was going to be alright. Working with someone so understanding was the best thing that ever happened to me as a beginner. He helped me see that I didn't need to second-guess myself, and that I had the ability to do a great job. I am truly grateful for everyone who has given me the blessing, the support, and the opportunity to achieve my goals. The film industry and Local 817 have truly changed my and my family's lives in ways I couldn't have ever imagined. Thank you!

Good afternoon, everyone and thank you for coming out and allowing the space for me to speak. My name is Charles Taylor, and I am a Theatrical Teamster Local 817 union member. I am father of two and a concerned New York City resident. I am here to testify and speak briefly about the sudden departure of productions and the need for Film Industry expansion in New York City. Productions leaving means a crucial hit for many local businesses that they film in. Thousands of families and communities are being left without a magic that now, to this day, even is as adult, I still enjoy. Movie magic.

I was born and raised in Crown Heights, Brooklyn for my whole life, except for two years when I moved to Bed Stuy. Currently, I reside back in Crown Heights. Park Place and Nostrand to be exact. I attended PS 138 elementary and middle school which now share its halls with Prospect Heights Success Academy where my son is currently enrolled in second grade. Much respect to Chi Ossé the Council Member for New York City's 36th District, representing Bedford-Stuyvesant and North Crown Heights who has assisted in promoting local economic development and strengthening our schools. He has also improved neighborhood sanitation and is reimaging public safety which makes filming on location and stages in NYC a lot better.

Who would have guessed it?! A program from the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment called Made in New York would change my life forever for the better. This program which trains New Yorkers how to become production assistants, highlights the verbiage, jargon, lingo as we say, as well as the duties and different departments that makes up film production. From pre-production to post-production. Please check it out and support. It has been the pivot in which my life was turned around on. Bridging the gap of Made on New York and becoming a part of the film industry in NYC has altered my way of life. The way I live, think, and see the world as well as raise my family. It has given me a great discipline and we know discipline equals freedom. I have grown to have a sense of direction and purpose.

I felt the urgency to come and testify today as it would place an image, or dream if you will, in your minds. A dream that the more we can do, the more funding for programs like Made in New York or the development of similar programs and incentives towards the productions will create a long-lasting effect on the New York community as a whole. Not only those who are directly connected to the programs will benefit, but every business, school, home, and family living here.

By creating more interactive film and entertainment programs that the community can partake so they can see and understand what happens in production. There's nothing better than being able to experience and relate to something that's embedded in everyone's life here. Let's encourage film festivals and partner with

local high schools, colleges, and universities to develop film-related curriculum. Expanding the film industry in New York City requires an approach that involves government incentives, industry partnerships, and community involvement.

I want to thank the chairs of the committees, all of the council members, the mayor's office, Made in NY, the Local 817 Teamsters executive board, and all of you who showed up here today for hearing my testimony.

Charles Taylor

Martin Greenfield Clothiers is a unionized tailored clothing factory in East Williamsburg Brooklyn. We manufacture the finest tailored clothing for individuals, designers, tailor shops, and television and film productions.

We currently employ about 60 people whose families depend on their work. Our jobs are needed, as we don't require language skills or formal education, only craftsmanship and work ethic, so our workforce is predominantly emigrants setting new family roots into our community.

My Father, a refugee, got his first job in this factory back in 1947. He was able to put my brother and I through college. Our employees have been able to do the same thing. Lately our show business has been declining as productions have been moving to other states with higher incentives. Please consider the valuable jobs at stake here as you make your determination.

Thanks, Tod Greenfield

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/25/23

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Name: LORI BARRETT-PETERSON

Address: GENERAL COUNSEL

I represent: HOME

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: ANNE DEL CASTILLO, HOME COUN.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: HOME

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: Kwame Amooaku Deputy Commissioner of the Film Office

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment

Address: 1697 Broadway, NY, NY 10019

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Name: HOUDA LAZRAK

Address: International Studio & Curatorial Program

I represent: Panel w/ Tyrel Hunt

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: Charles A Taylor

Address: 842 Park place

I represent: Theatrical Teamster Local 817

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: Tyrel Hunt

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: JCAL

Address: 161-04 Jamaica Ave



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Name: DONALD P. CATO

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: QUEENS WORLD FILM FESTIVAL

Address: JACKSON HTS, NY 11372

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Name: RYAN FERGUSON

Address: BKLV, NY 11238

I represent: DGA - Directors Guild of America

Address: 110 W 57 ST NYC 10019

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Name: Peter Kapsalis

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Cine Magic LICard Cine Magic ERS

Address: 11 Kent Street, Bklyn Studios, 11224

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Name: LORCAN OTWAY

Address: 80 SAINT MARKS PLACE NYC NY 10003

I represent: THEATRE 80 SAINT MARKS

Address: 80 SAINT MARKS PLACE NYC 10003

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Name: Tom Williams

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Reel Works

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Arlen Valdivia

Address: 120 Broadway

I represent: Motion Pictures Association

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: DOUG STEINER  
Address: 15 WASHINGTON AVE BROOKLYN NAVY YARD  
I represent: STEINER STUDIOS  
Address: 15 WASHINGTON AVE BROOKLYN NY 11205

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Name: Charles Reynolds  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
I represent: Reekworks  
Address: 540 President St Brooklyn NY

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