



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

Oversight Hearing: Administering DCLA's Cultural Development Fund

September 26, 2023, 10:00AM – Committee Room, City Hall

Testimony Presented by New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Laurie Cumbo

Good morning, Chair Ossé and members of the committee. I am Commissioner Laurie Cumbo of the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA), here today to testify in regards to today's topic, Administering DCLA's Cultural Development Fund. I am joined today by a number of my colleagues from the agency.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Cultural Development Fund (CDF) which is one of the primary ways that the City of New York invests in its vibrant cultural community. In Fiscal Year 2023, 1,070 cultural organizations received more than \$58 million through the CDF. This is the largest number of organizations in history to receive CDF grants. By comparison, in FY19 – the last full year before the pandemic – 985 groups received \$51.3 million in CDF support. So we are proud of our hard work, in collaboration with you, to have increased the amount and distribution of this funding for cultural programming in communities across the city.

Before I discuss the CDF reforms and what's coming next for the program, I want to take a moment to talk about this program, its goals and criteria a little more in depth. The CDF is a competitive, peer-evaluated grant process that supports a broad, multidisciplinary group of diverse nonprofit organizations providing cultural programming for NYC residents.

The hallmark of the CDF is to support cultural programming that is accessible to the public. While we continue to revise the process to make it more equitable, public service and impact remain the most significant criteria for CDF applications. As stated in the guidelines, "The organization provides arts and/or cultural programming in the five boroughs of New York City during the grant period with consideration toward accessibility, affordability, and equity." Put simply: how does this cultural program serve New Yorkers in a way that truly invites them in—whether that's through reduced financial barriers, multilingual programming, or any number of creative ways that our cultural community connects with its audiences. Next, we look at Organizational Accountability: meaning, if we invest public funds in this organization, does it have the capacity to deliver the programs it promises for New Yorkers? These first two criteria account for 85% of an organization's score. The final criteria is Quality: is the programming of a caliber that will serve our residents well.

It's with these core principles that we support over 1,000 cultural nonprofits across the city this year. Speaking as someone who founded a cultural nonprofit in Brooklyn, when we got that first CDF grant, it

was game changing. To have this public investment in your work as an arts group is such a vote of confidence in your team and your programming – even if the grants aren't huge. It also opens the door for other support, because so many funders look to the CDF panel process as the gold standard.

I've reviewed the substance of the CDF reforms in previous hearings before the Council, so I'll keep my summary here brief. The reforms to the CDF were the first significant updates to the process since 2008 and began with the CreateNYC cultural plan released in 2017. When the CDF panel process was suspended for two years during the pandemic, it gave DCLA staff an opportunity to engage with the field, conduct analysis and plan how to integrate these reforms when the application and panel review process restarted in full for the FY23 cycle.

In spring 2022, we restarted the CDF application process with the first set of pilot reforms which included:

- Increasing investment in historically marginalized communities: with the reforms 125 new organizations were funded and 82% of POC-led groups saw increased awards.
- Greater stability for grantees, especially smaller organizations: we doubled the minimum grant awards from \$5,000 to \$10,000 and made permanent a pandemic-era policy of expanding eligibility for multi-year awards to all grantees, regardless of budget size. This was the first time since 2008 – when the CDF was created in its current form – that the minimum for awards was increased.
- We greatly streamlined the application process, with a simplified digital application reducing the administrative burden on groups applying for funding.
- Based on a survey of CDF applicants, we found that 89% of users felt the application was intuitive to navigate; 94% understood how to answer all questions; and 99% found the guidelines helpful.
- We increased the panelist honorarium and cast a wider net to recruit CDF panelists. We expanded the profile of panelists from strictly development staff to include a broader range of cultural workers, board members, and artists. Many members of the Council helped distribute our call for panelists among their constituents, and we're grateful for your partnership. 47% of panelists were first-timers this year, a sign that we're succeeding in attracting new talent into the process. We look forward to your ongoing support and collaboration in this effort.

These were the goals of the reforms rolled out in the first half of 2022. When the CDF grants went out toward the end of the 2022 calendar year, we saw the results. As the first competitive grant cycle since the onset of the pandemic, we weren't sure what the response would be to the new reforms. But we had a record number of applications – around 1,400 – and a record number of grantees: 1,070. And 73% of these grantees received more funding thanks mainly to the increases in minimum award sizes, along with the addition of new budget bands that increased awards for the majority of grant recipients. All groups are now eligible for multi-year awards, a source of stable funding that was previously available only to larger organizations. The average awards for small groups with budgets under \$250,000 increased by 67%. As I mentioned before, more than 82% of groups that identify as being led by or founded by people of color saw an increase in their awards over the previous year, and there was also an increase in the number of awards for first-time applicants, with 125 groups in this category receiving funding, versus just 47 in the previous competitive grant cycle.

While these early results are promising, we continue to seek ways to improve the process. We've heard from the sector, my amazing team in the Programs unit offered guidance and feedback to every single

applicant who sought it out. I've listened to feedback on Culture at 3 and other sector calls, and we've carefully reviewed the thoughtful recommendations submitted by committed cultural leaders and advocates. Based on this feedback, we made a number of changes to the FY24 CDF panel process, including an extra round of panel conversation to allow more deliberation; the creation of a Panel Advisory Committee featuring experts from the field, to help spread the word and recruit panelists; the full implementation of the new digital application, which has streamlined the application process even further.

Last month, our Programs Unit wrapped the panel review process for the FY24 Cultural Development Fund. For this enormous task, our team of 10 convened 175 panelists for 35 review panels stretching over 9 weeks, during which time they reviewed 642 funding applications, involving an estimated 1,400 hours of prep time! My hats off to them for this tremendous accomplishment. As they work through these new applications, we also have 650 groups who will be in the renewal process this year, as part of our reform expanding multi-year awards eligibility to the entire grantee pool, regardless of budget size. We look forward to announcing the outcomes of our panel process later this year.

I want to close by saying that our partnership with the City Council is absolutely central to our ability to support and serve our city's cultural sector. I'm confident that working together with members of the Council and stakeholders in the field, we can continue to make the process even better for the cultural organizations we support and which, in turn, deliver amazing services and programming in every corner of New York. The Council initiatives and member items are a huge benefit to arts groups, and a huge source of equitable funding thanks to the Coalition of Theaters of Color, Cultural Immigrant Initiative, and member items in each district. We look forward to getting your FY24 designations in as early as possible so we can get the funds to grantees as quickly as possible. We also look forward to working with you to spread the word about the FY25 CDF call for applicants and panels early next year. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.



**Testimony of Educational Alliance
Before the New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs
Oversight: Administering DCLA's Cultural Development Fund
Councilmember Chi Ossé, Chair
Submitted September 26, 2023**

Thank you Chair Ossé and members of the Cultural Affairs Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important subject.

Educational Alliance was founded in 1889 to provide supports to newly arrived Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. At that time our programs included art classes that allowed participants to explore their own creativity and cultural offerings that provided an escape from cramped tenement life. Since our earliest years, Educational Alliance has been guided by the principle that each person is born with a divine spark of dignity and creativity and this belief remains central to the cultural programming incorporated into the services we provide today. In each of our community centers we offer a range of arts programming: studio arts classes, dance and creative movement classes, theater workshops and performances, and music programs for parents and babies. All are low-cost and accessible to a wide and diverse audience.

Particularly as the City emerges from the pandemic, investments in cultural programming are critical for stabilizing local venues and expanding opportunity. Though we do not currently receive funds through the Cultural Development Fund (CDF), we have been a recipient in the past and have used these dollars to directly support arts programming for over 1,200 New Yorkers through our art school, which offers studio art classes to anyone in the community, as well as theater performances in the 14Y Theater through **LABA, a laboratory for Jewish Culture**. With a troubling rise in anti-Semitism across the City and nationwide, this important program is a critical response that broadens the field of education and raises cultural awareness. Past funding we have received through the Cultural Development Fund, as well as discretionary awards through CASA and SU-CASA, is critical to the work we do, and enables us to offer high quality programs infused with opportunities for creative expression and rich cultural experiences.

Our small, independent theater venue offers an important resource in the downtown performing arts community, where affordable rehearsal and performance space is difficult to find. We are dedicated to keeping small independent theater in our community despite the difficulties facing this industry today. The Cultural Development Fund would provide much needed resources for us. While reforms to the CDF program in FY2024 helped make the funding process more equitable, we join colleagues in asking for further reforms:

Timeliness

- CDF funds must be **allocated in a more timely manner**. When grantees don't receive promised funds until well into the following fiscal year, they must pay for programming up front which often forces them to scale back programming or not pay artists on time.

Transparency

You belong here.

- DCLA should **release data on distribution of CDF funds** as well as clear information about available funding streams within CDF and how best to navigate the system to be considered for funding.

Equity

- DCLA should create **new and narrower budget tiers** and award amounts so that organizations are competing against peers of similar sizes, and so that award amounts better reflect the relative size of the organization.
- DCLA should establish an **equitable baseline increase** for funded organizations, and develop a more collaborative path towards achieving model equity in cultural funding.
- DCLA should create a **dedicated funding stream for art service organizations** so they are not competing with arts-producing and arts-presenting organizations.

Accountability

- The Cultural Advisory Council should be a true **oversight body for DCLA**. It should hold regular, public meetings with DCLA to review applications and grant-making decisions.
- The Cultural Advisory Council should have representatives of each borough to ensure **geographic distribution**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lucy Sexton

New Yorkers for Culture & Arts

City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs oversight hearing
on the Department of Cultural Affairs' Cultural Development
Fund

September 26, 2023 at 10AM

Thank you Chair Ossé and members of the City Council for this important hearing. My name is Lucy Sexton and I am with the cultural advocacy coalition New Yorkers for Culture & Arts.

The reforms to the Cultural Development Fund (CDF) introduced in 2022 were aimed at advancing equity in city funding. While there were successes on this front---many organizations received their first grant and many other, long underfunded organizations received overdue and much needed increases. However of an applicant pool of more than 1300, an estimated 35% received cuts or no funding at all from CDF. Many of these were groups that had long received funding, including many invaluable arts service organizations and legacy organizations of color. The fact that this news was delivered in

December, half way through the fiscal year, meant those organizations were unexpectedly plunged into deficits for FY23.

DCLA stated that this was a pilot year for the reforms and the community suggested many ways to reform the CDF process to better achieve the agency's goals of equity. Too many of those suggestions were not heeded and the process continued largely unchanged for the current year.

The DCLA must first and foremost have more money to run the agency-----so much of what injures smaller culturals and the sector as a whole is due to lack of capacity---with very few program officers handling the concerns of hundreds of grantees. With the funding decision process taking far too long and destabilizing the sector by announcing grants far into the year. And with a lack of transparency that is exacerbated by lack of staff capacity to provide data and information in a timely manner.

AND the DCLA must have proper oversight mechanisms by which the community's concerns can be heard, and the agency

be held accountable in answering them. There is a nominal Cultural Advisory Committee that can and should be given a clear mandate----via legislation from the Council---that would require regular meetings with the agency, that lead to accountable responses.

Finally, I join my colleagues in asking for the following reforms to CDF.

