

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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November 19, 2013  
Start: 1:19 p.m.  
Recess: 4:15 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm,  
16th Fl.

B E F O R E:

JAMES G. VAN BRAMER  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Stephen Levin  
Elizabeth S. Crowley  
Inez E. Dickens  
Daniel Dromm  
Andy King

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

Darcy Hector  
Queens Botanical Garden  
Representing Cultural Institutions Group

Mark Rossier  
Deputy Director  
New York Foundation for the Arts

Ginny Loulouides  
Executive Director  
Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York

Naomi Hersson-Ringskog  
Executive Director  
No Longer Empty

Anita Durst  
Artistic Director  
Chashama

Karen Zornow Leiding  
Director  
Arts and Business Council of New York

Caron Atlas  
Director  
Arts & Democracy Project  
NOCD-NY

Ella Weiss  
President  
Brooklyn Arts Council

Laurie Cumbo  
Council Member-elect, 35th District  
Founder & Director  
Museum of Contemporary African  
Diasporan Arts (MoCADA)

Lane Harwell  
Executive Director  
Dance NYC

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

Alexandra Farkas  
Vice Chairman  
Fractured Atlas Board of Directors

Tamara Greenfield  
Executive Director  
Fourth Arts Block

Anusha Venkataraman  
Director  
Green Light District Initiative  
El Puente

Amy Sananman  
Executive Director  
Groundswell

Risa Shoup  
Associate Director  
The Invisible Dog Art Center

Heather Woodfield  
Executive Director  
One Percent for Culture

Eric Pryor  
Executive Director  
The Center for the Arts Education

Therese Urban  
Artist  
Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition

Jason Maas  
Founder and Director  
The Artist Volunteer Center

Christina Lem  
Director of Foundation and Government  
Partnerships  
Poets House

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

Ellen Pollan  
Deputy Director  
Bronx Council on the Arts

Susan Goldbetter  
Executive Director  
Circuit Productions

Noel Joseph Allain  
Artistic Director & Co-Founder  
The Bushwick Starr Theater

Catherine Green  
Founder & Executive Director  
ARTs East New York

Ethan Vogt  
Executive Director  
Nuit Blanche New York

Diane Jacobowitz  
Executive and Artistic Director  
Dancewave

Jessica Silverman  
Carnegie Hall

Melissa Chapman  
Vice President  
Government & Community Relations  
Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good morning  
3 everyone and to those in the overflow room, good  
4 morning as well; we don't always have overflow rooms  
5 for the committee hearings, but I think that's a  
6 great sign of interest in this bill and in this  
7 topic, so with this [gavel] gavel I call this hearing  
8 to order.

9 My name is Council Member Jimmy Van  
10 Bramer; I'm very proud to be Chair of the Committee  
11 on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International  
12 Intergroup Relations. I am joined by the co-sponsor  
13 of Intro 1136, Council Member Steve Levin from  
14 Brooklyn who is a neighboring council member, a  
15 friend and someone who cares a great deal about the  
16 cultural community in the City of New York and who's  
17 really helped spearhead Intro 1136, along with Romy  
18 [phonetic] Meadow [phonetic], his terrific staff  
19 ember who's worked very hard on this piece of  
20 legislation as well.

21 So today we're here to discuss the  
22 proposal, which is to develop a comprehensive  
23 cultural plan for the City of New York and I wanna  
24 say that, while the City of New York is different  
25 than any other city in the world, it is important to

1  
2 note that several cities and localities have  
3 undertaken a similar approach and I think with some  
4 good results. Since I became chair of this committee  
5 four years ago, we've explored a wide range of issues  
6 concerning arts and culture in the City of New York,  
7 including obstacles that artists, institutions and  
8 organizations face, whether that's affordability for  
9 emerging artists, a lack of affordable performance  
10 space and of course, the cost of living, in addition  
11 to our annual spirited budget dance, which all of you  
12 are very, very familiar with. But the budget dance  
13 can often feel disempowering and I'd like us to  
14 approach culture and the arts from a position of  
15 power and actually have us driving the agenda and not  
16 simply responding to external forces that we feel  
17 like we have little or no control over.

18 Our city is obviously the preeminent  
19 cultural capitol of the world, yet too many people,  
20 for various reasons don't feel a strong connection to  
21 it or maybe feel excluded from it and the economic  
22 realities facing our city and their own lives can  
23 sometimes act as barriers to access to the arts and I  
24 think it's really important to be as inclusive as  
25 possible in developing a cultural plan and I for one

1 think having plans are good and setting goals are  
2 good; I do that in my own personal life, I planned to  
3 run for City Council and I won, so it's [laughter]..  
4 it can work Steve, it can work.

5 So I think this is important and I think  
6 many of us agree; a road map that shows us the way  
7 and the path and that includes so many voices from so  
8 many different neighborhoods, from so many different  
9 cultures I believe can only bring us to a better  
10 place when it comes to nurturing an environment that  
11 encourages risk takers and propels the arts forward;  
12 I think that's really, really important.

13 One of the goals of the cultural plan is  
14 to link emerging talent opportunities and broaden our  
15 cultural audiences to include those who may be  
16 disenfranchised and I am anxious to hear all of the  
17 testimony and all the suggestions and input; I think  
18 Council Member Levin and I feel strongly about this,  
19 but I also believe we feel strongly that this a  
20 conversation; this is the beginning of a very, very  
21 important conversation for our city and for the  
22 cultural community and we want to hear from you, your  
23 ideas; your suggestions as we continue to mold this  
24 plan.  
25

1  
2 Obviously we also have a change in  
3 administration coming and we are certainly anxious to  
4 include Mayor-elect de Blasio and his future DCA team  
5 in what we're doing; as they are currently engaged in  
6 some transition activities I know that they are very  
7 much interested and concerned about and wanna make  
8 stronger the cultural community in the City of New  
9 York.

10 I also wanna mention that we are live  
11 tweeting this hearing, so if any of you tweet and are  
12 on social media, encourage you to tweet; we did this  
13 once before with the Cultural Committee a couple of  
14 years ago and we trended, we trended in New York City  
15 with our hashtag; our hashtag today is nycultural  
16 plan, #nyculturalplan, so feel free to tweet, use  
17 that hashtag and to have a conversation; not just be  
18 in this room, but all over the City of New York, and  
19 as part of our live tweeting, which I will do once I  
20 find my phone, I wanna say that we're gonna be taking  
21 suggestions and ideas from the folks out, all over  
22 the City as well.

23 So with that I want to recognize Council  
24 Member Stephen Levin from Brooklyn, who is proud to  
25 represent a culturally rich district and who is a



1  
2 prime sponsor of Intro 1136 and a terrific council  
3 member I might add.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very  
5 much, Chair Van Bramer and I'll keep my remarks  
6 brief, because I wanna hear from you all about your  
7 thoughts on this and how we can work together moving  
8 forward for the next several years on developing, you  
9 know, as Chair Van Bramer said, a road map for the  
10 future. I wanna thank the Chair for his unwavering  
11 support of the cultural diversity of New York City  
12 and the cultural institutions that provide such a  
13 great service our city and this is something that I  
14 think is very necessary; this is a conversation that  
15 I think is important for us to have so that we can  
16 best harness the immense creativity that is  
17 throughout our city and to make sure that we are  
18 fostering culture and the arts in a way that is  
19 commensurate with the great talent, but then also  
20 making sure that we are delivering culture to those  
21 that need it, those that are staved for it; those  
22 that could best use it, and in listening to Chair Van  
23 Bramer, I'd like to share a personal anecdote; it  
24 reminded me of when I was younger, as a teenager -- I  
25 grew up in New Jersey -- but I would take every

1  
2 opportunity that I could get to come into the City to  
3 absorb the immense, the just tremendously vast  
4 resources that are here and sometimes we... you know, I  
5 think we take those for granted, but for a kid  
6 growing up in the suburbs, coming into New York and  
7 going to the MoMA or going to the Met or going to a  
8 concert or going to a small gallery opening or  
9 anything like that, from the smallest to the biggest  
10 I think presents such value, not only to our city,  
11 but our entire region really and so I'm really proud  
12 to be the prime sponsor and proud to embark on this  
13 with all of you and with our great chair of cultural  
14 affairs, Jimmy Van Bramer, and looking forward to  
15 working with not only the new administration, but  
16 this administration while they're still in office, to  
17 help lay the groundwork for this and so with that  
18 I'll turn it back to the Chair and I look forward to  
19 hearing from you all. Thanks.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
21 much, Council Member Levin; I wanna recognize that  
22 we've been joined by Council Member Elizabeth Crowley  
23 from Queens and a member of the Cultural Affairs  
24 Committee; I also wanna note that there are 15  
25 Council Members who are co-sponsors of this

1  
2 legislation so far, but we certainly anticipate that  
3 number growing eventually to a veto-proof majority,  
4 should that be necessary.

5           So we are also pleased to be joined by  
6 Council Member Inez Dickens of Manhattan; a member of  
7 the Cultural Affairs Committee, so welcome  
8 Councilwoman Dickens. And with that I think we'll  
9 get started with the first panel. We have a lot of  
10 folks who would like to testify; who have signed up  
11 already; more are signing up and for those in the  
12 overflow room, if there are folks there who would  
13 like to speak, please sign up and we will call your  
14 name. So we are going to have a clock of three  
15 minutes for everyone testifying so we move this along  
16 and make this as productive as possible and everybody  
17 gets to be heard.

18           So the first panel, we're gonna hear from  
19 Ginny Louloudes from A.R.T./New York, Mark Rossier  
20 from NYFA and Darcy Hector from... representing the  
21 CIGs, but with the Queens Botanical Garden; those  
22 will be the first three and then we'll do panels of  
23 three. I wanna remind everyone again that we're live  
24 streaming this hearing and live tweeting the hearing  
25

2 and the hashtag is #nycculturalplan, so feel free to  
3 engage in the discussion on Twitter as we go along.

4 And I think, Ginny, if you wanna start us  
5 off...

6 [background comment]

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh did you?

8 Okay, work it out amongst yourselves [background  
9 comments, laughter] and then you can go last.

10 [pause] Great. Thank you.

11 [background comment, laughter]

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well we love

13 Queens; I'm just saying. [background comment]

14 [pause]

15 [background comments]

16 DARCY HECTOR: Uhm-hm. Okay. Good  
17 afternoon Chairman Van Bramer, Council Member Levin  
18 and members of the Committee; I'm Darcy Hector of  
19 Queens Botanical Garden here today to represent the  
20 Cultural Institutions Group, 33 institutions, zoos,  
21 botanic gardens, museums and performing art spaces  
22 housed in city-owned properties or located on city  
23 land. As a group it is our privilege to work every  
24 day with arts groups of all sizes and kinds and with  
25 residents from every community in the City.

1  
2 Thank you for the opportunity to testify  
3 about proposed Local Law 1136 to amend the city  
4 charter in relation to a comprehensive cultural plan.  
5 The Committee has shown great vision and leadership  
6 in proposing such a plan.

7 As a group, the CIG has analyzed the  
8 legislative intent of Intro 1136 and applaud this  
9 effort to extend cultural opportunities for all in  
10 the City. The prospective of a cohesive,  
11 encompassing cultural plan that endeavors to make  
12 arts opportunities available for every resident is  
13 enticing. However, the CIG is concerned that the  
14 scope of research, information gathering and public  
15 conversations outlined in 1136 is beyond the  
16 administrative capacities of the Department of  
17 Cultural Affairs in its current state, the agency  
18 which would be charged with these tasks under the  
19 proposed legislation.

20 The creation of a cultural plan would  
21 require the active involvement of other agencies,  
22 including the Department of City Planning and  
23 especially the Department of Education, the leading  
24 arts educator in the City, along with youth services,  
25 aging and others. The involvement of for-profit

1 cultural players whose role in many cases  
2 intersections with that of non-profit arts  
3 organizations would also be needed.  
4

5 The cost of carrying out the needed  
6 research and consensus-building among the many  
7 stakeholders would be considerable. For example, in  
8 2001 the New York Foundation for the Arts, a service  
9 organization for individual artists, developed a  
10 report titled, "Culture Counts: Strategies for a More  
11 Vibrant Cultural Life for New York City." It was the  
12 first in-depth study of the City's cultural life in  
13 nearly 30 years and was intended as a transition  
14 document for the incoming Bloomberg Administration.  
15 The study's architects brought together arts groups  
16 large and small from all disciplines, individual  
17 artists and the business community, as represented by  
18 the New York City Partnership and the Chamber of  
19 Commerce, with public forums held in each borough.  
20 The budget for this effort totaled \$515,000, funds  
21 which were provided by nine private [bell]  
22 foundations. It was a massive undertaking requiring  
23 significant resources; thus, additional funding over  
24 and above the adopted FY 14 cultural budget would  
25 need to be identified to create a plan or the process

1 would hurt the very sector it is intended to help.  
2 Unfortunately, the release of Culture Counts was  
3 overshadowed by the attacks of 9/11; the City's focus  
4 was on recovering from that devastating event and the  
5 recommendations contained in the report received  
6 scant attention.  
7

8 Twelve years later, as a major  
9 stakeholder in the cultural agenda of this city, the  
10 CIG looks forward to working with the Committee in  
11 strengthening Intro 1136 in order to create a viable  
12 and living cultural plan. I submit this testimony  
13 with great thanks to the Committee and its members,  
14 your commitment to the arts and leadership on behalf  
15 of the cultural community and New York City residents  
16 is heartening and deeply appreciated.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
18 much; I wanna recognize we've been joined by Council  
19 Member Andy King from the Bronx, a member of this  
20 Committee and it almost seems appropriate now that  
21 NYFA would go next, since your plan was referenced;  
22 we can engage... [interpose]

23 GINNY LOULOUEDES: and he's from Kings  
24 County... [crosstalk]

25 MARK ROSSIER: So...

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: and he's from  
3 Kings County; we love Kings County.

4 [laughter]

5 MARK ROSSIER: Exactly, but I was not  
6 there at the time; I was with Ginny at the time.

7 [laughter] It's all, all a tangled web.

8 Thank you Chairman Van Bramer and members  
9 of the Committee for the opportunity to participate  
10 in this discussion; I'm Mark Rossier, Deputy Director  
11 of the New York Foundation for the Arts.

12 NYFA has, since 1971 served the needs of  
13 individual artists through the City. In talking  
14 about the arts, people often forget that art is  
15 actually made by artists who have to find ways to  
16 live and survive and create in this city. Therefore  
17 we were heartened to see that a portion of this  
18 legislation calls for an examination of the needs of  
19 this sometimes overlooked constituency. It is  
20 particularly appropriate that real estate is  
21 referenced. Last weekend I was invited to present a  
22 panel on the challenges facing artists at the Talking  
23 Transitions Tent in Duarte Park; as you can imagine,  
24 real estate figured prominently in the conversation.



1  
2 One of the participants made an  
3 especially cogent point, noting that those artists  
4 who have been able to last in the city for 10 or 20  
5 or 30 years generally fall into two camps -- those  
6 with trust funds and those with low overhead --  
7 meaning those who found low-cost or rent controlled  
8 space in rundown, undesirable neighborhoods before  
9 they became fashionable, yet managed to stay there  
10 and continue making work.

11 But these days there are fewer and fewer  
12 unfashionable neighborhoods and it takes a much  
13 shorter period of time for them to be discovered and  
14 when they are discovered... [static] okay... and when  
15 they are discovered, it is frequently because they  
16 have become artist hubs. This applies not only to  
17 living space, but studio space for visual artists and  
18 rehearsal space for performing artists.

19 The impact is more than personal; real  
20 estate can also dictate the kind of work that people  
21 make. If there is limited room to make art, the work  
22 gets smaller; if a playwright can only rehearse in  
23 their living room and they live in a studio, you'll  
24 end up with a small show. The same goes for visual  
25 artists -- forget the trip ticks and think 8 x 10.

1  
2 Of course, small work can be amazing, but only when  
3 artists deliberately choose to make small work, not  
4 when that is their only option.

5           Unfortunately another way artists choose  
6 to deal with the situation is to leave, to go to New  
7 Orleans or Detroit or Philadelphia or Chicago or any  
8 of the other places that have far more affordable and  
9 very friendly to artists. If artists who want to  
10 keep being an artist can't afford to stay here, we  
11 are losing an incredible resource.

12           I hope the thinking about individual  
13 artists will not be limited strictly to real estate,  
14 because they may play a role in achieving other  
15 elements of the proposed plan, especially with regard  
16 to creating greater access for the various  
17 underserved neighborhoods. Opening new facilities in  
18 this community is not always the answer, because such  
19 buildings often drive up real estate values, driving  
20 out the very people they are meant to serve.

21 Alternative solutions may be having artists in  
22 residence at affordable housing facilities or having  
23 a portion of such facilities created as live-work  
24 studios for artists, or having curators, directors  
25 and teaching artists work with residents and

1  
2 neighborhoods and then have exhibitions or public  
3 performances in spaces so the community feels pride  
4 and ownership of the artists in their midst.

5           Finally, I would ask that consideration  
6 be made to see that DCA has the necessary financial  
7 and human resources to take on a study of this scope.  
8 As Darcy referenced, NYFA oversaw similar initiative  
9 in 2001 and it cost in excess of \$500,000; had a  
10 project team of eight, [bell] not including NYFA  
11 staff. Therefore, I hope that the DCA will be given  
12 funding above and beyond its current budget to take  
13 this on, because the current funds are desperately  
14 needed by the grantees. For example, NYFA uses our  
15 funding to provide cash grants to individual artists  
16 throughout the City, professional development  
17 training, which allows artists to take control of  
18 their careers rather than passively waiting for  
19 opportunities, and provide online resources where  
20 artists can find employment, grant, residency and  
21 other opportunities; all things they tell us are  
22 critical to their ability to remain and make a life  
23 in New York City and are all dependent on DCA  
24 funding. Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
3 much; I wanna recognized that we've been joined by  
4 Council Member Danny Dromm from Queens, a member of  
5 the Cultural Affairs Committee. Ginny.

6 GINNY LOULOUEDES: What she said; what he  
7 said [laughter] and I'm going to deviate from my  
8 written comments because they're longer than I'm  
9 allowed.

10 So good afternoon; my name is Ginny  
11 Louloudes and I'm the Executive Director of the  
12 Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York, the  
13 leadership and advocacy organization for New York  
14 City's 358 non-profit theatres in all five boroughs.

15 I wanna thank you, Committee Chair Van  
16 Bramer for inviting me to testify on the proposed  
17 comprehensive cultural plan.

18 We applaud the Council for identifying  
19 what are probably the most critical issues facing the  
20 field right now. I would just like to site a few  
21 challenges that were not addressed; the loss of  
22 corporate funding and the programmatic shifts at  
23 several foundations that could seriously reduce  
24 funding to the field and as Mark referenced, a lack  
25 of affordable, appropriate, accessible space for an

1  
2 artist to perform -- in the last decade we've lost 50  
3 performance spaces alone.

4           So I'm gonna move around. In Section I,  
5 Legislative Intent, it states: There is no measure of  
6 what is considered an acceptable level of cultural  
7 resources. How does one define an acceptable level  
8 of cultural resource; is that the Council's decision?  
9 Is it based on a per capita basis? Will cultural  
10 activity include activities in current DCLA and arts-  
11 funded organizations? Will arts programs provided  
12 through the New York City Housing Authority be  
13 included? How 'bout arts programs non-profits  
14 provide in the schools and senior centers? What  
15 about church choirs or for that matter, dance classes  
16 taught in gyms, cultural centers, places or worship  
17 or dance schools like Broadway Dance?

18           Throughout the legislation there are  
19 words used that are not defined. How would you  
20 define a neighborhood? What is a community? Are the  
21 residents of each neighborhood considered a single  
22 community or are there multiple communities in each  
23 neighborhood? I would argue that New York City's  
24 neighborhoods are porous. What is more, the vast  
25 majority of the City's cultural organizations receive

1  
2 visitors from and provide residence to outside of the  
3 district, where the cultural organization is  
4 physically located.

5           How does this plan address naturally  
6 occurring cultural districts? For example, the  
7 reason so many Off and Off Off Broadway theatres are  
8 located in Districts 2 and 3 is because in 1970 all  
9 of those row houses were empty and they were free and  
10 they were taken over by people like Ellen Stewart of  
11 La MaMa and when she was evicted, the audience picked  
12 up the chairs and they moved next door to the next  
13 vacant house. So it's inventory that we have to  
14 think about in certain neighborhoods.

15           In the 80s we saw our theatres grown in  
16 the outer boroughs, or Brooklyn, Queens, Bronx and  
17 Staten Island, and sadly, some of those companies can  
18 no longer afford their rents, as Williamsburg, the  
19 East Village and Bushwick rents have gone  
20 exponentially, as you, Council Member Levin are well  
21 aware.

22           What is the source of funding for the  
23 cultural plan? Right now we're facing a major loss  
24 of private funding while fixed costs keep rising. In  
25 addition, DCLA, along with other city agencies

1  
2 annually face potential cuts to funding due to  
3 physical constraints. [bell] If funding comes from  
4 the DLCA budget, it will reduce the amount of funding  
5 for the groups you wanna help and if you raise  
6 private funds you're competing with us at a time when  
7 many of us are hurting.

8 I wanna go a positive, 'cause I don't  
9 wanna end on a negative...

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

11 GINNY LOULOUDES: Okay. [laughter] So  
12 here's my modest proposal -- first of all, you are  
13 boldly attempting to address what we call a wicked  
14 problem; the more you learn the more you're gonna see  
15 needs to be fixed and I've tried to do that myself  
16 and my heart goes out to you and I respect and admire  
17 you for it and we're lucky to have somebody willing  
18 to do this. So I would like to offer a modest  
19 proposal; that the Council consider working with a  
20 local college or university to conduct a study.  
21 Furthermore, in order to save time and money I urge  
22 you to gather and work with the data that already  
23 exists on the computers of many of our service  
24 organizations -- they're all listed in my testimony;  
25 I'm not gonna recite them.

1  
2 By partnering with a university program  
3 that has the student manpower, the desire to help the  
4 cultural community and the City Council and has the  
5 equipment necessary to merge existing data, you can  
6 acquire at least some of the information you are  
7 looking for and all this can be done on a pro bono  
8 basis.

9 Thank you again for addressing such a  
10 complex challenge and for letting me share my  
11 response. As I said, there is three times as much  
12 information in my written testimony.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I read it all,  
14 Ginny... I read it all. [laughter] So thank you and  
15 let me just say, first of all, 'cause all three of  
16 you... well, two of you certainly... the cost factor -- I  
17 look forward to serving within an administration that  
18 does not propose enormous cuts to the cultural  
19 affairs budget, let me just say that first and  
20 foremost to all of you, because that's really the  
21 answer to the budget question; is not operating from  
22 being \$50, 60; 70 million behind every single year  
23 and... [interpose]

24 GINNY LOULOUEDES: Can I just ask a  
25 question?



CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: No. [laughter]

And I just wanna say that we're talkin' about some funding here to do a study that would really propel this community forward and what we need to do is make sure that we have a stable budget, a budget that is baselined, and that we get those increases in the funding, 'cause I'm assuming that if we did and we're able to get that funding for this study that some of the opposition or some of the concerns that you have would then be eased. But the reason that we're in the budget situation that we are is because this community and this agency look at enormous holes every single year and we're fighting from behind and then the Council has to drive this budget process so aggressively and rightfully prioritize this community, so that we have hundreds of millions of dollars in restorations, but then we get to the point that we are every single year, doing it all over again, right?

So I believe that we're going to be able to get to a better place with the new administration and that we're gonna be able to find the funding for this study. So that should not be a concern.

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COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS

GINNY LOULOUEDES: Can I still ask my question?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes. But I just wanted to finish that, Ginny. [crosstalk]

GINNY LOULOUEDES: We're facing... I... No, I appreciate that; I skipped this, it was in my testimony -- we're facing a \$2 billion budget gap and the new mayor if facing a 152 contracts he has to negotiate and if the retroactive pay raises go through, that's \$6.5, if I'm correct, according to the New York Times.

So if that money... that's the money that would've gone towards the restoration to baseline us so you don't have to come back and restore us... [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well...

GINNY LOULOUEDES: I understand that, so my theory... [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Let met just interject, Ginny, and let's not... [interpose]

GINNY LOULOUEDES: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: game-out Mayor de Blasio's budget too much... [interpose]

1  
2 GINNY LOULOUDES: It's Mayor Bloomberg's  
3 budget now.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well, but it..  
5 but I believe the new mayor's gonna have a lot to say  
6 about the midterm and everything going forward, so..  
7 [interpose]

8 GINNY LOULOUDES: Right.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I hear what  
10 you're saying; we're all aware that there are  
11 significant challenges, but I prefer to look at it  
12 from a bit more of an optimistic approach and rather  
13 than fighting for the crumbs that we currently have,  
14 that we actually shoot for the stars and actually  
15 seek what we want and what we need and starting this  
16 conversation from a position of being deprived of  
17 what we've needed for all these years is not a  
18 winning strategy, it's just not a winning strategy.

19 So I just ask for a different approach  
20 when it comes to the budget and to view this proposal  
21 and this bill that Steve and I have authored, and 15  
22 Council Members have signed onto, as budget neutral  
23 for the purposes of this discussion, 'cause we'll  
24 figure that part out, but then let's get to the real  
25 discussion about what this does to the [background

1  
2 comment] cultural community and not get bogged down -  
3 - if you fund this, then we're gonna have less money;  
4 like that's not where this discussion should be.

5 So I just wanna make that point; that I  
6 believe we're gonna find the funding for it.

7 [crosstalk]

8 GINNY LOULOUDES: Thank you and I will be  
9 there with you to fight that fight.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

11 [interpose]

12 MARK ROSSIER: Yeah, we will all  
13 certainly... [background comments, crosstalk]

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Get in there,  
15 Mark.

16 MARK ROSSIER: whatever... whatever help  
17 you need to have those discussions, we are all happy  
18 to be there in that room to have those discussions  
19 with you.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, Mark.  
21 Thank you. [background comment] So one of the other  
22 things that CIG said is; to create a cultural plan we  
23 wanna include DCP and DOE and all these others; I  
24 just wanna say that I believe all of them should be  
25 included as well and will be included. Right, we

1  
2       wanna talk to every one and make sure that everyone  
3       is counted as part of this plan; I think that's  
4       really, really important.

5               And then, there was some discussion about  
6       the NYFA plan developed in 2001 and we only learned  
7       recently that it was actually... it went to printer on  
8       September 11th, 2011 and so it was a difficult time  
9       for your study to be released...