We ask that the grant schedule start earlier so that grant letters can go out AUG 1st to better align with fiscal year and school-year programs.

We ask that DCLA clearly explain the available funding streams within CDF and how best to navigate the system to be considered for them.

We ask that DCLA create a dedicated funding stream for art service organizations so they are not competing with arts producing and presenting organizations.

We ask that the panel process be restructured to allow for

- at least three rounds of discussion on the applications;
- for borough panels to be reintroduced and each panel be required to have representatives of each borough to ensure geographic distribution;
- for council staff to sit in on panels for better transparency.

We ask that the appeals process be reformed to be made more transparent and accessible for any organization with a legitimate grievance.

I'll stop there but the full list of recommendations are in my written testimony.

We ask that the existing Cultural Advisory Council be a true oversight arm for DCLA. That it be supported with legislation requiring DCLA to meet with the council several times a year, and that those meetings be made public.

We ask that DCLA immediately release their data on distribution of CDF funds—information the agency has as soon as it sends out grant letters.

We ask that DCLA re-evaluate the budget size tiers and award amounts and create new and narrower tiers, so that orgs are competing against peers of similar sizes, and award amounts are better reflective of the relative size of the organization across all tiers. (In particular, create two tiers within the broad \$500K-\$2.99MM tier)

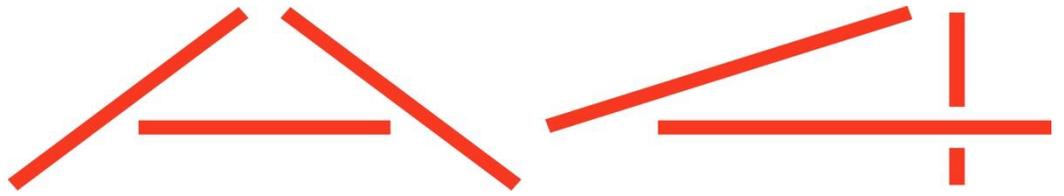
We ask that DCLA use an online tracking system so that organizations can know where their funds are in the process and can better predict when they will arrive.

We ask that organizations could accept or decline all but the first year of multi year grants, and simply reapply in the out years.

And rather than basing grant amounts on a single year, to base it on 3 years of an organization's budget to guard against outlier

years like FY21 which skewed funding downwards for many organizations..

We look towards a future where the city devotes one percent of its budget to culture to create an equitable, sustainable, vibrant, and economically and emotionally healthy city. Because to fund culture sustainably and equitably, to stabilize BIPOC cultural organizations, requires a much bigger investment. We need to act decisively to fund culture in every community of our city.



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

September 26, 2023

Good afternoon, Chair Ossé, and members of the Council. Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony today. My name is Lisa Gold and I am the Executive Director of the Asian American Arts Alliance (A4), a 40-year-old arts service organization that works to ensure greater representation, equity, and opportunities for Asian American Pacific Islander artists, arts workers, and arts organizations across disciplines.

I am here because I want to voice my support for the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) as well as my support for the transparency bill 1184-2023 sponsored by council members Chi Ossé, Jennifer Gutiérrez, Farah Louis, Lynn Schulman, and Shanana Hanif.

New York City's culture is the envy of the world, and the DCLA is the most important funding source for so many of the organizations who contribute to this stature. Studies have shown that BIPOC-led and serving organizations rely more heavily on government funding to support their missions as they do not often have the resources of predominantly white institutions. A 2015 report from the DeVos Institute¹ noted that approximately 60% of funding for mainstream arts organizations came from individual donors, while for African American and Latino organizations, only 6% of funding came from individual donors, inferring that 94% came from government, corporate, and foundation support.

I applaud the DCLA's efforts to affect greater equity in the distribution of funds and the number of small organizations that received increases in their grant awards last fiscal year. However, the actual grant amounts need to be made public so that the

agency can be held accountable and we can gauge the efficacy of their reforms.

We understand that only 19% of DCLA's budget is dedicated to the Cultural Development Fund² which is disbursed among 1,070 organizations while over 51% of the budget is allocated to a mere 34 CIGs, not a single one of which is AAPI-led. I've done some math which shows that AAPI-dedicated cultural organizations comprise .73% of FY22 DCLA grantees³ while our community represents 18% of the city population. But I shouldn't have to do those calculations. It's imperative that DCLA shares their data in an accessible and timely manner so we can all ensure our taxpayer funds are indeed equitably serving our BIPOC communities and that we can course correct for any unintended consequences of cultural budget reforms.

In addition to timely release of comprehensive grant data, I would like to suggest the following reforms:

- Begin the grant schedule earlier so that award letters can be sent out earlier (by August 1) to better align with the fiscal year and so that organizations are not halfway through the fiscal year before they know whether they have funds to support their programs.
- Require DCLA to publicly disclose their available funding streams.
- Require that DCLA create a dedicated funding stream for Arts Service Organizations so that they are not competing with presenting and producing organizations.
- Allow grantee organizations to accept or decline all but the first year of multi-year grants and be allowed to reapply in subsequent years taking into account organizations' budget changes. DISCLOSURE: Our organization, A4, was awarded a multi-year grant in FY23 at a 16% reduction from FY22 and we were told we could reject the grant and reapply in FY24, taking our chances, or be locked into the lower award amount for 3 years. Additionally, our budget has grown and we should be eligible for a larger base award, but are stuck at the lower amount for three years (based on our 2021 budget, a difficult year for all arts organizations!)
- Include a percentage increase in multi-year grants to account for inflation, increased costs, and healthier wages.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the cultural sector, especially A4 and the talented Asian American artists and arts workers who contribute so much to our city.

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1. *Diversity in the Arts: The Past, Present, and Future of African American and Latino Museums, Dance Companies, and Theater Companies, A Study by the DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the University of Maryland*, September 2015, page 15.
 2. [Letter to the Mayor](#) from 500+ signatories, dated May 31, 2023
(<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1x5EIWQJBafG0SKW6Myyqli4mhzK2azN-/view?pli=1>)
 3. New York City Open Data, DCLA Programs Funding, FY22
<https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Recreation/DCLA-Programs-Funding/y6fv-k6p7>

**Ballet Hispánico
City Council Testimony
DCLA/ CDF Hearing
September 26, 2023**

Good morning, my name is Tamia Santana, Chief Engagement & Inclusion Officer at Ballet Hispánico. Thank you, members of the DCLA's Cultural Development Fund, for the opportunity to speak to you today.

Thank you to the CDF and DCLA for providing almost \$2.8MM in absolutely vital support to Ballet Hispánico over the past 10 years. This funding—CASA programming for school students and their families and more—helps to sustain Ballet Hispánico and allow us to expand our services and community-building with the underserved communities who need it most in our city.

As the City considers deep cuts to city agencies, including DCLA, I here advocate for the continuation of vital CDF support for cultural organizations, in particular Black, Indigenous and People of Color-led organizations like Ballet Hispánico that provide important arts and cultural education with culturally relevant, educationally effective curricula that will also now serve growing migrant family populations who need our care and attention urgently.

As we join our fellow arts leaders in responding to increasing demand and need for sustained, on-going, culturally relevant programming and services—now more than ever for a growing Latinx population, we look to City leaders to support our commitment with equal dedication through the CDF and resources that empower our programs to affect change.

Ballet Hispánico is the nation's largest Latinx cultural organization, and an American Cultural Treasure—one of only 20 across the country to receive this honor. We are led by a majority BIPOC board of directors and staff who ensure our programming is grounded in authentic, lived-experience—exemplified by our founder Tina Ramirez and her successor Eduardo Vilaro, himself a Spanish-speaking immigrant who arrived as a child. We were founded to amplify and uplift historically under-represented Latinx, Black and brown voices—and are expanding programming now in response to the urgent need for our work.

Approximately 27% of all New Yorkers and 41% of the city's student population are Latinx—according to the most recent census, the fastest growing demographic—and growing rapidly now in our city. Unfortunately, Latinx New Yorkers also suffer a poverty rate of 25%—the highest of all populations, with Latinx immigrants enduring the highest poverty rates of all immigrant groups in New York City (24%). This is caused in part by the dropout rate for Latinx high school students in New York City: 8%, the highest dropout rate of any demographic. These are exactly the families Ballet Hispánico serves uniquely well with our relevant and high-touch programming and curricula.



As our Mayor and Chancellor have shared, it is 6+ arts experiences per year that can affect the most change in attendance and engagement for school children and families. This is the vital programming we provide—in schools, communities and inclusively at City Center.

Furthermore, Latinx students in New York City reside in under-resourced communities, go to under-served schools, and have few opportunities to learn about, celebrate, and share their rich cultural contributions, heritage, and pride. They suffer gentrification which further exacerbates poverty, under-employment and challenge to educational engagement. It is the CDF and DCLA that have provided the funds to strengthen our headquarters—and with whom we look to partner in future years to build out our physical plant so that we may serve more children and families, grow the community that nurtures health and vitality, hire more arts teachers and creatives, and grow the arts and cultural center that is NYC, bringing additional tourism to our city.

Ballet Hispánico's Community Arts Partnerships provide an answer to the lack of Latinx awareness in schools and communities that goes on to disaffect and disclude Latinx families from employment and community inclusion. We are in schools, in neighborhoods and communities—and bring families into the broader NYC community to educate, nurture and celebrate. Ballet Hispánico's *Bienvenidos* free ticket program provided over 1,000+ free tickets for school families to our Annual Season performances at New York City Center in 2022, and 1,000+ more tickets for the 2023 season.

Through 360-degree outreach, Ballet Hispánico ensures the benefits of artistic programming that become 6+ experiences per year for school students, families and communities who otherwise could not have afforded this experience. The very families who most benefit from inclusion and enrichment that lead to educational engagement, feelings of belonging in our city, and lead to valuable sustaining employment.

We depend on the CDF to fulfill our mission of service to BIPOC students and communities, and the growing migrant population that needs these services and inclusion in order to thrive and give back to their new home, our city and the United States.

The continued resourcing of the CDF will help to alleviate the crisis through Ballet Hispánico programming, ensuring our ability to continue providing crucial arts access and education to communities of color, and grow that programming to serve the rapidly increasing need on our doorstep today. We thank the City of New York, DCLA and CDF for this opportunity to advocate for expanded support to organizations and cultural institutions like ours are uniquely positioned to provide critical resources to the City's growing population. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.



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September 27, 2023

To the NYC Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

RE: Testimonial on hearing on oversight in administering the Department of Cultural Affairs' (DCLA) Cultural Development Fund (CDF).