10              MARK ROSSIER: Right.

11              CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: and really  
12       engaged in.

13              MARK ROSSIER: Right.

14              CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So I guess my  
15       question to you would be; do you feel like the  
16       administration used it; that it was helpful; that...  
17       and that if properly taken into account that it  
18       could've been helpful or more helpful, if it wasn't?  
19       But you know, it kind of got lost a little bit and  
20       obviously that's understandable, given the  
21       challenges...

22              MARK ROSSIER: Right.

23              CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: everyone was  
24       faced with at the time, but do you think that it was  
25

1  
2 a worthwhile endeavor that it ultimately did some  
3 good things?

4 MARK ROSSIER: Well as I say, I was not...  
5 [crosstalk]

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right.

7 MARK ROSSIER: I was not there at the  
8 time, so I only have seen the report and read the  
9 report and I certainly think there is useful  
10 information in it and certainly it may provide some  
11 information that is useful going forward for this  
12 kind of study, although it is 12 years old and things  
13 have obviously changed significantly, particularly in  
14 terms of access and social media and the way people  
15 get information in that time. I don't know what the  
16 plan was in terms of presenting it to the  
17 administration or how it was received or... I was... as I  
18 say, I was not there, so I don't know what any of  
19 those discussions were. [crosstalk]

20 GINNY LOULOUEDES: I do know that  
21 Commissioner Levin did read the plan, because when  
22 she met with the New York City Arts Coalition she  
23 actually had questions for them based on what she  
24 read in the plan, so is familiar with the plan.

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COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Did you wanna go?

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I wanted to just... thank you, Chair... if you had any kind of ideas as to ways in which it could be... there could be some type of buy-in... or do you think that it's... excuse me; let me rephrase that. Do you think that it would have been, in retrospect, more beneficial to have a greater buy-in from the City or DCA at the time or do you think it was appropriate to have kind of the perspective of having a group that's not the city itself authoring the report or the plan?

MARK ROSSIER: Well I mean I certainly think that there is... I certainly think one wants to know that if the plan is done... and one of the findings in this plan was actually calling for there to be a cultural plan for the city created... I certainly think that one wants to know that there's an audience for it, so it doesn't feel like you're just doing it and then, you know, sort of tossing it in the wind, but you certainly want an objective party who doesn't particularly have a stake in any one response doing the plan so that it doesn't get

1 automatically weighted in one direction or another..

2 [crosstalk]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Skewed or..

4 MARK ROSSIER: but I think you do wanna  
5 know that; hi, we're gonna do this and we wanna  
6 present this... we wanna present these findings to you  
7 and you wanna know that there's gonna be a receptive  
8 audience.  
9

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Right; I mean the  
11 reason that I ask is that, in looking, for example,  
12 and I don't wanna put too much emphasis on it, but  
13 the Chicago plan that came out, [background comment]  
14 that you know, the mayor's name is stamped on the  
15 front, right and it's like, it's... this is a plan that  
16 he's fully invested in, he's fully... and so you have  
17 the... kind of the full weight of the City of Chicago  
18 behind the plan; I'm wondering whether that might be  
19 seen as beneficial by the cultural community.

20 MARK ROSSIER: Well I think it's...  
21 [background comment] I think it's helpful because..  
22 [background comment] because you wanna know that the  
23 recommendations are being taken seriously and that  
24 you know, if the mayor's name is on it, then in  
25



1 theory the mayor is committing to execute..

2 [interpose]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: The  
4 recommendation.

5 MARK ROSSIER: what's in there, or at  
6 least a portion of them or at least give them serious  
7 consideration based on, you know, other concerns.  
8 But yes; I mean I think you don't wanna do something  
9 like this and then have it come to nothing because it  
10 takes a lot of time, it takes a lot of energy, it  
11 takes a lot of money [background comment] and to sort  
12 of do that and have it go nowhere doesn't obviously  
13 benefit anyone, 'cause we may have learned a lesson,  
14 but we didn't act on it.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Right. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So I just wanna  
17 jump on that point, 'cause I think that's actually  
18 really critical, right; there's not point in doing a  
19 study if it's just gonna go on a dusty bookshelf and  
20 everyone's gonna say wow, that was a lot of fun, but  
21 no one ever [background comment] looks at it again.  
22 So I just wanna say, Steve and I have talked about  
23 this and I think we're really committed to making  
24 sure that it's useful; that's it's used, that it's  
25

1 living and that it changes just as the cultural  
2 community changes every single day, as more and more  
3 things happen in the City of New York that are great  
4 because artists make them happen and so that's  
5 really, really critical, your study, which is... or  
6 NYFA's study in 2001, which was quite comprehensive  
7 and really well done and points in a lot of  
8 directions, was not used in the way that I think all  
9 of us would like for it to have been used and this  
10 would be a very different situation, and part of that  
11 is I think because of the way it's happening with the  
12 City Council sponsoring a piece of legislation;  
13 making sure that it's appropriately funded and  
14 followed through on; I think that's really, really a  
15 critical piece of this that is different than what  
16 NYFA did in 2001, so I think there's a lot of hope  
17 with respect to this study. And I just wanna remind  
18 everyone that we're live tweeting; I see lots of  
19 tweets going on and out about the plan and that's  
20 very exciting and hopefully will trend soon in the  
21 City of New York, [laughter] an NYC cultural plan;  
22 that's the goal, we're trending.

24 So... and I just wanna say; I think the  
25 City benefits every time we're having a conversation

1  
2 about culture and the arts and that we're all engaged  
3 in this discussion about how to make sure that we're  
4 appropriately funded and we are addressing equity  
5 issues, access issues, and we are again, being as  
6 aggressive as we possibly can in pushing forward our  
7 agenda, the cultural agenda for the City of New York.

8 Do any of my colleagues have questions  
9 for this panel? If not, I think we'll move on...

10 [interpose]

11 MARK ROSSIER: I would... I would just add  
12 one thing; that it... [interpose]

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

14 MARK ROSSIER: it sounds like this study,  
15 the way you'll use it would be a tool in which to  
16 create a new budget for the arts, that... that clearly,  
17 recommendations coming out of it would have expenses,  
18 whether those are expenses to organizations, to  
19 individual artists, to DCA; hopefully all of those,  
20 and that hopefully this plan would be used as  
21 evidence to generate the additional funding that's  
22 needed.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I've always  
24 thought you're a very smart man and now you proved  
25 it. [laughter] Yeah, no I think that we clearly

1 need to get to a place in the City of New York where  
2 culture and the arts are a priority and that we don't  
3 just say that, but that the budgets that we propose  
4 reflect that and that we are looking at a real five-  
5 borough strategy that indeed includes every  
6 neighborhood of the City of New York and yes, Ginny,  
7 while neighborhoods are porous and there are lots of  
8 different ways to define neighborhoods, all of us who  
9 have grown up and lived in the City of New York know  
10 which neighborhood we're from, so clearly there are  
11 neighborhood identifications; people know what  
12 neighborhood they're talking about and it's important  
13 that every single person in every single neighborhood  
14 feel like this is about them [background comment] and  
15 that the cultural community is them and they are the  
16 cultural community and resources are being directed  
17 in ways that reflect that increasing diversity in the  
18 City of New York. Do you wanna say anything else?  
19 So with that I wanna thank all of you for being here;  
20 I wanna thank you for the incredible role you play in  
21 the City of New York and so much for your  
22 contributions and for the recommendations that you  
23 have, as we are all taking notes and taking all of  
24 this in and I know that that will reflect a better  
25

1  
2 bill and that we will continue to work on this piece  
3 of legislation, which is important and I believe is  
4 going to make a better city. So with that I wanna  
5 say thank you to all three of you and ask the next  
6 panel to come forward -- Naomi Hersson-Ringskog from  
7 No Longer Empty, Anita Durst from Chashama; I think I  
8 saw Anita Durst fro Chashama... [background comments]  
9 oop... sorry 'bout that. [pause] Naomi is always  
10 causing trouble, just always... [laughter] always  
11 causing trouble. And I see... we have a... [background  
12 comments] a spec... there's Anita from the overflow  
13 room, awesome... [laughter] and we have a very special  
14 treat; we have a member of the cultural community  
15 that's currently engaged in discussion with a couple  
16 of other folks, but Lori, are you ready to do? Or  
17 would you rather some time? [background comments]  
18 Then we will ask Karen Zorno-Leiding, from the Arts  
19 and Business Council of New York to testify  
20 [background comments] as well and maybe Karen is in  
21 the overflow room, so we'll give her a few seconds to  
22 arrive and maybe Naomi, you can go first and then  
23 we'll go Anita and then we'll go Karen, who just  
24 arrived... [background comments] and again, three  
25 minutes each and then we'll go to our third panel.

1  
2 NAOMI HERSSON-RINGSKOG: Great; I can do  
3 it. Can I start?

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes you can,  
5 Naomi, thank you... [interpose]

6 NAOMI HERSSON-RINGSKOG: Fantastic.  
7 Thank you Council Members and your teams for inviting  
8 No Longer Empty to share testimony today. My name is  
9 Naomi Hersson-Ringskog; I'm the Executive Director of  
10 the public art organization No Longer Empty.

11 No Longer Empty is a five-year-old not-  
12 for-profit organization with a mandate to widen and  
13 deepen the audience for contemporary art. By  
14 repurposing vacancies No Longer Empty takes community  
15 liability and turns it into a shared cultural asset.  
16 No Longer Empty provides artists meaningful  
17 opportunities to create works, challenge their  
18 practice, gain visibility, advance their careers and  
19 receive compensation for their contribution. No  
20 Longer Empty also works with local organizations,  
21 both arts and non-arts organizations to create  
22 programs that bolster the cultural landscape and  
23 build art constituencies.

24 No Longer Empty and many small grassroots  
25 art organizations work in the City and support its

1  
2 artists and diverse communities, believe that art  
3 matters, that it enriches lives, feeds imagination  
4 and builds empathy and compassion; to do so, we need  
5 a unifying vision; we need a plan.

6           So we as an organization broadly support  
7 the proposal -- it's a bit vague right now -- and we  
8 anticipate the following values and items to be  
9 incorporated: (1) A cultural plan will community a  
10 central focus and vision that unites and inspires the  
11 art community, a plan of such will pave the road for  
12 greater inclusivity, civic engagement and municipal  
13 accountability. Without a comprehensive cultural  
14 plan, it will undermine the agency's efforts,  
15 influence and respectability; art needs to be  
16 accorded the same standards of thought, preparation  
17 and planning for a successful outcome as any other  
18 economic enterprise. A cultural plan will ensure  
19 more powerful legal, political and logistical  
20 development for the arts in New York City.

21           A holistic plan will strengthen the  
22 ecology of the art world, both small and large  
23 institutions, as well as traditional and non-  
24 traditional institutions or organizations. I would  
25 like to emphasize; the plan should help organizations

1 like No Longer Empty, build capacity, attain  
2 stability and thrive, thus sharing those successes  
3 with its artists, educators, youth and collaborators.

4 (4) A transparent plan will allow citizens to access  
5 open data, inform the field and innovate, thus making  
6 organizations like No Longer Empty better prepared to  
7 compete and deliver better services that the City  
8 wishes to pursue in particular neighborhoods. A  
9 focused plan with coordinated investment and  
10 processes will help build interdisciplinary or  
11 interagency initiatives within the field, with other  
12 sectors and agencies that will help grow audience for  
13 the arts that organizations like No Longer Empty aim  
14 to do.

15  
16 Yesterday we hosted [bell] a panel  
17 discussion at the Talking Transition Tent on Canal  
18 Street about cultural access; it was apparent from  
19 the eager responses of the audience that a public  
20 platform to express the needs of artists,  
21 organizations, students and consumers is much needed;  
22 such platforms constitute democracy in action.

23 I'd just like to also note that Chicago I  
24 think had about 40 community meetings; I think we can  
25



1  
2 double that; we can outdo them, in forming their  
3 plan.

4 And lastly, a democratic access to art is  
5 a central element of engaged citizenry both for now  
6 and ever more complex future that depend on creative  
7 thinking and problem solving and we need a plan and  
8 we need it now.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you; I  
10 like the ambition, [laughter] Naomi; that yes we can,  
11 little si, se puede in the room, yes. Anita.

12 ANITA DURST: Thank you for inviting me  
13 here today. My name is Anita Durst; I'm the Artistic  
14 Director of Chashama, an organization I founded 18  
15 years ago; Chashama helps keep artists in New York by  
16 providing them with affordable live, work and show  
17 space; we do this by transforming underutilized  
18 properties. Since 1995 Chashama has presented more  
19 than 3,000 shows and given over 12,000 artists the  
20 space to create.

21 I urge the Cultural Planning Committee to  
22 look at the possibilities of collaboration between  
23 art service organizations, land owners, economic  
24 development organizations, BIDs, churches; libraries,  
25 as well as looking at low-income housing for artists.

1  
2 For example, we've placed artists in  
3 subsidized housing in the Bronx where they contribute  
4 to the neighborhood and community by leading art  
5 classes for seniors and youth.

6 New York City has many opportunities for  
7 vacant space to be developed into affordable space  
8 for artists. These include development sites,  
9 unrented properties and space in transition. These  
10 unused properties, instead of lying fallow can  
11 support communities and promote economic growth.

12 Chashama has secured space through  
13 nontraditional collaborations with three different  
14 economic development organizations. With the New  
15 York City Economic Development Corporation Chashama  
16 has created 92 visual art studios; our work with the  
17 Greater Jamaica Development Corporation has resulted  
18 in youth programs, artist studios and gallery space;  
19 with the Mid-Bronx Senior Citizens Council we've  
20 created affordable housing.