This Testimony is to express my concerns for the way the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs has restructured how they are distributing City taxpayer monies to the hundreds of non-profit cultural institutions in our City, and the harmful effect, by way of extreme cuts to award levels for some institutions, this restructuring has had on many worthy cultural institutions. Specifically:

- a funding cap based on operating budgets has dropped award levels for some organizations by two or three times what they have previously achieved over many years of proving the value of the quality of their productions, thus being a shock to many organizations' budgets with only a year to make up the difference from other sources.
- Add to this the untimely delivery of award letters that more often do not arrive until well into half of the funding year, making cash-flow planning almost impossible, which affects all aspects of the organization's operations from staffing, programming, expenditures for materials and supplies and artist stipends, etc. And, after an award letter is finally sent, the first 80% of funding often doesn't arrive for another four to even six months (nearly the end of the fiscal year). This is not only disruptive to an organization's ability to run smoothly, but is unacceptable for any proper business operations. This timeline should be moved up much sooner in the year, with award letters going out by August, at the latest, so that organizations can start they "seasons" in September securely, knowing what funding they have to work with over the coming year.
- I also concur with these additional points made by the body of the NYC arts community at large:
 - review panels should include more time for discussion of applications, be more intradisciplinary representative, and there should be more borough representation on panels and awards;
 - multi-year grants should include a percentage increase for each subsequent year of the award accounting for 1) inflation, 2) increased costs, and 3) supporting arts workers receiving a living wage;
 - DCLA release accessible data on the distribution of CDF fund awards to facilitate more transparency in a timely manner.
 - It also appears that the dance community has been singled out for extreme cuts and this should be investigated as to why? And, at the least, new panel categories or

entire budget lines should be created to ensure that dance education and dance service organizations are fairly resourced.

Thank you for considering my testimony regarding how the cultural segment of our City's economy is properly supported by our City government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gail Nathan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gail Nathan
Executive Director
(718) 930-7861



Greetings, Chair Osse and Cultural Affairs Committee. My name is Gregory King and I am the General Manager for Programs and Partnerships at Dance/NYC, a service organization advancing the interests of the dance industry in the metropolitan NYC area. We serve diverse constituents and are supporting the nation's dance capital from classrooms, parks, and parkways, to living rooms, studios, and stages.

Today we acknowledge that there are challenges to keeping NYC's dance institutions functioning, and capable of providing a fair and equitable wage for its dance workers. Solutions to these problems *require* funds like the CDF to responsibly distribute support. We advocate that:

- An earlier start to the grant schedule with award letters by August 1st with timely payouts
- The creation of new separate budget lines for dance service and dance education organizations to create *specific inroads* and to NOT compete with presenting and producing entities.
- A restructuring of the panel process to:
 - more successfully distribute funding across the geographic landscape of the city.
 - include more time for discussion of applications,
 - Ensure that panels are more intra-disciplinarily represented
- The release of timely and accessible data on the distribution of CDF fund awards to facilitate more transparency
- Prioritizing communities and projects that are consistently underinvested in the award process. This includes disabled, immigrant and BIPOC-led projects.

These recommendations are built on our own experience and from a 2023 CDF Impact survey that Dance/NYC conducted with ARTNY which revealed in part that

- 26% of arts service organizations in dance received decreases in funding
- 31% of arts education organizations in dance also received decreases in funding

Dance/NYC will continue our commitment to research with the soon to be released Dance Industry Census findings.

If we weaken our cultural sector we lose the heart of what makes this city a beacon to those who uphold it, visit it, and aspire to be a part of it. We ask that you listen to us and our arts and culture colleagues to create a more sustainable and thriving sector. Thank you on behalf of the Dance Workforce of New York City.

Amanda Selwyn • Notes in Motion Dance Theatre

City Council Testimony | September 26, 2023

Amanda Selwyn, Artistic/Executive Director
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Mission/Background Information

Notes in Motion/Amanda Selwyn Dance Theatre is a non-profit dance theatre company that presents in-school & community arts-in-education programs through Notes in Motion Dance Theatre and creates professional dance performances through Amanda Selwyn Dance Theatre.

Notes in Motion has brought consistent, progressive, and inclusive dance and movement programs to more than 150 schools and over 177,000 students in NYC since 2000. We aim to build long lasting partnerships with our schools so that we may provide progressive dance education programs in which students build on their learning from year to year. Since DOE funds fluctuate, City Council support has been vital to the sustainability of many of our partnerships. Some longtime partners include:

- PS 89 Q since 2008.
- PS 63 M since 2008.
- PS 78 X since 2007.
- PS 112 X since 2012.
- East Village Community School M since 2014.
- The Neighborhood School since 2015.
- Earth School since 2017.
- One World Middle School since 2017.
- Urban Assembly for Performing Arts since 2018
- PS 182 Q since 2018
- Young Women's Leadership School Q since 2018

As a vendor of the NYC DOE, our programs reflect the DOE Blueprint. We offer a wide array of custom-tailored residency and after-school programs for Pre K - 12th that teach ballet, modern, jazz, hip hop, African, tap, yoga, Latin, and more. Programs are united by our pedagogical approach, *The Movement Exchange Method*, in which technique based instruction is coupled with creative exploration thereby empowering students as leaders and innovators. We create long-lasting partnerships with schools that allow students to build skills from year to year while inspiring the greater community with the beauty, magic, and vitality of dance. Our roster of 45 experienced Teaching Artists work collaboratively with classroom teachers at every program stage: planning, implementation, performance, assessment, evaluation. Programs foster active learning through a unique creative process, advance social emotional development, individual expression, and community engagement.

Amanda Selwyn Dance Theatre has presented over 90 productions since 2000, creating original and dynamic dance theatre that raises questions, challenges social norms, and magnifies humanity through dance. We have performed at venues including Baruch Performing Arts Center, NYLA, Jacob's Pillow, Ailey, Dixon Place, Tribeca Perf Arts Center,

Mark Morris, Westfest, Peridance, and more. Amanda Selwyn is an accomplished choreographer with a fresh and vibrant movement language and a prominent voice in the NYC dance community.

Notes in Motion has been resilient through the pandemic and expanded our relationships with schools throughout NYC. In Summer 2021, we were awarded 12 City Artist Corps grants for Summer Rising Arts Partnerships. In 2021-2022, we brought inclusive in-person dance programs to more than 60 schools.

NYC Public School Dance Education Programs

Notes in Motion dance education programs serve public schools all over NYC. Curriculum reflects the DOE Blueprint and is custom-designed in dance styles including: modern, ballet, African, tap, hip hop, Latin dance, and more. Our program provides high quality inclusive dance education for pre k-12th graders at our partners throughout the 5 boroughs both during the school day and out-of-school time. With the challenges students and families currently face, dance education is vital for mental and physical health and to develop whole learners. As a vendor of the NYC DOE, we require support from the City Council (City Wide Initiatives, Discretionary, and CASA) in order to pay Teaching Artists and program staff for the administration, planning, execution, and evaluation of our vital dance education programs serving children in underserved neighborhoods across the city. This need for funds includes support for our rich portfolio of dance education programs including: (1) our residency programs during the school day, (2) our after-school programming, and (3) our family/community programming during out-of-school time. We aim to serve at least 250 classes (6,250 students) with in-school and after-school programs throughout NYC in the 2023-2024 school year.

Each program includes 10-20 program sessions, planning meetings, culminating events, and program evaluation. Funds support Teaching Artist salaries, planning, curriculum development, evaluation, video/photo documentation, admin. support, and supplies. With City Council funding, we are able to offer free and affordable programs to school partners notwithstanding schools' budget challenges. Programs operate in-school and out-of-school time. Schedule for each program will be set by school staff and the Program Team depending on the needs of each neighborhood and school served.

Program Components: Planning meetings with classroom teachers; 10-20 (45 min-1 hr) dance sessions; interim assessment; culminating performance; evaluation meetings; photo/video documentation. All Teaching Artists have advanced degrees in dance and dance ed. as well as extensive professional choreography and performance experience

Pedagogy: Programs are united by our pedagogical approach, The Movement Exchange Method, in which technique-based instruction is coupled with creative exploration thereby empowering students as leaders and innovators. Students participate in critical discussions and develop collaborative skills while being physically active throughout class, practicing improv., developing technical skills, working in groups, and creating original choreography. Teaching Artists provide teachers with detailed lesson plans, classroom rituals, and follow-up activities.

Program Goals:

1. Provide high quality dance instruction that teaches fundamentals, promotes self-expression, and builds collaborative learning.
2. Collaborate with teachers and administrators to create curriculum and prepare them to be active residency participants.
3. Integrate curriculum with academic subjects, sharing creative teaching tools, and follow-up activities with classroom teachers.
4. Create opportunities for parents, guardians, and community members to engage, thereby building the community of the school.

Curriculum: With the DOE *Blueprint* as a fundamental focus, we develop specificity to each program curriculum in collaboration with school faculty and administration with the aim to complement and enrich subject learning already happening at each grade level. Sample program titles include: *Dance and Poetry*, *Dance and Literacy*, *Dancing Around the*

World, and *Meditation for Test Prep*. Students are physically active throughout class sessions practicing improvisation exercises, developing technical skills, working in small groups, and creating original dance performances. Students process their learning through class discussion, writing, drawing, and audience feedback sessions. Each program session targets age-appropriate learning objectives and follows a 5-part structure: Warm-up, Exploration/Improvisation, Choreography, Performance Prep, and Reflection. Teaching Artists provide classroom teachers with detailed written lesson plans and follow-up activities prior to the beginning of all programs.

Family Programs: Our family & community programs take place out of school time and, in contrast to our in-school programs, focus specifically on activities that multi-generational participants can do together. On these special days, we offer less of a sequential curriculum and more opportunity for immediate relationship-building, joy through getting out of your comfort zone, and shared memories. Programs vary in scope, length, and schedule based on the school's needs; some are held over 1 or 2 weekend days (either 1 wknd or 1 wk apart), or on a Friday evening, or first thing in the school day morning before parents go to work.

Assessment, Performance, and Evaluation: Programs are assessed with parent/teacher/student surveys, skill tests, video/photo documentation, drawings, games, and feedback. Artistic Director, Education Associate, and Artist Mentor regularly observe and provide written and oral feedback. Teaching Artists complete journal logs for each session to document student work, success of curriculum, and challenges encountered. Each program ends with a culminating performance that shares out the entire learning process with the greater school community.

Populations Served

Notes in Motion programs serve Pre K-12th grade students in the public schools in all 5 boroughs of NYC. In addition, through community programs and sharing events, we also engage families of our students, inspiring them to be more present at their child's school. We strive to work with underserved schools and, whenever possible, subsidize programs so that schools with less resources can offer creative dance education to students who benefit the most. On average, our programs serve communities that are over 90% minority, and we subsidize approximately 85% of programs. Our staff and team of Teaching Artists has been steadily growing in size and diversity in the past 4 years as our programs expand in scope and scale throughout NYC. With our student population being mainly African American and Latinx, it is important that our Teaching Artists, staff, and Board, reflect that diversity. We specifically recruit Teaching Artists that can speak Spanish and Mandarin and those trained in culturally-specific forms of dance. It is key to our mission to be representative of our community, allowing for a more supportive and inclusive learning experience.

Community Benefit

Notes in Motion addresses the unmet need and gaps in arts education in NYC Schools by working with schools that lack arts faculty, providing professional development for teachers, and sharing resources with families. Notes in Motion's programs enhance K-12 arts curricula, many of which, particularly in underserved districts, lack the personnel and resources to meet state and city standards for arts education. According to the *NYC Department of Education Arts in Schools Report 2020-2021*, arts instruction has been on a downward trend since 2016 across all grade levels, and performing arts instruction reports the lowest number of instructional hours. Arts education initiatives like Notes in Motion help schools improve student and community attendance and engagement. A vibrant portfolio of dance instruction after-school keeps youth out of trouble as they spend more of their otherwise untracked hours in a safe, supervised, and intellectually stimulating environment.

Notes in Motion programs offer multiple opportunities for parents, families, and community members to engage with students' arts learning, thereby activating the vitality of the entire school community. Our programs ease anxiety, get people to move their bodies, and create joy and shared experiences for students, class groups, and families. The positive impact of our programs was described in *NYFA's Current: A Magazine for Artists*: "At P.S. 78... Bronx, student attendance is erratic and parents' involvement in their children's education notoriously low. But something changed when the students performed in a Notes in Motion dance production at the year-end assembly: the parents showed up." We work with school leaders to build relationships with parents, faculty, community leaders, and administrators.

For each program, including culminating performances, we publish print materials, send e-blasts to parents and partners, and update our website regularly with testimonials, videos, photos, curriculum, and program descriptions from each partner. We send letters home to parents regularly, post notices on school websites and social media, create dynamic culminating events, and offer free tickets to schools and families to Amanda Selwyn Dance Theatre performances to create greater access to NYC dance performance for all of our constituents. Notes in Motion does extensive outreach to public schools, presenters, and general dance audiences in NYC for our programs through social media, e-blasts, mailings, listings, and diverse and accessible public events. In order to identify and build relationships with new school partners, we attend the DOE Arts & Culture Service Fair, pursue referrals from partners, are published in the DOE Arts and Culture Services Guide, and offer sample classes for potential school partners. We work with Dance/NYC, NYFA, NYC Arts-in-Education Roundtable, Fractured Atlas, NYLA, and other dance and arts service organizations to build visibility and grow our network of collaborators, audiences, and partners.

Vital Support from CDF and CASA

Notes in Motion/Amanda Selwyn Dance Theatre has received CDF Funds for over 15 years and it has been a vital backbone to our infrastructure. It has paved the way for other private, public, and corporate support and created continuity in our programming. We received FY23 CASA funds from Council Members Rivera, Gennaro, Riley, Vernikov and Stevens. Rivera's funds supported our after-school Prek-1st grade dance program at STAR Academy PS 63 and for The Neighborhood School as well as an after-school program at The Earth School. Riley's funds paid for an after-school dance program at PS 78 in the Bronx. Gennaro funds supported after-school programs at PS 499 Q and Young Women's Leadership School. Gennaro also supported our program at PS 182 Q in the past. Vernikov supported an after-school program at PS 153 K and Stevens supported a program at PS 53 X. We are excited that thus far for FY 24, in addition to sustaining the programs above, we have also received funding from CM Riley for PS 41X

Summary

By bringing quality dance education to underserved public schools, we inspire and diversify the dancers and dance audiences of the future. We appreciate the City Council and the City's commitment to the arts and cultural/non-profit economy by sustaining and hopefully building on our support from the CDF and discretionary spending in the future.

Supplemental Links

Highlight Reels

Notes in Motion | Bringing Dance to NYC Schools <https://vimeo.com/704699166>

Notes in Motion | 2022 - 2023 School Year | Program Highlights <https://vimeo.com/852414453>

Culminating Events:

Children's Lab Queens | Latin Dance Rhythms & Move to the Beat | Grades 2nd & 3rd <https://vimeo.com/837378234>

PS 199Q | Our Stage, Our Canvas: Tracing, Painting, and Sculpting Through Movement | Grades 3rd-5th:

<https://vimeo.com/804545707>

Urban Assembly for the Performing Arts | Exploring Street Jazz Aesthetics | Grades 9th-12th: <https://vimeo.com/840249282>

PS 152 Brooklyn | The Art of Storytelling | Grades 3rd-5th <https://vimeo.com/784281308>

Community Events:

Amanda Selwyn Dance Theatre | Habit Formed Preview | PS 83X: <https://vimeo.com/829961604>

PS 376Q | Family Dance Carnival: Dance Around The World: <https://vimeo.com/836409842>

Amanda Selwyn Dance Theatre | Habit Formed Preview | PS 182Q: <https://vimeo.com/835234594>

Cypress Hills Collegiate Prep School Brooklyn | Family Dance Carnival: Dance Around The World: <https://vimeo.com/834533823>

Classroom Footage

Luisa Righteo Children's Lab School | 3rd Grade: <https://vimeo.com/826670354>

Rohan Urban Assembly for the Performing Arts | 11th Grade: <https://vimeo.com/828473620>

Rosie Jo Needy | PS 78X | Broadway Jazz | Grades 1st-5th: <https://vimeo.com/82666752>



Where creative learning
meets community change

NYC Council Department of Cultural Affairs Committee Hearing
9/26/2023 10 am
Administering DCLA's Cultural Development Fund

Testimony

My name is Martha Bowers, Executive Director at Hook Arts Media, a nonprofit arts and education organization based in Red Hook, Brooklyn. For more than 30 years, we have worked with NYC educators to reform an educational system that has largely failed many BIPOC students. We have helped open three public high schools, designing culturally responsive arts programs that increase student engagement and introduce students to pathways to higher education and career planning. We serve between 700 and 1000 young New Yorkers each year, and our pipeline of filmmaking programs disrupt gatekeeping in one of the city's most lucrative, competitive, and gatekept industries. Our alumni have gone on to win awards at film festivals and gain employment at Paramount, Comedy Central, and MoMA PS1. Danny, who graduated from our most advanced program before accepting a production position for NBC said of Hook Arts Media:

"I'm just very grateful to Hook Arts for allowing me to be part of (the) program and supporting me after. I'm just really grateful you guys will still take a call with me and answer any questions I have, and I have a lot of questions."

I would like to point out that, despite glowing panel comments, in FY23, Hook Arts Media's DCLA CDF award decreased by more than 36%, (\$34,950) from \$113,700 in FY22 to \$78,750 in FY 23. Also we went from many years of receiving multi year awards to a one year award in FY23. Additionally, our FY23 award included a \$40,304 Safety Net component. When discussing this decrease with our DCLA Program Officer, we were advised that there was no guarantee that the Safety Net component of the award would be included in our FY24 award. That means we should be prepared for even smaller award in FY24- potentially \$38,446- more than \$75,000 less than in FY22. These abrupt and large decreases pose a significant hardship for Hook Arts Media and will impact our ability to meet the demands of our growing services to NYC youth. I was never very clear after our conversation with our Program Officer why there was such a drastic reduction in our award other than it was partially due to DCLA restructuring its award process and based on the size of FY 21 audited budget, which was lower than usual due to the Pandemic.

We applaud DCLA's measures to make its grant making process more equitable and transparent however this process has had a very negative impact on our organization. We are grateful to the Department of Cultural Affairs for supporting community arts, media, and education for young New Yorkers. Each young person deserves access to the materials, training, and support to foster their talents and dreams. BIPOC and impoverished young people often face disproportionate obstacles to attain educational and career success, not the least of which include the city's extreme cost of living in addition to the cost of materials and training programs. Our programs remove some of

these barriers by providing equipment, training, and minimum wage so that our students don't have to sacrifice education for cost of living. **In FY23 alone, Hook Arts Media will have paid over \$90,000 in student incentive stipends which goes directly into the pockets of low income students and their families.**

Despite the role of arts, culture, and education in NYC's economy, many of us who continue to work in this industry throughout the pandemic do so under threat of shrinking resources that threaten our jobs and ability to support the very same young people for whom we've already sacrificed greater economic opportunity. To be clear: no one works in arts education because of the competitive wage or benefits. We do it because we understand how vital it is to decolonizing opportunities that so often escape the kids at the margins of our society. We do it because we get to see young people seize upon inspiration, follow their dreams, and redefine their futures.

The data speaks for itself.

"... youth of low socioeconomic status with a history of high arts engagement had better grades and higher college enrollment and attainment rates than youth without such involvement. In addition, the NEA found that high school students who had in-depth arts engagement:

- Had higher GPAs than students with low levels of arts engagement;
- Enrolled at higher rates in competitive and four-year colleges than low-arts-engaged students; and
- Were three times more likely than their arts poor peers to earn a bachelor's degree"

- Stringer, Scott. "State of the Arts: A Plan to Boost Arts Education in New York City Schools." Office of the New York City Comptroller. April, 2014.

- Catterall, James S. et al. "The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies." National Endowment for the Arts. March, 2012.

This is the vital, decolonizing force that should be guaranteed, but it is only through the work of under-resourced organizations and their over-extended staff that these vital services reach NYC's young people. Since 1993, Hook Arts Media has proudly supported and served thousands of NYC's most vulnerable and resilient young people. More than 90% of our students come from vibrant BIPOC communities throughout Brooklyn, and while enrolled in our programs, they not only learn the skills that help them navigate career and educational opportunity, they also become thoughtful and critically engaged citizens who learn to facilitate the sustainable change they want to see in their communities.

Our students have:

- Studied Film, Photography, Communication, Nursing, and even Medicine in college.
- Secured competitive positions at multinational distribution and production houses like FilmNation.

- Secured work on popular television shows, like Broad City and Full Frontal with Samantha Bee.
- Paid it forward in their communities as educators and activists.

Now is the time to invest in the ever-changing needs of the next generation of community members, movers, and shakers. The future of our city is toiling at home, facing down public health, housing, economic, and social justice crises. They need more opportunities to learn, express themselves, and navigate the complexities of the trauma they're surviving in this most crucial juncture.

And as the people who will live in the city they will soon govern, we need them to have the skills, dedication, and creative thinking to show up for us in the very near future.

Finally, I join my colleagues in asking for the following reforms to CDF:

- We ask that the grant schedule start earlier so that grant letters can go out AUG 1st to better align with fiscal year and school-year programs.
- We ask that the existing Cultural Advisory Council be a true oversight arm for DCLA. That it be supported with legislation requiring DCLA to meet with the council several times a year, and that those meetings be made public.
- We ask that DCLA immediately release their data on on distribution of CDF funds—information the agency has as soon as it sends out grant letters.
- We ask that DCLA clearly explain the available funding streams within CDF and how best to navigate the system to be considered for them.
- We ask that the panel process be restructured to allow for:
 - at least three rounds of discussion on the applications;
 - for borough panels to be reintroduced and each panel be required to have representatives of each borough to ensure geographic distribution;
 - for council staff to sit in on panels for better transparency.
- We ask that DCLA create a dedicated funding stream for art service organizations so they are not competing with arts producing and presenting organizations.
- We ask that the appeals process be reformed to be made more transparent and accessible for any organization with a legitimate grievance.
- We ask that DCLA re-evaluate the budget size tiers and award amounts and create new and narrower tiers, so that orgs are competing against peers of similar sizes, and award amounts are better reflective of the relative size of the organization across all tiers. (In particular, create two tiers within the broad \$500K-\$2.99MM tier)
- We ask that DCLA use an online tracking system so that organizations can know where their funds are in the process and can better predict when they will arrive.
- We ask that organizations could accept or decline all but the first year of multi year grants, and simply reapply in the out years. And rather than basing grant amounts on a single year, to base it on 3 years of an organization's budget to guard against outlier years like FY21.