21 A comprehensive plan for culture would  
22 qualify the relationship between economic development  
23 and the arts; this could identify ways to promote  
24 collaborations that will result in projects that  
25

1  
2 really liven the community, create economic stimulus  
3 and replace vacant space with positive activity.

4           Similarly, the plan should explore  
5 collaborations between organizations that are already  
6 serving communities and individuals. These  
7 organizations include churches, libraries and  
8 business improvement districts, who are looking to  
9 utilize unused space and program for their  
10 constituents.

11           Most artists fit into the criteria of  
12 low-income housing; I strongly urge the Committee to  
13 make a sector for artist living and low-income  
14 housing. This could work much like what we are doing  
15 with the Mid-Bronx Senior Citizens Council where we  
16 offer subsidized apartments in exchange for taking  
17 part in community projects aimed at revitalizing the  
18 neighborhood.

19           My recommendation to the City Council is  
20 to think outside the box and to look at groups other  
21 than cultural organizations, such as real estate  
22 developers, economic development corporations,  
23 churches, libraries, BIDs and subsidized housing.  
24 Thank you for your consideration.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
3 much, Anita. Karen.

4 KAREN ZORNOW LEIDING: Good afternoon,  
5 Chairman Van Bramer, Council Member Levin; Council  
6 Members, thank you so much for this opportunity to  
7 address the proposed cultural plan.

8 My name is Karen Zornow Leiding; I'm the  
9 Director of Arts and Business Council of New York  
10 programs. I'm testifying on behalf of my  
11 organization and on behalf of Americans for the Arts,  
12 a national art service and research organization with  
13 offices here in New York City.

14 I testify today in support of  
15 establishing a comprehensive cultural plan for New  
16 York. While other speakers will testify to the  
17 merits and methods for establishing a cultural plan,  
18 my testimony will focus on providing a national  
19 perspective on this issue and on the impact of the  
20 arts sector on the business sector.

21 NYC remains the cultural capitol of the  
22 world and the Office of the Mayor, the Department of  
23 Cultural Affairs and the City Council deserve  
24 congratulations and thanks for their ongoing support.  
25 But in accordance with the principle of kaizen,

1  
2 always improving, more can be done and one of the  
3 best ways to do more is to have a comprehensive plan  
4 to sustain this vital sector of our city's economy  
5 and quality of life.

6 A quick survey of the top 10  
7 municipalities in the U.S. shows that NYC is the only  
8 one of those that does not have some sort of cultural  
9 plan. Highlights from other cities in the top 10  
10 that do have cultural plans are Chicago; Chicago  
11 updated its 1986 cultural plan in 2012; this plan  
12 creates a framework to guide the city's future  
13 cultural and economic growth. The Chicago plan is  
14 very detailed and contains a set of 10 priorities, 36  
15 recommendations and 200 plus ideas for making them a  
16 reality within four categories: people, places,  
17 policies and planning culturally.

18 Chicago's proposed 2014 City Budget  
19 includes a \$1.25 million investment to support  
20 initiatives of the Chicago Cultural Plan. Since  
21 Chicago's cultural plan was enacted in 2012, half of  
22 its 241 initiatives have been addressed to date;  
23 these initiative have helped make Chicago even more  
24 tempting to tourists and improve the city livability  
25 of its residents.

1  
2 A few examples: 487 Chicago public school  
3 staff have been designated as arts liaisons with 77  
4 percent coverage in schools in the program's first  
5 year and 60 percent of CPS schools have completed the  
6 Creative Schools Certification. This is the part I  
7 really like -- an inventory of Chicago's cultural  
8 assets revealed over 220 dance companies, over 200  
9 theatre companies, over 200 presenting stages and  
10 over 225 music venues, as well as others I'm not  
11 mentioning here. The next phases of this project  
12 will focus on determining which visitor segments to  
13 target and developing and testing cultural tourism  
14 promotional tactics.

15 The study also revealed that while  
16 Chicago is highly rated in general for its arts and  
17 cultural attributes, unaided awareness of Chicago's  
18 specific arts and culture attractions is low. As  
19 evidence of the art sector's impact on a wide variety  
20 of other sectors, the 2012 Chicago Cultural Plan has  
21 been incorporated into other Chicago city plans:  
22 technology, public health and transportation.

23 In Philadelphia [bell] in 2011...

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Chair privilege  
25 -- I want you to read the rest of this, 'cause this

1  
2 is really fascinating and I'm really grateful that  
3 you've taken a look at this other city studies, so  
4 please finish, Karen.

5 KAREN ZORNOW LEIDING: Thank you. In  
6 2011, the Philadelphia mayor's Cultural Advisory  
7 Council created a plan that establishes a clear set  
8 of goals, objectives and strategies to realize  
9 Philadelphia's vision for a thriving artistic and  
10 creative community. A few of their accomplishments  
11 so far are: launching the creative Philadelphia  
12 initiative to support creative economy efforts and  
13 create opportunities for cross networking of artists,  
14 cultural organizations and creative businesses,  
15 funding eight [background comments] creative facility  
16 projects through a \$500,000 creative industry  
17 workforce grant program with funding from the  
18 American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, securing  
19 \$250,000 in funds from the NEA to preserve arts jobs  
20 and producing the city's first temporary public art  
21 project, Soil Kitchen, in conjunction with the  
22 Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields  
23 Conference, and I point these out to make the point  
24 that funding can be available from other sources  
25 besides the city budget and private funders who are

1  
2 currently donating arts; we may be able to find other  
3 sources from other agencies.

4 In New York, as in other cities, a  
5 cultural plan can assess and improve not just  
6 community support for the arts, but also community  
7 benefits from the arts. The arts strengthen sectors  
8 from education to health care, veterans assistance,  
9 social services and of course, business jobs and the  
10 local economy. A cultural plan can increase both the  
11 visibility of artists and arts organizations and the  
12 larger civic community's awareness of the potential  
13 of arts and cultural to contribute to community and  
14 economic development.

15 New York's creative industries have not  
16 only contributed to the city's economic bottom line,  
17 but have also been the first footprint for economic  
18 development and neighborhood revitalization. The  
19 arts are good for business. Non-profit arts and  
20 cultural organizations of all sizes in all boroughs,  
21 including Queens and Brooklyn, are proud and active  
22 members of the business community, employing people  
23 locally, purchasing goods and services within the  
24 community and creating mutually beneficial  
25 partnerships with other businesses to help them build



1  
2 market share, enhance their brands, reach new  
3 customers and provide valuable employee benefits.

4           The economic impact of non-profit arts  
5 organizations in New York City in 2010 was more than  
6 \$3 billion in direct spending, with over a 100,000  
7 people employed on a full-time, part-time or  
8 consultant basis. Over 98.6 million people attended  
9 performances, exhibitions, classes and workshops  
10 throughout the five boroughs and ancillary spending  
11 by these attendees on things such as drinks, meals,  
12 parking and shopping generated additional income for  
13 local businesses.

14           The arts are integral to the ongoing  
15 vitality of the city. Our goal is to sustain and  
16 strengthen the arts citywide, since the arts create  
17 and support jobs, spur urban renewal, attract new  
18 business, draw tourism dollars, generate tax dollars  
19 and enhance community development. A cultural plan  
20 for New York City will chart a roadmap for continued  
21 cultural and economic growth and will come the  
22 centerpiece for sustaining NYC's reputation as a  
23 global destination for creativity, innovation and  
24 excellence in the arts, and after all, you can't  
25

1  
2 score if you don't know where the goal is. Thank  
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
5 much and I like that you have footnotes in your  
6 testimony, Karen... [interpose]

7 KAREN ZORNOW LEIDING: I was afraid you  
8 would ask me, so I wanted to make sure I had the  
9 sources of those stats. [crosstalk]

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Everything is  
11 sourced; absolutely wonderful. What are the other  
12 cities; can you name other cities other than Chicago  
13 and Philadelphia? [crosstalk]

14 KAREN ZORNOW LEIDING: It's... it's  
15 footnote one and... [laughter] with all due respect,  
16 and uhm... [crosstalk]

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You know uhm...

18 KAREN ZORNOW LEIDING: and that is based  
19 on population size.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Very good. So  
21 just for the record, so New York City, Los Angeles,  
22 Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Antonio,  
23 San Diego, Dallas and San Jose, and we are the only  
24 ones without a cultural plan?

25 KAREN ZORNOW LEIDING: Yes.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Which is  
3 staggering when you think about it, that New York  
4 City, which is the leader in all things and certainly  
5 our cultural community, deserves what every other  
6 cultural community in these top 10 cities in the  
7 country have and we're the only ones without it;  
8 that's staggering; I don't know if there are that  
9 many people who know that and I think there are a lot  
10 of people who would be surprised to learn that New  
11 York City is behind cities like San Jose and Phoenix,  
12 not that they're not lovely cities; I'm sure they're  
13 lovely cities, but that's pretty intense.

14 Just wondering why... [music] why you think  
15 that might be.

16 KAREN ZORNOW LEIDING: Why we're the only  
17 city that doesn't have a cultural plan? It would be  
18 pure speculation on my part and not based on anything  
19 that we can prove; I think we've been doing very well  
20 for a long time in terms of being considered the  
21 cultural capitol of the world; some might argue that,  
22 but it's the truth. Part of that is because of  
23 Broadway and Off Broadway, but what people don't  
24 always recognize is that the non-profits arts  
25 communities is the feeder system for those big ticket

1 things. I think we've been doing well and people  
2 wanted to focus on other things; maybe people felt we  
3 didn't need it because we were already doing well,  
4 'cause we're already number one in so many  
5 categories, but I think the plan would be about  
6 planning to stay number one, you know, kaizen, always  
7 improving, because we can't just rest on our laurels,  
8 particularly with the challenges we are about to be  
9 facing under the next administration and say yeah,  
10 well it's always been okay, so it will be okay.

11 [crosstalk]

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right. And...

13 [crosstalk]

14 NAOMI HERSSON-RINGSKOG: And I think  
15 those cities want to compete with New York City, they  
16 want to start attracting people, so I think that was  
17 the impetus for some of these cities to actually make  
18 themselves more attractive and favorable towards  
19 artists and art organizations.  
20

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right, which is  
22 a reminder to us... [interpose]

23 NAOMI HERSSON-RINGSKOG: Not...

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: to not rest on  
25 our laurels and to see Mayor Emanuel in Chicago

1  
2 embrace this thing has he has shows you that Chicago  
3 wants to be number one, right and they're gonna try  
4 and do everything they possibly can to have some of  
5 the artists who are here or might come here go there  
6 and we don't wanna lose a step, we don't wanna lose  
7 our edge, and we certainly don't wanna lose artists  
8 to other cities who might be playing hardball when it  
9 comes to making their city more welcoming for the  
10 cultural community. So I think all three of you make  
11 the case very powerfully for a cultural plan and  
12 Karen, I'm not sure I could love you more, but as a  
13 result of your testimony I think I do. So [laughter]  
14 I thank you for that... [background comment] Are there  
15 any Council Members who have questions?

16 Anita, I did wanna talk to you, 'cause I  
17 love your focus on collaboration and getting us to do  
18 more in terms of affordable housing or looking at the  
19 other options. Are there, you know, two or three  
20 things that you think are most important that... I  
21 don't know if you've read the legislation, but if you  
22 could, make it so, if you could blue sky it in terms  
23 of the City doing more, working better, what would be  
24 the single most important thing that you think that  
25 we could do or put in this plan or effect as a result

1  
2 of this plan to create those collaborations and  
3 ultimately resulting in more affordability?

4 ANITA DURST: I think Manhattan Plaza is  
5 a really good example of artist housing that has  
6 worked really well and if we're able to create more  
7 spaces like that and if we are able to have in the...  
8 [background comment] the affordable housing to have a  
9 section where artists, where they had their own... so  
10 they had their own pathway into there.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right, I  
12 couldn't agree with you more, particularly on that  
13 last piece and there are a number of developments, as  
14 you I'm sure are aware that are moving in that  
15 direction, including a significant one in my  
16 district, which I'm very excited about.

17 So unless there are any other questions  
18 from the Council Members, I thank all three of you  
19 for the work that you do and it's always a pleasure  
20 to have the three of you before the Committee and  
21 look forward to continuing to work with you on this  
22 important piece of legislation and so many others.  
23 So thank you very much and with that I'll call the  
24 next panel -- Ella Weiss from the Brooklyn Arts  
25 Council and... by the way, this is a Brooklyn panel, an

1  
2 all Brooklyn panel in honor of... Ella, you can give  
3 your testimony to the Sergeant at Arms [background  
4 comment]... an all Brooklyn panel in honor of Steve  
5 Levin... [laugh] Caron Atlas from NOCD, which is not  
6 Brooklyn-specific, but we love a lot of the work  
7 they're doing in Brooklyn, and if she's ready, Laurie  
8 Cumbo is here; she is obviously someone who everyone  
9 knows from her wonderful work [background comments]  
10 founding a museum and running it, but now she is the  
11 Council Member-elect from the 35th Council District  
12 in [background comments] Brooklyn, so we're honored  
13 to have her [background comment] testifying before  
14 the Committee as a Council Member-elect. So you can  
15 choose [background comments] amongst yourselves who  
16 goes first and fight that out amongst the three of  
17 you and then we'll hear from you.

18 CARON ATLAS: I lost the fight.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So you're  
20 first; you're up, Caron.

21 CARON ATLAS: Am I... Can you hear me?  
22 Okay. Okay. Hi, I'm Caron Atlas and I direct the  
23 Arts and Democracy Project and co-direct Naturally  
24 Occurring Cultural Districts New York, which works in  
25

1 all five boroughs, but yea Brooklyn; I'm based there.

2 [laughter] Thanks for the opportunity... [interpose]

3 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: 'Kay.

4 CARON ATLAS: to testify and thanks for  
5 your commitment to the arts and culture in New York  
6 City.  
7

8 I believe that a cultural plan can be a  
9 good opportunity to make transparent cultural policy-  
10 making and the values that underlie it, and those  
11 values have not always been that transparent. Also,  
12 as Council Member Van Bramer mentioned in the  
13 framing, it makes us proactive rather than reactive  
14 and I believe it gives the... the fact that it's a  
15 comprehensive plan gives us the opportunity to  
16 integrate culture into the other policy areas in the  
17 City, as was mentioned in the last panel.

18 I focused on recommendations for an  
19 inclusive planning process and I'll just go through  
20 some of them quickly. The first thing is that New  
21 York City has a diverse and continually changing  
22 cultural ecosystem and it's important to engage the  
23 full range of this ecosystem in the planning.  
24 Sometimes we plan based on a decade ago instead of  
25 what our city is becoming.



1  
2 Also recognize the honoring diversity  
3 isn't enough in a city where unfortunately in equity  
4 of the city is represented in the arts community as  
5 well as the rest of the city. So I feel that -- and  
6 this is probably one of the most important ones  
7 around the process, because the process determines  
8 the outcome -- is to really address these issues of  
9 cultural inequity and all so really look at how to  
10 support those who have been historically  
11 disenfranchised in the art world and in culture.

12 I also believe that the people most  
13 impacted by planning should be the ones leading it  
14 and having a say in it, so of course, that means  
15 involving artists and cultural organizations. At the  
16 same time, we don't wanna just have a conversation of  
17 the arts community with itself, I think that's really  
18 limiting and so I would really advocate for us  
19 bringing this conversation into our communities and  
20 using our community-based organizations to help do  
21 that and also compensating them for doing this work.

22 I would also say that -- and this has  
23 been mentioned and I wanna underline it -- that  
24 cultural planning should intersect with other forms  
25 of planning and policy-making and there are all kinds

1 of examples, some have been given; I'll add a few  
2 others -- resilience planning, disaster planning --  
3 we need culture built into that, both in terms of the  
4 impacts on artists, but also the ways of the cultural  
5 community [bell] can be part of that. Uh... it goes  
6 fast. I'll give you just a couple more then before I  
7 end.  
8

9 I wanna say that... and you can ask me, but  
10 I was a participant in the blueprint process and I  
11 have a little bit of a different view on it. As a  
12 participant I think that the process had an impact  
13 whereas the product may have had a limitation and  
14 that it wasn't intended as a plan, but rather to  
15 queue up a plan. The process, from my perspective,  
16 was very important because it was very inclusive and  
17 it brought very passionate conversations about equity  
18 to the floor.

19 And then, I would just say that... I would  
20 add to other things -- I think it would be great if  
21 research could be included as part of this process,  
22 specifically around demographics and which  
23 communities are being left out in the current system.

24 And then finally, I would just add that  
25 the planning process itself should be leveraged and

1  
2 that by getting people together that it could build  
3 relationships and create opportunities.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

5 Ella.

6 ELLA WEISS: Good afternoon; I'm Ella  
7 Weiss, President of the Brooklyn Arts Council and I'm  
8 here today to speak in support of the City Council  
9 initiative to create a cultural plan for New York  
10 City.

11 Thank you Councilman Van Bramer,  
12 Councilman Levin and everybody else who has sponsored  
13 the bill; we are very grateful in the arts community  
14 to have this conversation started.

15 The arts and cultural in New York City  
16 are woven into the fabric of our sense of place. The  
17 world knows us through our creativity and visionary  
18 artistic endeavors; these efforts range from the  
19 largest cultural institutions to the emerging artists  
20 and small collectives that are completing  
21 groundbreaking projects in all five boroughs. There  
22 is much data about the economic impact of the arts on  
23 our city that is indisputable and of which you are  
24 well aware, so I'm not gonna go into that kind of  
25 detail.

1  
2           However, more comprehensive planning and  
3 strategic allocations could make this economic engine  
4 more fuel efficient, allowing us to take advantage of  
5 the city's full range of creative resources. In  
6 Brooklyn, when the combined funding from the  
7 Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York State  
8 Council on the Arts are compared, some districts get  
9 less than 50 cents per capita arts funding, while  
10 other districts receive over \$3.00 per capita arts  
11 funding and in some cases substantially more. How  
12 can we leverage the potential of the whole city,  
13 including these underserved areas?

14           Of course, it is important to continue to  
15 support our established cultural icons that have  
16 helped make New York City a destination for artists  
17 and arts patrons; at the same time, we need to invest  
18 in emerging and vibrant artistic efforts as well to  
19 build the icons of tomorrow. A cultural plan that  
20 analyzes our diverse cultural landscape and provides  
21 guidance for addressing inequities and deficiencies  
22 is an imperative for New York City to remain the  
23 cultural capitol of the world. A commitment to the  
24 diversity of our cultural offerings, a commitment to  
25 the audiences that are served and a commitment to the

1  
2 innate talent of New Yorkers will go a long way in  
3 making our communities more cohesive.

4 It has been proven time and again that  
5 when artists move into neighborhoods that are  
6 considered unappealing these communities are  
7 rejuvenated. At the same time, when we support the  
8 culture that already exists in under-recognized  
9 areas, we are capitalizing on building the sense of  
10 community for a robust environment. A healthy  
11 society relies on arts and culture to feed the soul  
12 and nourish the heart. As Ossie Davis said, and I  
13 quote, "Any form of art is a form of power; it has  
14 impact; it can effect change; it cannot only move us,  
15 it makes us move." He said really what we are  
16 talking about today, a cultural plan will help us use  
17 this power responsibly and we are offering our  
18 assistance on behalf of Brooklyn to make this happen.  
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you Ella.  
21 Laurie. [crosstalk]

22 ELLA WEISS: And I made it in three  
23 minutes.

24

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah; it was  
3 great. [laughter] It was very succinct, very  
4 passionate and on time. Amazing.

5 ELLA WEISS: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Laurie.

7 LAURIE CUMBO: Thank you. Good  
8 afternoon; I wanna thank my colleagues, I'm very  
9 excited; this will be my last time on this side of  
10 the table and hope to be joining over on that side of  
11 the table very soon in January, so I thank you so  
12 much; it seems that I've come into the Council at the  
13 exact right time, right at the moment of the  
14 discussion of a cultural plan and I think that  
15 nothing could be more exciting in New York City right  
16 now.

17 I just wanna keep my comments very brief  
18 and off the cuff. As being the museum director and  
19 founder of the Museum of Contemporary African  
20 Diasporan Arts, one of the things that I would say  
21 will be very important of the development of the  
22 cultural plan will make sure, as my colleagues have  
23 said, is that the demographics are taken into account  
24 in terms of the distributions of resources; not only  
25 on the expense side, but certainly on the capital

1 side and I would say that that has been one of the  
2 challenges that small organizations such as mine and  
3 so many others have been excited to see the capital  
4 developments that are happening in the different  
5 boroughs for many of the institutions that are  
6 growing and building and expanding, but I think at  
7 the same time a different level of infrastructure and  
8 support needs to be given to those organizations who  
9 are doing community-based work, predominantly for  
10 communities of color who just don't have access to  
11 the private dollars and don't have access to the  
12 foundations and the level of support that would allow  
13 them to match city and state support for those  
14 projects and beyond, and I think that if we can  
15 address that, coupled with looking at communities  
16 that are also suffering from issues of gun violence,  
17 that are also suffering from homelessness. If we're  
18 able to look at those communities that are feeding  
19 our prison industrial complex system, how do we use  
20 art and culture in order to eradicate those  
21 challenges that so many of those communities are  
22 facing? And I think... having a light bulb during this  
23 process, I think that one of the things that would be  
24 so exciting through this plan would be the ability  
25

1  
2 perhaps -- and I might be giving you some extra work;  
3 you can kick me under the table -- would be for our  
4 arts councils in the different boroughs to lead the  
5 charge in developing these plans and that communities  
6 could work by district and then together in boroughs  
7 by their arts council in order to develop the  
8 framework for what the cultural, the final rather,  
9 cultural plan will actually look like and how we can  
10 create something, but I believe that expediency is  
11 what's going to be most critical here, because as a  
12 new administration is coming in -- hint, hint -- as a  
13 new administration is coming in it's going to be very  
14 critical that we charge them with our agenda, the  
15 cultural agenda, moving forward.

16           So I just wanna thank you so much for  
17 this opportunity; I'm so excited and looking forward  
18 to the opportunity to working with all of you and I  
19 thank all of my colleagues for being here; it's been  
20 a pleasure to work with you on this side and I look  
21 forward to working with you on that side and bringing  
22 all the sides together so we can't [bell] even see  
23 the lines anymore. Thank you.

24           CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
25 much and once you become a council member on January



1  
2 1st, you'll never again come in under three minutes;  
3 [laughter] this is, I think physiologically  
4 impossible for council members [laughter] to not  
5 speak more than they're supposed to. So I wanna  
6 thank all three of you -- thank you my chief of  
7 staff; thought that was really funny -- and say to  
8 all of you present, as someone who comes from the  
9 arts councils and [background comment] who was  
10 president of Queens Council in the Arts for many  
11 years before I was elected, I very much envision a  
12 very strong role for the arts councils; recognizing  
13 that there are differences among the arts councils  
14 too [background comment] in terms of capacity, right.  
15 So let's not deny that, right; that there are some  
16 differences even among our arts councils in terms of  
17 what [background comment] they're able to do. Do you  
18 wanna speak to that, Ella?

19 ELLA WEISS: Oh, I think the issue came  
20 up before, that this will take resources...

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right.

22 ELLA WEISS: and so, the allocation of  
23 the resources to do the planning will come into play  
24 and I think you can equalize some of those  
25 disparities if there are particular projects that you

1  
2 want councils to participate in. So I think you had  
3 your own answer before to that.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah.

5 [background comment] Absolutely, Ella and Laurie,  
6 obviously [background comment] your discussion of  
7 capital and equity, I think that's really part of the  
8 heart of this plan and [background comment] and you  
9 know, there's been a little anxiety spoken of, both  
10 privately and a little bit even here, around that  
11 topic and that discussion, quite frankly; [background  
12 comment] but I always think it's better to not run  
13 from it but to address it, right, [background  
14 comment] and to... and my belief is that if we actually  
15 are talking about increasing funding, which is very  
16 much part of this; then we're talking about lifting  
17 up all boats, right, and not necessarily [background  
18 comment] going after anyone, but if there are  
19 underserved communities, then we have an obligation,  
20 an absolute obligation to address that.

21 ELLA WEISS: Certainly.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So I am very  
23 much excited about that part of the plan.

24 And Caron, you talked a little bit about  
25 the process that you were engaged in on the previous

1 effort and you eluded to a few things, but I wonder  
2 if you might expand on those... [background comments]  
3 your experience?  
4

5 CARON ATLAS: Yeah, just a couple things,  
6 and I certainly was disappointed that it didn't go as  
7 far as it could've and one of the ones I skipped over  
8 was that it has to be a public-private partnership;  
9 it's gotta include public policymaking or it's not  
10 gonna go anywhere.

11 But what I think was good about the  
12 process and really stuck with me is... you talked about  
13 there are some tensions; well they're below the  
14 surface and what the process did was make them  
15 visible so people could have dialogue and the issues  
16 and the people who felt voiceless had a chance to  
17 speak. And I think another thing that was good about  
18 it is it brought people together in multiple ways.  
19 So there were artists that could come together, there  
20 were people in disciplines; there were neighborhoods  
21 and the Brooklyn town meeting was really lively  
22 around all of the sort of contested issues of what's  
23 culture; is my culture your noise? And but it just  
24 all got brought out and I think that that's really  
25 positive and that we're never gonna get anywhere

1  
2 unless we can have those difficult conversations, so  
3 that's what I would say was good about.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I agree.

5 [background comment]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very  
7 much all of you for your testimony and for the great  
8 work that you do in fostering creativity and culture  
9 in Brooklyn; I think Brooklyn is really a better  
10 place for the work that you and your colleagues do.

11 In just kind of speaking to that, Caron;  
12 I think one thing that was kind of driving us to  
13 explore this is that, that conversation is dynamic  
14 and it continues to change and so, you know, even  
15 since that conversation happened in 2000, 2001; I  
16 mean, things are continuing to move forward, you  
17 know, kind of like on into the future and so I think...  
18 you know, part of the thing about looking at this is...  
19 you know, an updating of that conversation; we can  
20 obviously improve upon ways in which we can ensure  
21 that things are implemented and there's... you know,  
22 there's increased buy-in from the public side of the  
23 public-private partnership, but having... what's  
24 exciting to us is this idea of updating that

1 conversation, because you know, that... you know, art  
2 is dynamic and it continues to change.