Sincerely,



Martha Bowers
Founder and Executive Director
Hook Arts Media

Martha@hookarts.org
718 809-8030



CELEBRATING THE JOY OF DANCING ON ICE

September 26,2023

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New York, NY 10011
212-929-5811
212-929-0105 (FAX)
www.icetheatre.org
itny@icetheatre.org

Re: New York City Council Hearing – Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations – written testimony

Dear Members of the City Council:

I am submitting this written testimony as Executive Director of Ice Theatre of New York® to highlight the contributions of the non-profit arts sector and in support of continued expansion of DCLA and its funding of the arts.

As for many organizations, the annual funding from DCLA is one of the largest donations ITNY receives. We regret that the funding hasn't increased much in the last decade and that in fact it decreased last year as a result of the reforms, but we are grateful for the support. We very much appreciate that 80% of the DCLA funds come as a "grant" earlier in our fiscal year, instead of a reimbursement process such as for our discretionary funding (we still haven't been reimbursed from DYCD for programming expenses we fronted in the last fiscal year).

That said, DCLA deserves more funding to function better internally so it can serve its constituents better and larger funding streams to distribute to NYC's arts organizations. I added comments on suggested reforms for DCLA are at the end of my letter.

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

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

Culture is a small part of NYC's budget that returns great rewards. The DCLA budget, the City Initiatives and the NYC Council Discretionary Funding are essential to the health, diversity and dynamism of NYC. Culture is what makes NYC different from most other major cities.

The social impact of culture and the arts include improved outcomes in mental health, education, youth involvement in the criminal justice system, safety and other dimensions of social well-being of the communities we serve.

Finally, I join my colleagues in asking for the following reforms to CDF:

We ask that the grant schedule start earlier so that grant letters can go out AUG 1st to better align with fiscal year and school-year programs.

Founder/Director
Moira North

Executive Director
Jirina Ribbens

Ensemble Director
Elisa Angeli

Outreach Director
Sarah France

Chair
William J Candee IV

Vice Chair
Betty Wasserman

President
Moira North

Treasurer
Mary Gaillard

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Dick Button

Richard Caples

Ann Carlson

Richard Dwyer

Erika Harrsch

Josef Koudelka

Meredith Monk

Atoy Wilson

We ask that DCLA re-evaluate the budget size tiers and award amounts and create new and narrower tiers, so that orgs are competing against peers of similar sizes, and award amounts are better reflective of the relative size of the organization across all tiers. (In particular, create two tiers within the broad \$500K-\$2.99MM tier)

We ask that the existing Cultural Advisory Council be a true oversight arm for DCLA. That it be supported with legislation requiring DCLA to meet with the council several times a year, and that those meetings be made public.

We ask that DCLA immediately release their data on the distribution of CDF funds—information the agency has as soon as it sends out grant letters.

We ask that the panel process be restructured to allow for

- at least three rounds of discussion on the applications;
- for borough panels to be reintroduced and each panel be required to have representatives of each borough to ensure geographic distribution;
- for council staff to sit in on panels for better transparency.

We ask that DCLA create a dedicated funding stream for art service organizations so they are not competing with arts producing and presenting organizations.

We ask that the appeals process be reformed to be made more transparent and accessible for any organization with a legitimate grievance.

We ask that DCLA use an online tracking system so that organizations can know where their funds are in the process and can better predict when they will arrive.

We ask that organizations could accept or decline all but the first year of multi-year grants, and simply reapply in the out years.

And rather than basing grant amounts on a single year, to base it on 3 years of an organization's budget to guard against outlier years like FY21, which skewed funding downwards for many organizations.

Skating...combines and surpasses the joys of flying and dancing: only in a certain type of a dream do we ever else attain a higher degree of the same ravishing experience of exultantly skimming the earth.

— Ernest Jones, Biographer of Freud

I urge you to continue funding the arts and encourage you to keep increasing the support for this vital sector.

I thank you very much for your attention.

Sincerely,



Jirina Ribbens
Executive Director, Ice Theatre of New York®



Dear Chair Osse and the Cultural Affairs Committee:

Thank you for welcoming our written testimony regarding CDF Reforms. My name is Randi Berry and I am the Executive Director of IndieSpace. IndieSpace provides radically transparent, equitable and responsive: funding, real estate programs, professional development and advocacy to the independent theater community. Our organization was created to address systemic inequities in philanthropy and cultural real estate ownership/operation. We represent nearly 700 indie companies and venues and more than 2,000 individual artists. Most of the organizations we work with have budgets well under \$250,000 and are the primary focus of the CDF. Our mission and values put the artists we support front and center and we work hard to remove barriers of entry for artists that have been historically and currently under funded, under-resourced and left out of the larger philanthropic conversation.

We applaud DCLA in its recent reforms of its process. There were many great strides made that should be celebrated. Many of the organizations we represent received funding for the first time or a much needed increase and/or multi year support. Yes! More of this! However, because the pot of funds didn't increase in order to support this much needed investment, many critical organizations' awards were significantly reduced or cut all together. Including IndieSpace. IndieSpace received \$0 in CDF funds and \$3,000 from Council Member Caban (Thank you Council Member! We are very grateful.). We believe we were miscategorized during the CDF process which impacted our review. Because of the \$3,000 in Council Member funding we were told we were awarded, and therefore, not permitted to appeal the decision. We also weren't able to refuse our Council Member funding in order to appeal. After working with DCLA as a regrant partner with City Artist Corps and the critical support we have provided underrepresented artists over the last decade plus we were extremely disappointed in these results. This does not just impact IndieSpace, but the arts organizations we serve, side by side, with DCLA.

Commissioner Cumbo mentioned in the hearing that we need to help BIPOC organizations seek DCLA funding. That is what Service Organizations do! Service organizations like ours help prepare BIPOC and other underrepresented organizations to formalize aspects of their work and apply for DCLA funding. We provide relief and support to the individuals within the organizations who aren't eligible for DCLA funding directly as well. We were partners to private foundations and the City throughout Covid providing life saving relief to individuals and small budget arts organizations. We are the resource that artists turn to during emergencies and on the every day when looking to advance their work and care for themselves as workers trying to survive and thrive in NYC. We must protect service providers while deeply investing in organizations founded by, led by and serving Global Majority, d/Deaf, disabled, trans/GNC/non-binary and immigrant artists.

Below are a few critical steps we think DCLA can take to support the entire arts and culture sector and to move the most equitable process forward:

- We ask that DCLA clearly explain the available funding streams within CDF and how best to navigate the system to be considered for them. Small budget arts organizations do not have development staff to help with this process. They rely completely on DCLA staff, who themselves are under-resourced, and information on the website to figure out how to apply and to what.
- We ask that the grant schedule start earlier so that grant letters can go out AUG 1st to better align with the fiscal year. Delays in these grant letters, and payouts, put the organizations that DCLA has prioritized in the most jeopardy. They rely heavily on city funding and can not plan or produce without timely notification and payment.
- We ask for continued and expanded investment in organizations that are founded by, led by and are serving the Global Majority, d/Deaf, disabled, LGBTQIA+ and immigrant artists.
- We ask for a restructuring of the panel process:
 - More time for discussion between panelists, at least three rounds
 - Equitable distribution of funding across geographic landscape with representatives from each borough on panels
 - Council participation in the panel process for transparency
- We ask that DCLA immediately release their data on distribution of CDF funds as soon as funding letters are sent so that we can properly advocate for our members.
- We ask that the appeals process be reformed to be made more transparent and accessible for any organization with a legitimate grievance.
- We ask that DCLA create a dedicated funding stream for art service organizations so we are not competing with arts producing and presenting organizations. Service organizations should be seen as partners to the DCLA and to the artists we serve as we also provide funding and programming to those who are also applying. It is detrimental to both the service organization and the artists we serve to be put in the same categories for review, competing for limited funds.

And we are asking the City to prioritize getting us to 1% of the city budget for culture.

It is a critical moment for the city's arts and culture workers. We must show up now in order to keep the thousands of artists and small companies in NYC. There is no time to waste. Thank you for your partnership as we steward the city's resources forward in the most just and equitable way possible.

Sincerely,



Randi Berry



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www.insidebroadway.org

TESTIMONY: NYC Council Budget Hearing on the Cultural Development Fund

September 26, 2023

Dear members of the Cultural Affairs Committee,

I am Michael Presser, the Founder and President of Inside Broadway. Please accept the following written testimony on behalf of our organization.

Inside Broadway has just celebrated 40th anniversary season of bringing live theatre to New York City's public-school students. Our programs offer children the opportunity to attend Equity touring productions of classic Broadway shows in their own school auditoriums, participate in theatrical productions directed by our team of teaching artists, and attend our Creating the Magic seminar program held in a Broadway theatre that demonstrates the production elements and careers involved in a major Broadway musical. We have programs in all five boroughs of New York City, and 90 schools and 75,000 students participate in our programs each year.

Many organizations in New York rely on the Cultural Development Fund to continue funding arts during this difficult economic period. Due to this, we strongly believe that funding to the Fund should be increased in the next budget cycle, so that organizations such as ours can continue to provide these important programs.

We are also extremely grateful for the Council's support of several programs, namely the Cultural After-School Adventures (CASA) program, the Cultural Immigrant Initiative (CII), and the SU-CASA program. It is because of funding from these programs that we have been able to provide much-needed arts education programs in so many New York City public schools, as well as in senior centers throughout the city. Arts education has been proven time and time again to be essential in children's social and emotional development, and engagement with the arts is incredibly beneficial for senior citizens as well. For many New York public school students and senior citizens, the only access they have to the performing arts is through programs like Inside Broadway. We believe that these programs should not only be preserved, but also expanded, so that we can bring these life-changing programs to more New York City schools and senior centers.

We thank you for your time and attention to this testimony and hope you will continue to consider the importance of arts education in this upcoming budget cycle.



Tuesday September 26 at 10:00

Thank you to the Chair, Councilmember Chi Osse, and the rest of the City Council Committee. My name is Martha Ayon; I am the Government Affairs consultant for Museum Hue, a member-driven organization dedicated to empowering of Black, Indigenous, Latine, Asian, and all People of Color through research, advocacy, education, and community engagement. I am testifying on behalf of our coalition of over 400 arts entities through our HueArts New York City initiative, representing Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian arts entities across the five boroughs. We are not an agency, not a union but collectively bargaining for greater racial equity in arts funding. I join my colleagues working across creative disciplines throughout the city in thanking the Committee for their leadership.

We support Chair Osse's bill regarding distribution of arts funding. The bill (Intro 1184-2023) will require the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) to submit to the Speaker of the Council and post on its website a report containing information regarding DCLA's spending to support art and cultural organizations and institutions as well as DCLA's spending on direct agency expenses.

One key challenge facing arts entities of color is the lack of data from the City's Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) of funding across racial lines. Over the last two years, through our HueArts NYC initiative, Museum Hue heard from hundreds of arts leaders who noted the lack of financial support from the city and a need for greater funding for arts within communities of color.

Arts organizations like Weeksville Heritage Center in Brooklyn, the Clemente in Loisada, the National Black Theater in Harlem, the Bronx Academy of Art and Dance, Think Chinatown, and other community-centered BIPOC cultural entities are often overlooked, while greater favor and funding is disproportionately given to the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) and other predominantly white institutions.