3  
4 CARON ATLAS: I would just add is... and  
5 this came through a discussion of the two Chicago  
6 plans; is there was a sense that I heard that the  
7 first plan was a much better; including people  
8 outside of the arts community [background comment]  
9 and that that gave it some extra weight, and so I  
10 would urge you to think that way as well, that we  
11 need to get beyond the arts community in this  
12 conversation, which is very dynamic.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely.  
14 Thank you, [background comment] all three of you for  
15 your work and Council Member-elect, we look forward  
16 to serving with you in due time. [background  
17 comment] Our next panel is gonna consist of Lane  
18 Harwell from Dance NYC... is Alexandra Farkas  
19 [background comment] testifying... Alexandra Farkas and  
20 Tamara Greenfield as well from the fabulous Fourth  
21 Arts Block. And... [pause]

22 [background comments]

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [background  
24 comments] Go ahead; it's up to you. [background  
25 comments]

ALEXANDRA FARKAS: Okay. [crosstalk]

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Whoever wants to start; it's up to you.

LANE HARWELL: It's a race; I'll start.

Lane Harwell, Executive Director of Dance NYC. I submit this testimony on behalf of the service entity, Dance NYC and from this professional perspective I advocate, of course, for the centrality of dance to any cultural planning for the City of New York, which has earned its reputation as a global dance capitol. Now at the same time, I offer that all of us in the arts and culture are stronger when working together and working with New Yorkers.

For a cultural plan to be comprehensive it would take as its starting point arts and culture as a whole and consider the evolving roles of all allied disciplines and forms. Certainly it would consider the 501(c)(3) organizations in all City Council Districts and of varying shapes and sizes currently eligible for funding by the Department of Cultural Affairs, but it would also embrace those contributing to the arts and culture outside this legal structure, including individual artists. It

1  
2 would acknowledge that creative lives exist on a  
3 continuum and take seriously arts education, arts  
4 careers, institutional advancement, as well as  
5 audience and constituent access and engagement. Such  
6 a plan would not look at arts and culture in  
7 isolation, but as being reciprocally linked to  
8 society -- the arts and New York are one.

9           Now for a cultural plan to be effective  
10 it must be data driven. I advocate transparency, the  
11 generation and analysis of more inclusive data,  
12 listening to the arts community and all New Yorkers  
13 and mapping cultural assets neighborhood by  
14 neighborhood, porous neighborhood by porous  
15 neighborhood. The planning, as Caron highlighted  
16 before, I believe the planning itself has value and  
17 the process has value and I also very much favor a  
18 scenario where arts councils and service  
19 organizations take a lead in their communities.

20           There are inevitably budgetary  
21 considerations and I share your hope and rejoice with  
22 you, Chairman Van Bramer, [laughter] about  
23 opportunities for the future. I invite the City to  
24 hold out the possibility of increased investment  
25 through the DCA and improved alignment between this

1 allocation and the growth of overall city  
2 expenditures -- this is not a statement of need;  
3 rather, as the data already tell us and as a  
4 comprehensive cultural plan would too -- investment  
5 in the arts drives healthy returns including  
6 neighborhood diversity and economic development.  
7

8 It's also the case for DCA to include new groups in  
9 its portfolio and to help currently funded groups to  
10 scale their delivery of public value it would need  
11 additional funds.

12 Critically, however, I believe a cultural  
13 plan would look beyond city arts dollars and DCA;  
14 city funding is but one critical lever in advancing  
15 the health of arts and culture; it could catalyze  
16 public-private partnerships and harness the creative  
17 potential of our city's artists to lift up neglected,  
18 established and start-up industries.

19 I advocate interagency strategy, as many  
20 others have today; there are of course many examples  
21 of [bell] interagency collaboration, but they're...  
22 they're more... keep going? Okay. There remain  
23 untapped opportunities for arts leadership, critical  
24 agencies for increased access and for bridge-building  
25



1  
2 that puts artists and arts organization at the table  
3 in critical policy and program discussions.

4 I believe the arts have a role to play in  
5 creating solutions for all of the issues New Yorkers  
6 are facing and once can take, for example, those  
7 highlighted in Mayor-elect de Blasio's visions for  
8 New York and framework for addressing inequity, New  
9 York rising together -- jobs and economic  
10 development, education, safety, affordability,  
11 transit, sustainability, resilience and equality for  
12 all New Yorkers. In each of these issue areas  
13 opportunities for the arts and culture abound. Thank  
14 you all.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

16 ALEXANDRA FARKAS: Hi there. Good  
17 afternoon, my name is Alexandra Farkas and I am the  
18 Vice Chairman of Fractured Atlas Board of Directors.  
19 Adam Huttler would like me send his regards and say  
20 that he is very sorry that he couldn't be here;  
21 unfortunately there were prior commitments that made  
22 it impossible.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: We love  
24 Fractured Atlas.

1  
2 ALEXANDRA FARKAS: [laugh] And we love  
3 you.

4 I'd like to thank the Committee for  
5 inviting Fractured Atlas to testify and I'd  
6 especially like to thank Council Members Van Bramer  
7 and Levin for introducing this important piece of  
8 legislation.

9 For 20 years or more New York City has  
10 taken what might be characterized as a laissez-faire  
11 approach to cultural policy; that's not to suggest  
12 that the city hasn't been supportive of its arts  
13 organizations. On the contrary, the extent to which  
14 New York subsidizes its cultural institutions through  
15 DCA funding is admirable. The City Council in  
16 particular is to be commended for its ongoing  
17 commitment on this front and for valiantly defending  
18 the DCA through a long stretch of challenging budget  
19 cycles.

20 Likewise, there is no question that our  
21 cultural institutions do excellent, important work  
22 with the public funds they receive, but funding  
23 alone, no matter how generous is insufficient to  
24 safeguard New York's position as the arts and culture  
25 capitol of the world. That's because there are two

1  
2 critical factors that public funding fails to  
3 address.

4 First, there is a tremendous amount of  
5 grassroots arts and cultural activity that receives  
6 little or no support through the DCA, despite being  
7 an essential engine for our creative economy. When  
8 neighborhoods like Williamsburg or Long Island City  
9 undergo dramatic transformations, both culturally and  
10 economically, it isn't because they're packed with  
11 marble columned tourist destinations. The bedrock of  
12 New York's cultural sector is a dense and vibrant  
13 population of individual artists, along with diverse  
14 array of community-based arts organizations. This is  
15 what gives the City its unique character and makes  
16 New York such a thrilling place to live and work.

17 The second problem with a cultural policy  
18 that begins and ends with DCA grants is that public  
19 funding is essentially a blunt instrument; valuable  
20 as it is, it largely fails to address the underlying  
21 social and economic contexts in which art is made and  
22 consumed. The DCA's budget could be tripled and we'd  
23 still see young artists leaving New York in favor of  
24 cities where they can actually afford a studio  
25 apartment. Meanwhile, what frameworks do we have for

1  
2 understanding the process of artist-driven  
3 gentrification and its effects on neighborhood  
4 character and economic sustainability? Looking  
5 beyond affordability, what kind of infrastructure is  
6 necessary to ensure a robust, productive and  
7 sustainable creative economy?

8           A thoughtful and comprehensive cultural  
9 planning process would explore challenging questions  
10 like these. The first step is to assemble robust and  
11 nuanced data on the cultural sector as it exists  
12 today; this goes far beyond assembly a roster of  
13 DCA's grantees and requires looking deep into the  
14 outer boroughs to get below the radar of broad  
15 mainstream awareness. There must also be transparent  
16 process of community engagement and beginning  
17 meaningful input on current challenges and future  
18 opportunities.

19           An effective cultural plan would take a  
20 sober and honest look at how New York can reassert  
21 itself as the most vibrant and exciting place in the  
22 world to make and experience art. Yes, it would  
23 consider levels of funding, [bell] but it would also  
24 look at housing, production facilities, consumption  
25 facilities, zoning, public education, permitting

1 rules, audience development, interagency cooperation,  
2 and all of the other elements that together form the  
3 context in which the arts happen in New York.  
4

5 All of this is to say a cultural plan is  
6 vitally important, but it's also a huge project. The  
7 City Council must not simply pass this bill without  
8 also ensuring that the DCA is adequately resourced to  
9 do this right and I recognize you acknowledged this  
10 earlier, but it's worth saying again. That means new  
11 dollars that do not cannibalize the agency's existing  
12 budget for grant-making operations; it also means  
13 accepting the likelihood that project of this  
14 magnitude in a city as large and complex as New York  
15 is probably at least \$1 million undertaking.

16 Those caveats aside, Fractured Atlas is  
17 an enthusiastic supporter of the proposed  
18 legislation; all of us on the staff and board stand  
19 ready to assist in whatever way we might be helpful  
20 to its passage or in the execution of the plan  
21 itself. Thank you again for your time, for inviting  
22 our testimony and most importantly, for everything  
23 you do to support the arts in this great city.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. And  
25 I just... I'm struck by how many folks are using the

1  
2 words transparency and democracy and inclusivity and  
3 equity and that is exactly why I support this  
4 legislation, so fabulous, fabulous, fabulous.  
5 [laughter] Fourth Arts Block.

6 TAMARA GREENFIELD: Thank you, thank you  
7 for... thank you Chair Van Bramer and members of the  
8 City Council for this opportunity to testify about  
9 developing a comprehensive cultural plan for New York  
10 City. I'm not gonna go into FAB because there's not  
11 that much time and I wanna talk a little bit about  
12 some of the key points. Most things that I would  
13 testify about have been mentioned, but a few could  
14 warrant some more discussion.

15 So I believe that development of a  
16 cultural plan for New York City could be an  
17 incredible opportunity to engage a wide range of  
18 artists, cultural leaders and residents to develop a  
19 vision for how the arts could be part of the cultural  
20 vitality of every community in New York City. In  
21 order to do this effectively there's a few  
22 recommendations I would make -- I think many of them  
23 have been made -- engage every agency in developing  
24 cultural policy, integrate arts and culture into safe  
25 streets and transportation, education, immigration,

1  
2 sustainability, zoning; community development,  
3 include community-based cultural organizations in the  
4 development of the plan so New York City's cultural  
5 policy truly reflects the diversity of our city's  
6 people and neighborhoods, provide funding to support  
7 the development of the cultural plan, as well as the  
8 implementation of key priorities. We want a policy  
9 that is acted upon, not one that sits on a shelf, as  
10 I think has been said.

11 In addition to direct funding support for  
12 the cultural sector, explore creative policy  
13 approaches to support neighborhood-based culture --  
14 and this is really the key area -- what if we brought  
15 the same creativity that we use in the cultural  
16 sector to policy to support cultural vitality in  
17 every community. Ideas could range from publicly-  
18 funded marketing and promotion, which New York City  
19 and company, MTA; lots of other agencies have access  
20 to, to reduction in bureaucratic barriers -- I always  
21 bring up the example of SAPO [phonetic] -- and  
22 enforcement of illegal conversions of manufacturing  
23 space that we continually lose for artist workspace  
24 to condo conversions, to information sharing; how  
25 could people more effectively access public space;

1 what are some of the easier ways for artists and  
2 cultural uses of those public and private spaces?

3 And to more radical approaches, like community land  
4 trusts, tax credits and I apparently didn't finish my  
5 sentence, but [laughter] many other such strategies  
6 that I think we all know.

7  
8 FAB itself is a benefit of that kind of  
9 creative approach and I would love to see more  
10 opportunities for that throughout the City. Thank  
11 you.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and I  
13 love the idea of changing the way we actually govern  
14 by using the creativity of the cultural [background  
15 comment] community to change it, because there are so  
16 many things that are done better and make more sense  
17 and... you know, I was thinking of your... the idea about  
18 maps and No Longer Empty did something last year in  
19 the Bronx and they did a map -- I don't know if  
20 you've seen the map that they did -- which was  
21 brilliant and it was so much better in some ways at  
22 bringing people to a place and letting people know  
23 what was there than anything else I've ever seen and  
24 using the art to drive everything else, which was  
25 amazing and that's just one example [background



1  
2 comment] that I've seen that I particularly thought  
3 was strong and really, really terrific.

4 And Lane, I apologize; while you were  
5 talking I looked at your State of Dance NYC and I  
6 just want you to know that some of those dancers are  
7 in danger; [laughter] this guy should not be hanging;  
8 [laughter] I don't know if anyone has seen that, but  
9 that man is in very much danger... [crosstalk]

10 LANE HARWELL: We must help them, yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah. Someone  
12 needs to... [background comment] if he's still hanging  
13 from there, could someone go get him, like at the  
14 [laughter] corner of 179th and Columbus, or whatever.  
15 But uhm... no, I appreciate everything that you've all  
16 said and I... I think a lot of what we're saying is  
17 hitting on some very similar points and I think that  
18 means we're in some alignment here and I think the  
19 importance of this hearing and this discussion is to  
20 bring the actual legislation into alignment with what  
21 we're all thinking would be most helpful and useful  
22 and real, so I think it's really terrific and  
23 Alexandra at Fractured Atlas does such amazing work  
24 around health care and some other issues and I was  
25 wondering if you could talk about that issue and some

1  
2 of the ways in which you help artists and that we  
3 could help artists achieve their goals, but what  
4 could we make sure is in here with respect to health  
5 care and affordability that would be useful to  
6 artists and useful to support the work that you're  
7 already doing, which is really groundbreaking in so  
8 many different ways?

9           ALEXANDRA FARKAS: Well, thank you very  
10 much for that. I became involved with Fractured  
11 Atlas as a member, as an artist and one of the things  
12 that drew me to the organization and has kept me  
13 involved in the organization for the last 10 years  
14 has been the fact that they look to support the  
15 artist in their work...