What message is the city sending when white art spaces are far more resourced to showcase, and commission works by Black and Brown artists who are often first nurtured, mentored, and exhibited at insufficiently funded Black and Brown cultural institutions? The success of DEAI in the arts shouldn't be just having Black and brown bodies in white spaces but the sustainability and thriving of our Black and Brown institutions. The arts funding in this city is not unique or an outlier to this nation's increasing racial disparities for providing equitable financial support for communities of color. We not to long ago saw the near closure of Weeksville in Brooklyn and the ongoing struggle of Sandy Ground in Staten Island two historical Black communities and institutions. While the CIG's continue to receive funding for things like a new wing of their institutions, which is truly insanity. These institutions demonstrate that arts and culture happens beyond commercial districts.

To revive New York City's arts and culture vibrancy, we need long-term investment by the New York City Council. We need stronger dedicated funding for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and all People of Color arts spaces. These organizations were impacted way before the Covid-19 pandemic. We believe an implementation and deployment of a new \$40 million funding model over five years will help accomplish the following objectives:

1. Regrant equitable funding to BIPOC arts entities across New York City;
2. Provide professional development opportunities to strengthen BIPOC arts entities;
3. Advocate for city/state policies and practices to provide support for BIPOC arts;

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www.museumhue.com



4. Assist BIPOC arts entities in gaining long-term spaces to operate.

NEW YORK SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL dba THE PUBLIC THEATER

Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Jointly with the Committee on Civil and Human Rights

**The Public Theater's Testimony Regarding DCLA's Administering of the Cultural Development Fund
Tuesday, September 26, 2023**

Thank you, Chair Ossé for calling this committee hearing to discuss DCLA's administration of the Cultural Development Fund.

New York City is considered the cultural capital of the world and as such it is deeply intertwined with many aspects of daily life and the systems that support it. Cultural Institution Group members and Cultural Development Fund recipients often partner with each other and with countless other industries across the City including hotels, hospitality, libraries, community centers, homeless centers and more to create a more equitable more vibrant New York City. This makes it all the more surprising that Cultural funding represents less than 1% of the City's budget; it is no wonder that the field is struggling to serve its communities and artists.

The Public Theater is a member of the Cultural Institution Group and speaking on behalf of the CIGs, I can say we were concerned when we learned about how the changes to the administration of the Cultural Development fund affected many of our peers and the artists and communities they support. We appreciate that DCLA heard the feedback of the cultural community about the need for multi-year grant commitments and that to some extent this guided aspects of their administration of the program; however, the implementation of the plan stumbled when there was not adequate consultation with the affected party. We've seen this repeated in the FY24 budget when without warning CIGs were told after the budget was passed in July that it would have to absorb a \$5M cut to its funding.

Despite these frustrations, we also understand that DCLA is being forced to make tough decisions as it operates with limited resources. They too are a part of the ecosystem in which we all exist. This is all the more concerning amidst the looming cumulative 15% PEG cut that has been proposed to take place over the next 6 to 9 months. These cuts on top of the changes CDF and CIGs have already experienced would be devastating for many cultural organizations and will have ripple effects within our communities. Culture generates an astounding 13% of the city's economic activity as their audiences, artists and staff eat at nearby restaurants, shop at local stores, and bring vibrancy to their neighborhoods. As funding to cultural organizations decreases so too will cultural organizations' ability to generate economic activity.

Particularly in this perilous moment where we see cultural organizations being forced to cut staff and programming as they struggle to stay afloat under the great economic duress we face we ask that in addition to looking at more equitable ways to support CDFs that the council commit to more equitable funding of Culture within the City budget as a whole. We believe DCLA's budget should be baselined to ensure ALL neighborhoods, artists and cultural organizations can thrive.

When we all support each other, the entire system thrives but when that support is taken away our fragile ecosystem quickly deteriorates. We ask the council to continue its focus on ensuring the entire ecosystem has the support it needs.

Thank you to the Chair and Committee members for their time and attention on this matter.

Arts in Education **R**^{NYC}**UNDTABLE**

New York City Arts in Education Roundtable

Testimony - Committee on Cultural Affairs (September 26, 2023)

Thank you to Chair Chi Ossé, fellow Committee Members and Council staff, for your passion, leadership, and support of arts, culture, and arts education in New York City.

My name is Kimberly Olsen, and I am the Executive Director of the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable. We are an arts service organization that works with thousands of artists, educators, and cultural organizations each year to improve and advance arts education in NYC.

The Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Development Fund are a critical resource for NYC's arts education community. For many organizations in our membership, the impact of CDF and cultural initiative funding enables organizations to provide critical arts education services to young New Yorkers in every neighborhood across the five boroughs. We often say at the Roundtable — it starts with the arts. These afterschool arts programs, field trips, arts partnerships, teen programs, and more are funded by CDF seed and grow the next generation of arts workers and audiences.

Funding through the Cultural Development Fund was also one of the first funding that my organization received back in 1998. That \$5000 in funding transformed our organization 25 years ago. For most of my organization's history we operated with a budget under \$250,000, and only recently have been able to go that threshold in part due to (first-time) multi-year funding received through CDF.

With that pathway in mind, the Roundtable applauds the agency for taking steps towards centering equity, diversity, and accessibility in its application process. Yet we acknowledge that this work is and will be ongoing and should be responsive to the needs of the field and the students and constituents we serve.

I join my colleagues in asking for the following reforms to CDF:

- 1) We ask that the grant schedule start earlier so that grant letters can go out AUG 1st to better align with fiscal year and school-year programs.
- 2) We ask that DCLA clearly explain the available funding streams within CDF and how best to navigate the system to be considered for them — many within our community are eager to learn about and be considered for initiative funding, but simply don't know where to begin.
- 3) We ask that DCLA create a dedicated funding stream for art service organizations so we are not competing with arts producing and presenting organizations.
- 4) We ask that DCLA re-evaluate the budget size tiers and award amounts and create new and narrower tiers, so that orgs are competing against peers of similar sizes, and award amounts are better reflective of the relative size of the organization across all tiers. (In particular, create two tiers within the broad \$500K-\$2.99MM tier)

The full list of recommendations are in my written testimony. As our city takes action-able steps towards the recovery and resilience of our community, the City should establish an equitable foundation for arts in every community to support pathways to a bright, bold future for all.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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TESTIMONY AT THE NYC COUNCIL HEARING ON SEPTEMBER 26, 2023 at 10AM

Good morning. Thank you for considering my testimony today.

I'm Fran Garber-Cohen, President of Regina Opera, which offers fully-staged operas with full orchestra and English supertitles, in Sunset Park - an underserved and low income community, as well as many free concerts in public, accessible spaces in Brooklyn.

We rely heavily on funding from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs. The funds that we receive through the Cultural Development Fund allow us to provide affordable, professional-level entertainment in accessible venues for people who may not otherwise attend live performances.

Today I join my colleagues in asking for the following reforms to the CDF:

We ask that the grant schedule start earlier so that grant letters can go out August 1st to assist us in planning for the upcoming season, and that the payments are made quickly to help with our cash flow.

We ask that the existing Cultural Advisory Council be a true oversight arm for DCLA. That it be supported with legislation requiring DCLA to meet with the council several times a year, and that those meetings be made public.

We ask that DCLA immediately release their data about the distribution of CDF funds—information the agency has as soon as it sends out grant letters.

We ask that DCLA clearly explain the available funding streams within CDF and how best to navigate the system to be considered for them.

(OVER)

We ask that the panel process be restructured to allow for at least three rounds of discussion on the applications, and more time for this.

We ask for borough panels to be reintroduced and each panel be required to have representatives of each borough to ensure geographic distribution and for council staff to sit in on panels for better transparency.

We ask that DCLA create a dedicated funding stream for art service organizations so they are not competing with arts producing and presenting organizations.

We ask that the appeals process be reformed to be made more transparent and accessible for any organization with a legitimate grievance.

We ask that DCLA re-evaluate the budget size tiers and award amounts and create new and narrower tiers, so that organizations are competing against peers of similar sizes, and award amounts are better reflective of the relative size of the organization across all tiers. (In particular, create two tiers within the broad \$500K-\$2.99MM tier)

We ask that DCLA use an online tracking system so that organizations can know where their funds are in the process and can better predict when they will arrive.

We ask that organizations could accept or decline all but the first year of multi-year grants, and simply reapply in the following years, and rather than basing grant amounts on a single year, to base it on 3 years of an organization's budget to guard against outlier years like FY21.

We also ask that multi-year grants include a percentage increase for inflation and increased costs.

Respectfully submitted,

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

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



Re: City Council Hearing regarding Administration of DCLA's Cultural Development Fund

To: The Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, & International Intergroup Relations

Thank you, Chair Ossé and esteemed members of this Committee, for the opportunity to testify. At Roundabout Theatre Company, we are grateful for everything you have done to promote equitable arts access for all New Yorkers, and to help arts institutions recover from the pandemic.

This testimony shares Roundabout's experience with recent CDF reforms and our concerns about future rounds of funding. These concerns are critical to strategic planning within our company and throughout the theatre industry.

Roundabout is the nation's largest not-for-profit theatre company. We celebrate the power of theatre by spotlighting classics from the past, cultivating new works of the present, and educating minds for the future. We produce plays and musicals on and off-Broadway, serving an audience of hundreds of thousands. Offstage, our education programs serve over 24,000 public school students, teachers, and outer borough residents each year. We reduce physical, financial, and cultural barriers to the arts through a portfolio of community partnerships and programs designed to increase access to theatre. With the City's ongoing support, Roundabout also delivers the Theatrical Workforce Development Program, a first-of-its-kind vocational fellowship that trains underemployed young New Yorkers for careers in technical theatre and models workforce development best practices within the arts sector.

With CDF support, Roundabout has helped keep the arts at the heart of our civic life. Each year we serve not only the locals and tourists who attend our productions, but also tens of thousands of artists, technicians, teachers, students, and community members who benefit from our programs in all five boroughs. We are the fourth largest theatre owner on Broadway, an industry that contributed \$14.7 billion to the city's economy during the 2018-19 theatre season, not including ticket sales and 96,000 local jobs. And we provide leadership in the overlapping not-for-profit arts sector, an \$8 billion industry that generates \$21.2 billion in economic impact for the city and state.

Today, not-for-profit theatres like Roundabout face profound challenges. We have lost millions in earned revenue during the pandemic and relied on emergency reserves to sustain operations. *The Washington Post* warns that "Theater is in freefall," while *The New York Times* reports that "A Crisis in America's Theaters Leaves Prestigious Stages

Dark". Peer institutions have laid off staff by the dozens and reduced programming by half. This season, Roundabout will deliver scaled back programming and operate with a \$5 million deficit.

Roundabout has been a proud grantee since CDF's founding in 2003. Unfortunately, following 2023's CDF reforms, our FY23 application was not recommended for funding. We were grateful to receive City Council discretionary funds and \$120,000 in safety net funding, which preserved eligibility for DCLA capital funding and allowed us to maintain programs. However, it is our understanding that the allocation of safety net funding may be a temporary means of support to help organizations adjust to these reforms.

This reversal raises concerns and, potentially, significant challenges. With our resources stretched to their limits, Roundabout cannot afford to lose eligibility for City capital funding. With previous DCLA support, we have renovated and maintained the five historic theatres we operate in midtown, including three on Broadway, ensuring that they will be a resource for New Yorkers for decades to come. In that tradition, we will seek CDF support for future necessary capital updates, including potentially urgent construction projects at our theatres.

We appreciated our Program Officer's feedback on our submission for FY23, which we have applied to our FY24 application. But we are concerned that DCLA is urging more discrete project funding, when what organizations need most is funding that will sustain our operations at-large. Moving forward, we would be grateful to better understand how companies are selected for safety net funding and how DCLA determines the award amount. Given the precarity facing arts institutions, we respectfully advocate for safety net funding to be provided for all applicants, which would promote stability across the not-for-profit sector. Now is the time for the City to invest in the future of the arts.

We also join our colleagues to request the following reforms to CDF's administration, which will provide further transparency and reassure organizations across the cultural sector.

- We ask that the grant schedule start earlier so that grant letters can go out August 1 to better align with organization fiscal year and programming in city schools.
- We ask that DCLA publicly release data on distribution of CDF funds—information the agency has as soon as it sends out grant letters.
- We ask that DCLA clearly explain the available funding streams within CDF and how best to navigate the system to be considered for those opportunities.
- We ask that the panel process be restructured to allow for at least three rounds of discussion on the applications, and for council staff to sit in on panels for better transparency.

The arts are an essential part of New York City's identity, and not-for-profits are the reason why. We are cultural flagships, education providers, tourism draws, and community hubs that make New York a better place to live and visit. We deeply appreciate the City's years of ongoing partnership, and your consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Mercanti". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "S" and a trailing flourish.

Sarah Mercanti
Director of Government Relations
Roundabout Theatre Company



FOR THE RECORD

Testimony to The New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries
September 26, 2023

Dear Chair Ossé, and members of the committee,

Thank you for inviting members of the public to testify on the subject of the administration of the Cultural Development Fund, the small and mighty program fund from the largest municipal funder of arts and culture in the nation. We testify today on behalf of The Clemente Soto Velez Cultural and Educational Center, a beacon of affordability to hundreds of artists and pulpit where countless New York based Latinx, BIPOC, local Lower East Side, and international partners create contemporary work and co-productions in a collaborative environment, for the past 30 years. We echo the calls of our predecessors and colleagues to draw attention and action to the equitable use of these funds to right the wrongs of historic and racialized dispossession, and to serve the vast diversity of New Yorkers by fully funding their ability to develop and express our traditions.

Like many peers in our cohort, we administer our main cultural programs through the CDF. The Clemente receives approximately \$50,000 annually from this fund, which underwrites four major festivals of the arts, which supports over 55 performances, 300 performing artists, and 30,000 audience members. Our curatorial program supports 100 visual artists and 15,000 audience members. We also remain committed and responsive to the communities we represent, often mobilizing our cultural resources through these programs in times of crisis, like the devastation of Hurricane María, the twin pandemics of COVID19 and racism, and the migration crisis facing our city. With our allocation alone, the city of New York spends \$1 per audience member, which remains woefully low for a historically low income and Latino community. We know that our peers in this cohort face similar challenges, with a limit of \$100,000 to any CDF award.

More specifically, The Clemente is both a multidisciplinary and arts service organization, the latter functions of which provides unique services to cultural fields through our deeply subsidized 42 visual artist studios, five theaters, 13 administrative offices, and two galleries. Yet, **the CDF only allows for the selection and application of one discipline to be considered for funding, which fails to more fully fund the scope and impact of our work.**



To conclude, The Clemente, alongside the Latinx Arts Consortium of New York, a coalition which represents over 40 Latinx arts organizations, advocates for significant increases in funding for the DCLA overall, with additional resources being directed to where they are currently most lacking. We believe the path forward includes:

- 1. DCLA must begin to report annually on the distribution of its funding. We support Councilmember Ossé's Intro 1184-2023, that will help do just that.**
- 2. Equity must be defined as directing significantly greater new resources to the communities and organizations that currently receive less funding from the rest of DCLA's allocations.**
- 3. We must see a change in an often-overlooked aspect of funding inequity: the way funds are distributed.**

We respectfully stress the urgency of this path, to protect the city's cultural economy, sector, and spirit through a progressively equitable distribution of public funding for our sector which makes New York City a cultural capital of the globe.

Sincerely,

Libertad Guerra
Executive Director

Andrea Gordillo
Development Director



From: The New 42nd Street, Inc
Testimony to the New York City Council Committee for Cultural Affairs
Hearing on Administering DCLA's Cultural Development Fund - 9/26/23
Hearing Date - September 26, 2023

The New 42nd Street (New 42) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony to the Committee for Cultural Affairs in support of funding for the performing arts and arts education programming. New Victory Theater is the premiere nonprofit New York City theater for kids and families, located in the heart of Times Square, with an annual audience of approximately 60,000 people. It is one of New York City's largest providers of live performing arts and classroom arts education programming, reaching 25,000 students in all grades annually. Through our own research on the intrinsic impacts of the performing arts on children, New 42 knows young people who have access to the arts receive myriad benefits that help them become more collaborative with their peers, as well as empathetic and understanding of the lives of others. Crucially important in a city where thousands of children live in underserved neighborhoods, the arts also inspire students to imagine a more optimistic future for themselves. New 42 believes access to the performing arts is an essential right for all. In November 2021 the theater reopened after the pandemic and a parent attended a performance at New Victory with his two children and wrote a beautiful thank you note to us which included, "This was the first public artistic piece we've taken our children to in nearly two years, and my God, what a glorious, glorious piece it is. What a show. What a show. What a show." We are so happy to be back, live, for New Yorkers of all ages who need the rejuvenating spirit of the theater. New Victory's School Engagement team has also designed arts learning resources rooted in culturally-responsive education, and informed by input from our partner teachers. The learning resources have been created to engage students as artists, activate critical thinking skills, encourage risk-taking, boost creative problem-solving, and to be enjoyable. The resources include activities for grades Pre-K through high school, and are extremely flexible, so teachers can customize curriculum for their students' needs. The program is being distributed to educators at our 150+ partner schools across the city and arts education liaisons across the entire New York City Department of Education. We fervently believe New 42 is a critical cultural partner for New York City and that expanding access to the arts to all children will help us move toward a more equitable and just society. With the City Council's help, and continued funding of arts initiatives, we will bring the performing arts into an ever-expanding number of homes, classrooms and schools across the City and we will bring New Yorkers, even the littlest amongst us, into the New Victory Theater for live performances that inspire, challenge, and bring hope and joy to all New Yorkers. Thank you for the invitation to provide this testimony and thank you for your support.



IN THE KEY OF *love*

Young People's Chorus of New York City®

Francisco J. Núñez, Founder/Artistic Director

37 West 65th Street, 2nd Floor

New York, NY 10023

T: 212.289.7779 | F: 212.289.6918 | www.ypc.org

**Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and Int'l
Intergroup Relations**

**Testimony Submitted by:
Emma Grettenberger, Assistant Director of
Development & Institutional Support**

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Thank you to Chair Ossé and the entire Cultural Affairs Committee for this opportunity to provide testimony. We are so grateful for the Council's continued support arts and culture citywide. I am Emma Grettenberger, Assistant Director of Development & Institutional Support for the Young People's Chorus of New York City (YPC).

The Young People's Chorus of New York City (YPC), founded by Artistic Director Francisco J. Núñez, provides children of all cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds with a unique program of music education and choral performance that seeks to fulfill each child's potential, while creating a model of artistic excellence and diversity that reflects, and enriches, the community.

Núñez experienced stark segregation and inequities among NYC's communities. His personal experiences formed the beliefs upon which YPC was founded: that settings that bring together children of diverse backgrounds are critical to young peoples' ability to broaden their perspectives and succeed as members of an inclusive society; and that music has the power to build bridges of understanding across differences. YPC not only provides unparalleled musical training, performance, and pathways to higher education, but also creates a space where young people feel safe and supported as they develop talent, skills, and life-long friendships.

YPC has served thousands of NYC children, ages 8-18 since our inception. Our three core programs are our School Choruses where we work with 18-20 public schools to provide a music and choral education program, our Performance Choruses which is YPC's core after-school program, and our Community Choruses where children attend after-school rehearsals in their neighborhood hosted by YPC community partners and perform concerts throughout the year in their communities and across New York City.

City funding, and in particular our CDF Funding from the Department of Cultural Affairs, allows us to provide all these programs. While we understand the need for reform and the desire to increase funding access to more organizations, the process as it took shape last year, ended up critically hurting organizations like YPC. Last year, without any warning, we saw a \$34,570 cut in funding (down to 118,680), which includes \$41,190 in safety funds that we were told were a one-time measure. If that safety net funding is not available this year and assuming we receive the same score as last year, that means we will be down nearly \$76,000 from where we stood before the reforms were enacted.

That kind of cut, for an organization of our size, is catastrophic. We WILL have to cut back on programming, and we WILL have to cut staff. In addition to this cut, we feel that there was both a lack of communication and transparency by the agency. We never received a clear understanding of why our funds were cut so drastically nor were we provided with any sort of suggestions on how our application could have been improved. We went into this year's application with zero guidance on how to address this situation.

While it is unclear what caused this issue, YPC is supportive of going back to a system of having a minimum of 3 rounds of panel meetings so that each application receives the proper attention and vetting it deserves, considering the many hours and days required to complete this application. We would also be in favor of returning to the system where Council staff are included in the panel process, so that individuals who are most aware of the importance of our programs in their respective districts, may have a seat at the table. With regards to transparency of the process there needs to be a timely release of all data re: how these awards were evaluated and allocated.

Finally, we think that there needs to be additional oversight hearings on this matter, especially as the awards for this year have not been announced yet. We are very concerned that, combined with the anticipated PEG cuts, we may see an even bigger cut to our bottom line this year.

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



Myra Hernández
Director of Program and Curriculum Development
Cool Culture
mhernandez@coolculture.org
September, 26, 2023
DCLA's Cultural Development Fund Hearing

My name is Myra Hernández, Director of Program and Curriculum Development of Cool Culture. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Cool Culture, and the community of 50,000 families that access the city's rich cultural resources through our arts and cultural programs.

With almost 25 years of BIPOC leadership, Cool Culture was founded to correct the historic disparities in how (and which) communities are able to access cultural resources needed to ensure they can engage individually and collectively in creative practice. Our staff of 13 Cool Culture team members are Black, Latinx, East- and South Asian American, LGBTQ+ and allies. Cool Culture's community is consists of:

- **50,000 families**, who reflect the cultural diversity of our nation. 83% of our families are BIPOC. 47% speak a primary language other than English. The majority face economic injustice.¹
- **Over 1,000 educators** and administrators from over **450 schools, early learning programs**, and community based organizations.
- **Hundreds of cultural workers**, museum administrators, artists, and scientists from **90 of NYC's most celebrated museums**, historical societies, botanical gardens, and zoos.