16           CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right.

17           ALEXANDRA FARKAS: from a 360-degree  
18 level, whether it is health insurance, whether it's  
19 event insurance, which was something that did not  
20 come to our attention and when it... there was only... it  
21 runs out that there is only one insurance company  
22 that was insuring -- and this is going to sound like  
23 an absurd idea -- but people who use fire in their  
24 art, there's only one insurance company in the nation  
25 that insures them; they went out of business, so

1  
2 Fractured Atlas took up that mantle. And so it's  
3 very often looking at what the needs are and  
4 addressing those needs and finding a really efficient  
5 and entrepreneurial way of addressing them. We use  
6 technology, as you all know very much, to find  
7 efficiencies and to find ways to address the broadest  
8 population that we possibly can. So there's a lot of  
9 crosspollination that happens, whether it's with our  
10 artfully or spaces programs; there are artists that  
11 benefit from it who may not have been the original  
12 constituency, but who are able to benefit from it  
13 because it is built on a platform that is broad  
14 enough to help others.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And I love your  
16 description of public funding as a blunt instrument;  
17 [laughter] it's of course vitally important, but it  
18 is not the end by any stretch of the imagination.

19 So unless Steve has anything talk for..  
20 Steve is just taking it all in, he's taking it all in  
21 [laughter] and we seriously are, through our staff,  
22 writing everything down. So I wanna thank you for  
23 everything that you do for the City of New York and  
24 thank you for being here and Lane, seriously, get  
25

1  
2 that guy off that fire escape, [laughter] and with  
3 that I will call the next panel.

4 ALEXANDRA FARKAS: Thank you very much.

5 [background comment]

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

7 Anusha from El Puente; is Anusha here? Very good,  
8 thank you. And I would say the last name Anusha, but  
9 I can't read it [background comment]... alright, thank  
10 you. Amy... [background comment] Sananman,  
11 Groundswell... is Groundswell here? [background  
12 comment] They're in the other room, okay, so Amy  
13 from Groundswell, who we love will come and Michelle  
14 Amador from Mark Morris Dance Group. Is Michelle  
15 Amador from Mark Morris here? Maybe in the other  
16 room. And I wanna thank in advance everyone who is  
17 scheduled to testify; this is the list of people who  
18 have not yet testified and we're gonna try and move  
19 as quickly and as respectfully as possible, making  
20 sure everyone can be heard today, but it is a good  
21 thing that we have as much interest in this hearing.  
22 [background comment] Maybe Michelle is not still  
23 with us, so I'll call another name and we'll check in  
24 with Michelle again and Risa Shoup. Risa Shoup from  
25 Brooklyn Commune... alright. You wanna go, Anusha?

1 ANUSHA VENKATARAMAN: First... and this is  
2 now on. So thank you Council Members, especially to  
3 Council Member Levin for the invitation to speak here  
4 today. My name is Anusha Venkataraman... it's not as  
5 difficult as it's spelled... and I am from El Puente; I  
6 am the Director of the Green Light District  
7 Initiative there. El Puente is a 30-year-old  
8 community-based organization that works with youth  
9 and adult community members in arts and leadership  
10 development in North Brooklyn, specifically in  
11 Williamsburg and Bushwick, and the Green Light  
12 District is a 10-year sustainability and equity  
13 campaign.  
14

15 You know, to give you some context, the  
16 community that I work in, the community of Los Sures,  
17 reflects a rich history of Latino arts and culture  
18 and today the Southside is home to a host of creative  
19 people, places and cultural organizations. We  
20 recently worked on a project over the past two years  
21 that was led by the adult artist network that we  
22 coordinate called CADRE, the Community Artists'  
23 Development and Research Exchange; the project we  
24 worked on was called the WEPA Project, where we  
25 mapped the cultural assets in our community; we

1 developed an online interactive map of these cultural  
2 assets, which includes the spaces and places of  
3 cultural expression and we formalized the major goals  
4 of the community, the creative community and beyond  
5 in the WEPA Project Cultural Assets Action Plan. I  
6 say that to emphasize that I know this process is not  
7 easy; that has taken us two years and our  
8 neighborhood is one square mile, so you know, I look  
9 forward to sharing what we've learned from that  
10 process with you moving forward.

12 First I wanna commend the sponsors of  
13 this bill, which goes a long way in recognizing our  
14 city's artistic and cultural assets and I wanna  
15 emphasize some of the guiding values, many of which  
16 I've heard mentioned earlier today.

17 First, culture should be approached  
18 broadly, recognizing that culture, identity and place  
19 are intertwined. Our cultural perspectives define  
20 our notions of community well being and inform our  
21 vision and imagination of what our neighborhoods and  
22 city overall can be become. Second, equity and self-  
23 determination can aid us in prioritizing the  
24 distribution of opportunities and benefits in our  
25 neighborhoods related to arts and culture. And last,

1  
2 transparency also needs to be reflected in this plan  
3 and the process must address the structural barriers  
4 that produce inequity in the city, address them so  
5 that we don't replicate them.

6 My specific points of feedback regarding  
7 the bill, many of which we've heard today, first is  
8 that you require all agencies to address culture,  
9 because cultural policy does not happen only at DCA,  
10 for example, the Department of Parks sets cultural  
11 policy in structuring how to use and access public  
12 space, City Planning and HPD and any other agency  
13 that works on environmental impact statements does  
14 cultural policy when they assess the impact of  
15 development projects on cultural resources, which are  
16 currently defined as historic districts or buildings  
17 that qualify for the National Register of Historic  
18 Places; that's the place to start. This bill can  
19 require all agencies, some of those I listed and  
20 more, to address cultural impacts of their actions  
21 and policies on our communities.

22 Second, and this has been emphasized over  
23 and over again, create an implementation plan and one  
24 that's tied to funding, 'cause nobody wants to waste  
25 our time really on something that sits on a shelf.

1  
2 Third, empower community-based  
3 organizations and grassroots groups to conduct the  
4 neighborhood-based planning and community engagement.  
5 CBOs and grassroots groups know best what our  
6 communities need, how to engage them in the politics  
7 that's inevitably part of every public process;  
8 however, without the funding and even technical  
9 assistance and support, our organizations may either  
10 lack the capacity or compromise our ongoing work, so  
11 tying this facilitation, well the funding is crucial.

12 Lastly, I suggest you go beyond service  
13 and service delivery; you can't deliver culture, we  
14 live, breathe and eat culture -- I'm really hungry; I  
15 haven't eaten enough culture today -- [laughter] so  
16 that we can address the culturally specific needs of  
17 each community, whether geographically defined or  
18 otherwise. A service-based approach commoditizes  
19 culture and normalizes a singular cultural  
20 perspective. Similarly, participation needs to be  
21 replaced with engagement so that we can leverage the  
22 empowering potential that meaningful engagement in  
23 the arts can cultivate. Thank you so much.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
25 Anusha.



1  
2 AMY SANANMAN: Good afternoon and thank  
3 you so much to Council Member Levin for inviting us  
4 and giving us the opportunity to speak and of course,  
5 to Council Member Van Bramer.

6 My name is Amy Sananman and I am the  
7 Executive Director of Groundswell. As many of you  
8 know, Groundswell is a cultural organization with a  
9 17-year track record of using art as a tool for  
10 social change. Over our 17-year history Groundswell  
11 has engaged thousands of youth, community members and  
12 artists in the creation of upwards of 500 works of  
13 public art in neighborhoods throughout all five  
14 boroughs of New York.

15 It is a pleasure to join you here today  
16 and testify on behalf of this legislation to amend  
17 the New York City charter. Many people have  
18 contributed amazing ideas and I just have a few brief  
19 remarks to add.

20 As the cultural capitol of the world, New  
21 York City should be the global leader in setting  
22 equitable and clear objectives that take into account  
23 the assets, needs and resources of all its  
24 communities and perhaps redefining and modernizing  
25 what it means to be the cultural center of the world.

1                   The legislation calls for New York City  
2  
3 to create a transparent -- and you can add that to  
4 word count, Jimmy -- and comprehensive cultural plan.  
5 This plan will support our shared efforts to increase  
6 cultural activity throughout New York City with the  
7 goal of deepening access to and participation in the  
8 arts among New Yorkers from diverse neighborhoods,  
9 socioeconomic backgrounds and cultures, and for us  
10 particularly it's most important to reach those that  
11 are most marginalized.

12                   Added to this legislation should be an  
13 analysis on the impact of youth and families having  
14 access to arts and culture within their own  
15 communities and an outline of how affordable housing  
16 can be used as a strategy, not just for artists, but  
17 for residents who risk displacement due to arts-  
18 related real estate development and gentrification.

19                   I'd be happy to answer any additional  
20 questions on how this legislation might positively  
21 impact community-based cultural organizations. Thank  
22 you so much for your time and consideration today.

23                   RISA SHOUP: There we go. Good afternoon  
24 Chairman Van Bramer, Council Member Levin and other  
25 distinguished members of the New York City Council.

1  
2 My name is Risa Shoup and I am the Associate Director  
3 of The Invisible Dog Art Center in Boerum Hill and a  
4 lead organizer for the Brooklyn Commune, an artist-  
5 driven research project investigating the value of  
6 labor in the performing arts that will culminate in a  
7 white paper. This weekend Brooklyn Commune will  
8 commence a global congress at The Invisible Dog; our  
9 goal is to identify actionable solutions to systemic  
10 challenges; I'm also a graduate fellow at the  
11 Department of City and Regional Planning at the Pratt  
12 Institute. Thank you for this opportunity to testify  
13 today and also for your commitment to arts and  
14 culture.

15 Council Members, just as I, play roles in  
16 several cultural institutions; I ask you to consider  
17 how you embody several roles with respect to the arts  
18 as sponsors of this worthy plan, as well as family  
19 members, neighbors and friends of artists and  
20 audience members at this great city's many cultural  
21 institutions; we all have a critical role to play in  
22 making the City more affordable for artists and arts  
23 workers.

24 My colleagues from Brooklyn Commune and  
25 The Invisible Dog and I are excited by the prospect

1  
2 of a comprehensive cultural plan, but a plan is a  
3 distraction if it isn't backed up by a substantive  
4 process that leads to actual change, and so many  
5 great notes on process were delivered by Caron  
6 earlier. We commend you for highlighting the need to  
7 "provide support to individual and emerging artists  
8 in the City," but what are the mechanisms for doing  
9 so? It is imperative that artistic production and  
10 cultural infrastructure be granted more funding based  
11 on the needs of individual artists who design the  
12 creative projects and places that better the lives of  
13 all New Yorkers.

14 Arts and culture are critical reasons why  
15 so many industries decide to locate in New York City;  
16 the City has leveraged innovative incentives and  
17 development to attract tech and design firms; workers  
18 in those firms employ skills shared by artists and  
19 arts workers, but if we don't create incentives and  
20 developments in response to the needs of artists and  
21 arts workers, then they will have no choice but to  
22 live and work elsewhere.

23 Artists subsidize their own industry with  
24 free labor and uncompensated resources. Brooklyn  
25 Commune's early research shows that artists make too

1  
2 little from their practice and spend considerable  
3 portions of their income to support it, which does  
4 not enable long-term stability.

5 I wanna take a moment now to highlight  
6 the excellent work already done by the Department of  
7 Cultural Affairs, particularly in light of their  
8 democratic reform of the public funding process in  
9 2008, along with members of the City Council and of  
10 the Mayor's office. We hope a similar reform  
11 mentality will continue to guide you and we wish to  
12 be your collaborators in reform. We also want to be  
13 firm; both the necessary research that will inform  
14 this plan and any policy and programmatic changes  
15 that result must be reflected in a funding mandate.

16 We commend you for recognizing the need  
17 to consider the critical differences between  
18 neighborhoods and we want to implore you to consult  
19 artists and other members of the public in this  
20 evaluation. Artists can cut costs and increase  
21 production when they are able to live and work in  
22 close proximity. [bell] Several important  
23 organizations help transform existing and unused real  
24 estate into subsidized space for artists, but we  
25 believe that the city should also enable artist

1  
2 entrepreneurs to create their own affordable  
3 developments by legitimizing and incentivizing live-  
4 work spaces, the purchase of real estate and other  
5 supply site incentives.

6 In closing I wanna thank you for the  
7 opportunity to testify; artists do not live  
8 precarious lives by choice, precarity is a lamentable  
9 affect of our choice to be artists, but together we  
10 are now in a position to help reverse this trend.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you all  
12 very much. Council Member Levin had to go across the  
13 street; there is a democratic caucus of Council  
14 Members discussing some very important bills that the  
15 Council Member cares a great deal about; I care about  
16 them too, but I'm Chair of the Committee, so I will  
17 be staying with you, but just to let you know why  
18 Council Member Levin had to depart. So he'll be back  
19 after democratic caucus, which Laurie does not have  
20 to go to yet... [background comment, laughter] you may  
21 sneak over to democratic caucus. So I just wanna say  
22 thank you very much and thank you for highlighting  
23 transparency once again, but also I would add  
24 grassroots to some of the things that we keep hearing  
25 -- grassroots, grassroots, grassroots -- which is

1 where I come from and something I've very, very  
2 concerned about. So thank you very much, and  
3 Groundswell, I will continue to look for ways in my  
4 district to work with you; Council Member Levin and I  
5 were just raving about your work again as you were  
6 testifying and one day we're gonna do it, but thank  
7 you [background comments] for all the work that  
8 you're doing, thank you, all three of you. And with  
9 that I'll call Eric Pryor, The Center for Arts  
10 Education, Heather Woodfield, One Percent for Culture  
11 and Therese Urban from the Brooklyn Waterfront  
12 Artists Coalition -- if you would give your testimony  
13 to the Sergeant at Arms and then we will... is Therese  
14 Urban here or in the overflow room? We will call  
15 then... let's see... oh, here we go, Therese?  
16 [background comment] Thank you. Thank you for being  
17 here. You wanna... [background comment] Tamara, why  
18 don't you... Heather, why don't you start?