I would like to thank the Committee on Cultural Affairs Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Chi A. Ossé, Chair; and Members: Eric Dinowitz, Amanda Farías, Shahana K. Hanif, Crystal Hudson, Farah N. Louis, Rita C. Joseph, and Sandra Ung for the opportunity to present testimony today about the Cultural Development Fund.

I am here today to speak on behalf of continued capital investment in arts and culture with the added goal of moving towards achieving equity in NYC cultural funding through reforms in the CDF. With organizations with annual budgets under \$1 million representing 90% of nonprofit cultural groups, their share of all gifts, grants and contributions has continued to drop over the years. A 2015 study by the University of Maryland's Devos Institute for Arts Management on the past, present, and future of African American and Latino museums, dance companies, and theater companies found that by the year 2000, approximately 60% of funding for mainstream arts organizations came from individual donors, while African American and Latino organizations received only 6% of funding from individual donors. These numbers speak to the urgency of capital funds for small BIPOC led organizations for whom government support is so incredibly important.

¹ Most families have incomes at 200% of the poverty line or below, and all have a child enrolled in one of NYC's subsidized Child Care, Head Start and UPK Centers, or enrolled in grades PreK or K in a NYC Title I Public School.

By choosing to increase funding of BIPOC led arts and cultural organizations, the CDLA is choosing to right the wrongs of systemic racism and inequities families from historically marginalized communities continue to face. A landmark 2017 study by the School of Social Policy & Practice at the University of Pennsylvania examined New York City's "neighborhood cultural ecosystem" and found that cultural resources are significantly linked to a higher quality of life, particularly in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods across NYC that have the least cultural resources.

Cool Culture urges the City Council and the Administration the following:

- To make the existing Cultural Advisory Council be a true oversight arm for DCLA. That it be supported with legislation requiring DCLA to meet with the council several times a year, and that those meetings be made public.
- That the panel process be restructured to allow for:
 - Diversify panel make up with regard to: representation across boroughs, to ensure geographic distribution, and racial diversity;
 - A return to inclusion of council staff on panels for better transparency.
 - Increase the stipend for panel members
- That the appeals process be reformed to be made more transparent and accessible for any organization with a legitimate grievance.
- That DCLA use an online tracking system so that organizations can know where their funds are in the process and can better predict when they will arrive.
- Increase DCLA staffing and funding to provide the agency with the bandwidth to provide assistance to funding applicants and grantees, to allow for more transparency in the funding process. Currently only 6% of the DCLA budget covers direct agency expenses.
- That organizations could accept or decline all but the first year of multi year grants, and simply reapply in the out years. And rather than basing grant amounts on a single year, to base it on 3 years of an organization's budget to guard against outlier years like FY21.
- With the goal of increasing equity:
 - Allow appeals from orgs that got zero funding from the CDF, regardless of whether they received CM discretionary dollars;
 - Allow smaller unfunded orgs get access to feedback on their application;
 - Opportunity to have a focused category/fund to award additional funds for targeted orgs (based on budget size, BIPOC leadership, etc) towards Equity objectives.

Many worthy cultural organizations face challenges to our survival, especially those organizations led by or serving Black, Indigenous, People of Color, (BIPOC), immigrant, LGBTQIA+, low-income, disabled, and older New Yorkers. We strongly urge you to ensure the necessary support for arts and culture and to include the priorities of cultural organizations, particularly BIPOC-led institutions that have deep relationships with historically marginalized communities in New York City. This support will enable Cool Culture and other arts and

culture community members to continue providing critical programs as many communities struggle through the city's recovery phase.

HISTORY: THE LONGSTANDING NEED FOR CULTURAL EQUITY & ACCESS

Systemic Racism and Its Devastating Impacts: An Historic Challenge In Need of Immediate Action

In historically marginalized communities in NYC, families and children face the stark reality of underinvestment in arts and culture, while more privileged communities benefit from systemic inequities.² **In the process of creating the first-ever CreateNYC Cultural Plan, tens of thousands of New Yorkers named cultural equity and inclusion as their top priorities and expressed a desire to access culture within their own neighborhoods.**³

- A Chicago-based study commissioned by The MacArthur Foundation examined the relationship between the arts and neighborhood capacity and community life found that **initiatives led by small arts organizations connected to local social networks significantly impact the wellbeing of communities.** They provide: access to new and existing resources to be shared by residents, opportunities to learn new skills, a gathering space for residents of differing socioeconomic status, and for cross cultural dialogue and a structure for meaningful social interaction, and to build positive social relationships.⁴

The reality is that **the hardships faced by BIPOC families and communities are most frequently met by the many creative responses we have generated from our own networks, organizations, which lack adequate funding to fully realize solutions to the challenges faced by BIPOC communities.**

As outlined in an April 2022 letter co-authored by the Citizens Advisory Committee and the Cultural Affairs Advisory Commission to Mayor Adams, members of the City Council, and DCLA:

“the only path to providing longevity and viability for our cultural organizations and artists in New York is to extend a commitment of baseline funding to support BIPOC, outer borough groups, and groups with budgets under \$250,000.

Without baseline funding, culture and the argument that equitable access to culture is a core value of our city will always be secondary to political interests and negotiations.”

The research support for this is clear, as stated in the HueArts Report:

“POC arts entities face extra layers of challenges in securing adequate funding in comparison to predominantly white-led arts entities. Compounding the inherent competitiveness of grant programs, POC arts entities face additional challenges

² In NYC, the largest 139 cultural groups received 82 percent of all revenue, while 1,807 with budgets under \$1 million received 6 percent. [Not Just Money: Equity Issues in Cultural Philanthropy](#), Helicon Collaborative, July 2017.

³ [Create NYC a Cultural Plan for All New Yorkers](#), 2017.

⁴ [Leveraging Assets: How Small Budget Arts Activities Benefit Neighborhoods](#), MacArthur Foundation, Diane Grams and Michael Warr, 2003.

related to structural racism and to a lack of understanding of the organizations' communities and work."⁵

As outlined in a report Commissioned by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the New York Community Trust: *What Are the Paradigm Shifts Necessary for the Arts Sector to Nurture THRIVING Institutions of Color?* There is a need for capacity building support that the private sector is often reluctant to provide:

"deeper investments in operational competencies (finance, reach, scale, communications, and revenue diversification) [and] capacity (fundraising, marketing, financial management, archives/legacy preservation, and board development)"

CREATENYC

Legislation requiring New York City to produce its first-ever comprehensive cultural plan was sponsored by the City Council, and signed into legislation in 2015, and the CreateNYC Plan published in 2017. **At the time, in NYC, the largest 139 cultural groups received 82 percent of all revenue (public and private), while 1,807 with budgets under \$1 million received 6 percent.**⁶ **As stated in CreateNYC:**

"CreateNYC tackles the challenging question: How can we work toward a sustainable, inclusive, and equitable cultural sector that serves all New Yorkers?" The legislation called for the cultural plan to address specific issues including the availability and distribution of cultural activities in the five boroughs, the relationship between cultural activities and social and economic health, affordable housing and workspace needs of artists, and increasing arts education and activities in public schools"

Since the publishing of CreateNYC, DCLA has taken advantage of a record setting one-time infusion of \$40 million to strengthen arts and cultural organizations that have experienced systemic inequities by adding new organizations to its portfolio of CDF grantees. But extreme inequities remain, with 57% OF DCLA funds allocated to 34 CIGS and just 22% to the thousand plus smaller organizations funded through CDF. In addition, how DCLA investments, and cultural funding from other NYC agencies track back to the goals of the plan, is still unknown.

COOL CULTURE'S ROLE



WE ARE A WORK OF ART

Health + Wellbeing through the Arts: We Are A Work of Art

The pandemic and slow recovery, has shed a light, and exacerbated long standing structural issues and oppression. Cool Culture's *We Are A Work of Art: Health + Wellbeing Initiative* supports wellness through family festivals, artmaking events and workshops that feature BIPOC artists and health practitioners. Activities are co-designed with museums, educators, families and other community stakeholders.

⁵ [HueArts Report](#), 2022

⁶ [Not Just Money: Equity Issues in Cultural Philanthropy](#), Helicon Collaborative, July 2017

⁷ Research conducted by The Social Impact of the Arts Project found 4,700 nonprofit cultural programs in NYC. [The Social Wellbeing of New York City's Neighborhoods: The Contribution of Culture and the Arts](#), 2017.

Art Access and Cultural Equity: CityWide Cultural Access Program

The largest program of its kind in the country, we facilitate **a network of 450 Title I Schools and early childhood centers, and 50,000+ member families who enjoy free access to 90+ museums, historical societies, science centers, botanic gardens, and zoos.** The result of this collaboration is 180,000 museum visits each year across the city. In response to requests from families and museum partners, we are designing a Cool Culture Digital Platform which will complement current workshops and give families the tools to connect and organize self-led in-person events.

Culturally Competent Family Engagement & Early Education through the Arts

Cool Culture's **We Are All Curators** initiative brings families, educators, teaching artists and cultural workers together to create new practices that support equity in schools, museums and communities.



- **Curators for Educators** is a seminar series and peer exchange that supports educators to create equitable learning environments. It also prepares educators to discuss the real world issues that shape the lives of young children and families.
- **Curators for Families** is a place-based initiative that builds community among families with young children. Families, educators, teaching artists and museum staff co-create projects that include experiences in galleries, art making, storytelling and curation of exhibits that center community priorities.

**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: Laurie A. Cumbo

Address: _____

I represent: DCLA

Address: _____

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1184 Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Martha Ayo

Address: _____

I represent: Moscow Ave

Address: Brooklyn NY

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kate Madigan

Address: _____

I represent: The Public Theater

Address: 425 Lafayette St. NY, 10003

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1184-2023 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/26/2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kimberly Olsen

Address: Center Blvd, LIC, NY 1109

I represent: NYC Arts in Education Roundtable

Address: 219 W 19th Street, NY, NY 10011

**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: 9/26/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: H. Harvey

Address: Van Brunt St Bklyn NY 11231

I represent: Hook Arts Media

Address: 480 Van Brunt St Bklyn NY 11231

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mura Hernandez

Address: 47th St Astoria 11105

I represent: Cool Culture

Address: _____

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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: Andrea Cordillo

Address: _____

I represent: The Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center

Address: 107 Suffolk Street NY, NY 10009

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Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LISA GOLD

Address: _____

I represent: ASTAN AMERICAN Arts Alliance (NY)

Address: 29 W 80th St NY NY 10021

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Appearance Card

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 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LUCY SEXTON

Address: 160 SIXTH AVE 10013

I represent: NEW YORKERS FOR CULTURE &

Address: SAME ARTS

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 9-26-23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: FRAN GARBER-COHEN

Address: 599 E. 7 ST BKLYN NY

I represent: REGINA OPERA COMPANY

Address: c/o F. GARBER-COHEN, 599 E. 7 ST
BKLYN NY 11218

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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 in favor in opposition

Date: 9/26/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christopher Leon Johnson

Address: BURFORD AVENUE

I represent: SPY

Address: _____

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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: Gregory King

Address: W. 213rd St. NYC 10034

I represent: Dance NYC

Address: 218 E 18 Street NYC 10003

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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: Alton S. Murrey

Address: 31 Chambers St

I represent: Dep of Cultural Affs

Address: 31 Chambers St

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