20 HEATHER WOODFIELD: Alright. On behalf  
21 of One Percent for Culture and our more than 550  
22 coalition partners throughout the City, I would like  
23 to comment Council Members Levin and Van Bramer,  
24 along with the Council Members currently supporting  
25 Intro 1136 on their collective vision and leadership

1 in introducing and supporting this legislation. We  
2 believe that with some additional clarification and  
3 enhancements this amendment will benefit New York's  
4 non-profit cultural sector, artists of every  
5 discipline and most importantly, New Yorkers  
6 throughout the City -- I've cut this down a little  
7 bit from my written testimony.

8  
9 We commend that this legislation  
10 addresses increasing participation in cultural  
11 activities, creating a measurement and review  
12 process, which we feel will aid in advocacy for  
13 funding, both from private and government sources,  
14 maximizing the benefits that culture brings to our  
15 neighborhoods and addressing the needs of artists,  
16 which will help support a key sector of the creative  
17 economy and ensure the retention of our human  
18 cultural capital.

19 We have heard some concerns from our  
20 coalition partners about a few of the points included  
21 and some that may be missing and I wanna highlight  
22 five of these quickly.

23 The first is the funding for the plan  
24 itself; without increased funding for the Department  
25 of Cultural Affairs for this planning process, the



1  
2 cost of the plan could put an undue burden on our  
3 already under-resourced non-profit cultural sector;  
4 I'm gonna add that we're hopeful that this will  
5 change, as 71 percent of the 2014 City Council have  
6 signed on in support of the goal of increasing  
7 funding to one percent of the municipal expense  
8 budget.

9 We're also pleased to see the emphasis  
10 Intro 1136 places on neighborhoods, as our non-profit  
11 cultural sector is geographically diverse, with  
12 organizations throughout the five boroughs. However,  
13 we have some concern about how this will be defined  
14 and assessed. There may be instances where having  
15 cultural programming in adjacent and easily  
16 accessible neighborhoods may fill the needs of a  
17 community; furthermore, we know that basing such  
18 assessments on physical addresses could create an  
19 incomplete picture, as many organizations with  
20 citywide reach operate in neighborhoods other than  
21 where they are headquartered. We recognize that in  
22 New York City the term neighborhood is highly  
23 subjective and hope that the language in the  
24 introduction can be amended so that a strong emphasis

1 on local communities is still present while  
2 acknowledging some of these realities.

3  
4 As the Committee is well aware, cultural  
5 expense funding has declined and stagnated in recent  
6 years and has been one of the victims of the so  
7 called budget dance, subject to cuts and  
8 restorations, making increases almost impossible. A  
9 comprehensive cultural plan for New York City must at  
10 a minimum assess the funding needs of the sector; we  
11 would propose that it go a step further and identify  
12 funding solutions that would create a sustainable  
13 funding model for culture and ensure the long-term  
14 vitality of the sector. It follows that a  
15 comprehensive cultural plan would also need to  
16 identify new funding sources required to implement  
17 any of the recommendations in the plan rather than  
18 reallocating the current limited resources.

19 A comprehensive cultural plan for New  
20 York City should address the area of education to the  
21 extent that it is possible; many of our city's  
22 cultural organizations provide educational  
23 programming either in school, after school or out of  
24 school; these organizations not only offer vital arts  
25 education programming, but also programs in other

1 [bell] subject areas, including science, math,  
2 history, humanities and literacy for New Yorkers of  
3 all ages. A comprehensive cultural plan should seek  
4 to enhance and expand these learning opportunities  
5 offered by cultural organizations, should acknowledge  
6 the need for comprehensive arts education in our  
7 schools and should examine whether we are retaining  
8 graduates from our arts programming at city-based  
9 colleges and universities.  
10

11 In closing, it is our hope that a  
12 comprehensive cultural plan will identify the avenues  
13 for interagency participation so that New York City  
14 may benefit from the economic impact, educational  
15 opportunities and improve quality of life that the  
16 cultural sector provides. By calling for interagency  
17 participation in a comprehensive cultural plan, this  
18 Committee, the Council and the Department of Cultural  
19 Affairs can build a model for stronger interagency  
20 cooperation and planning throughout city government.  
21 And I end with a shameless plug that we're hosting a  
22 panel on building interagency cultural participation  
23 this Friday at the Talking Transition Tent.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There's no such  
25 thing as a shameless plug. [laughter] So I just

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wanted to briefly address the funding piece, 'cause I am proud to support Percent for Culture and I think we all agree that the current system is not working and is not sustainable over the long haul, so doing nothing is not an option; if what we want at the end of the day is a larger pool of resources more equitably distributed and baselined, right, and end the budget dance once and for all, so doing nothing does not accomplish that; I just wanna make that clear and hope that everyone agrees; we've got to do something and Percent for Culture and this cultural plan are all about getting us to the place where we need to be where this vital, vital piece of the City of New York is respected and sustained. So I'm sure you share that... [interpose]

HEATHER WOODFIELD: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: belief with me, so... I don't know who's going second, but feel free to... [background comments] Therese or Eric. [crosstalk, background comments]

ERIC PRYOR: Hello, my name is Eric Pryor and I'm the Executive Director of The Center for Arts Education. First I wanna thank you for this opportunity to testify today; I wanna commend

1 Chairman Van Bramer and Councilman Levin for your  
2 leadership in this area. The Center for Arts  
3 Education, we support the development of a cultural  
4 plan as a catalyst to strengthen the City's economic  
5 health and civic vitality; New York City is the arts  
6 and cultural capitol of the world; I don't need to  
7 tell anyone else that here; however, we feel a  
8 comprehensive cultural plan would be incomplete  
9 without arts education as one of the core components  
10 of this plan. Last time I sat in this room was  
11 testifying in front of the Education Committee and us  
12 in the arts education field feel oftentimes that  
13 we're a stepchild in education and oftentimes don't  
14 dialogue around arts education in this type of space  
15 because the funding primarily happens at the  
16 Department of Education, so we feel it's primarily  
17 important for arts education to be discussed here and  
18 be part of this plan. The students that primarily  
19 are not getting the arts and the districts that are  
20 not getting the arts are primarily low-income  
21 communities of color and we feel that this is an  
22 equity issue that can be addressed within the context  
23 of this plan; we feel it's important that we  
24 strategically position and leverage our cultural  
25

1 resources so that all children have an opportunity to  
2 experience and visit our rich cultural offerings  
3 across all five boroughs and we know that it's  
4 particularly important, because as we work in trying  
5 to get arts into particular communities, it's  
6 incumbent that there are healthy organizations there  
7 where they can partner so if they're in Central  
8 Brooklyn they can partner with the MoCADA and partner  
9 with other organizations that are there, so the  
10 stability of old organizations are also paramount in  
11 terms of our kids having these opportunities.  
12

13 We know for a fact that 300 of our city  
14 schools have no cultural partnerships with any  
15 organizations, with funding for these type of  
16 partnerships declining by 45 percent or \$12 million  
17 over the past seven years, this divestment of  
18 resources with partnerships in the education sector  
19 is important that we reinvestment; invest in our  
20 future.

21 We believe that a multi-agency, multi-  
22 stakeholder cultural plan with arts education as a  
23 core element can help leverage resources and create a  
24 roadmap, helping ensure that the cultural capitol of  
25

1  
2 the world becomes the art education capitol of the  
3 world. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and I  
5 know you skipped some parts there, but I... [interpose]

6 ERIC PRYOR: I didn't wanna go over.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I read the piece  
8 about Chicago, I jumped ahead, so thank you for that  
9 inclusion... [interpose]

10 ERIC PRYOR: That's okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: as well, though  
12 you didn't get to say it publicly.

13 THERESE URBAN: I'm Therese Urban and I  
14 am on the board of... totally extemp...

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: No problem; go  
16 ahead.

17 THERESE URBAN: very sorry about that.  
18 Oh it's not even on yet.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There you go.

20 THERESE URBAN: See, it's really extemp;  
21 [laughter] I don't know how to do this. I'm one of  
22 the artists you're all talking about, so I'm not an  
23 executive director and I am not paid to do anything;  
24 however, we are very appreciative of all of you in  
25 the room who are.

1  
2 I'm on the Board of Directors of the  
3 Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition and I'm one of  
4 the exhibiting artists. We're located at 499 Van  
5 Brunt Street, at the waterfront in Red Hook. We're  
6 36 years old, we've been there for 21 years; a lot of  
7 people don't know that because we have no money for  
8 advertising. We put on between two and five national  
9 juried shows each season; our season runs from March  
10 to the end of October and we put on the same amount  
11 of participatory shows for local artists; everyone is  
12 an emerging artist in our group. We do attempt to  
13 address the same tasks that you're now attempting to  
14 identify and quantify -- how to deliver art  
15 opportunities to the widest possible audience. We  
16 have no barriers to participation in our coalition  
17 except that we require volunteer hours in exchange.  
18 We encourage monetary donation, but we don't require  
19 it for showing with us; we have a very active barter  
20 system instead.

21 Our problem is we can't deliver our  
22 artists' work to the wider community without the  
23 money for advertising. So since we can't have that  
24 we need connections; the City doesn't really provide  
25 connections. So we thank you very much for the



1  
2 opportunity to participate in this kind of design for  
3 the scope of this plan. We've come up with two  
4 particular ways in which we can use connections, and  
5 I'm sure other arts groups can as well -- the tourist  
6 bureau, for instance. Many multicultural events go  
7 on in this city -- parades, etc. -- and our artists  
8 being from all countries of the world as well, we  
9 would love to be able to piggyback on that with some  
10 of our exhibitions; we don't know when those are  
11 happening, there's no way to find out in enough  
12 advance time for us to plan anything, but if we knew  
13 whether it's the United Nations, whether it's the  
14 Cultural Affairs, Tourist Bureau, whoever knows  
15 what's going on in the City really could connect that  
16 to the arts organizations in the City. We can't get  
17 certain kinds of funding because we don't provide  
18 education; it's a lot easier to get grants if you're  
19 educating children from the community; [bell] we're  
20 in the Red Hook community and we have a dedicated  
21 community room that for 21 years we have had  
22 educational groups participate; we hang their work,  
23 whether it's senior citizen centers, schools;  
24 however, if we had a connection that we could  
25 continue to do that and utilize that kind of

1  
2 community room for community outreach, we could do a  
3 much better job of it. So if you can't give us  
4 funding, at least give us connections.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well I'll take  
6 that as a recommendation and not a direct ask. But  
7 uhm, uh... [laughter] but I'm really glad to hear your  
8 perspective; I think it is slightly different than  
9 just about everybody who's come before and your  
10 points are well taken and will be included; we're  
11 certainly happy to talk to you offline about funding  
12 issues and access to those and ways in which we can  
13 steer... [interpose]

14 THERESE URBAN: We do get some funding;  
15 we get DCA, we do... [interpose]

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh, okay.

17 THERESE URBAN: we have one arts  
18 administrator who is a full-time paid employee and we  
19 have between 200 and 400 participating exhibitors at  
20 any given show.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: It sounds like a  
22 wonderful, wonderful... [interpose]

23 THERESE URBAN: It's huge.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: organization  
25 and... [interpose]

2 THERESE URBAN: But emerging artists are  
3 usually also working full-time...

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah.

5 THERESE URBAN: and they just don't have  
6 the strength to be executive directors and get  
7 everywhere and get everything out and make all the  
8 connections on their own...

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure.

10 THERESE URBAN: from scratch.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah. No, I  
12 think the connections piece is very important and I'm  
13 really glad you came and you delivered expert  
14 testimony off the cuff, which was great, so thank you  
15 very much for that and thank you Heather and Eric as  
16 well for your perspectives.

17 I'm gonna call the next panel, Jason  
18 Maas, The Artist Volunteer Center; is Jason... there he  
19 is... [background comment] I think that's Christina  
20 Leene or Leone or... [background comment] Levin... could  
21 it be Levin... Poets House; is Poets House here?  
22 Christina from the Poets House. Well we'll see if  
23 maybe she's in the other room. Anyone else?  
24 [background comment] Okay. Uh... there we go; is that  
25 Christina? [background comment] Awesome.

1 [background comments] And Ellen... is it Ellen Pollan  
2 from the Bronx Arts?  
3

4 FEMALE VOICE: Yeah.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: My eyesight is  
6 clearly going, if you're watching me try to read  
7 these things... I'm getting much older. Alright. So  
8 Jason, why don't we... you start off and then we'll go  
9 that direction.

10 JASON MAAS: Sure, uh... [interpose]

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Jason, Christina  
12 and Ellen.

13 JASON MAAS: Thank you so much for giving  
14 me the opportunity to speak and for having this  
15 incredibly important ongoing dialogue at this  
16 critical time in the city's development.

17 I represent The Artist Volunteer Center;  
18 we're a non-profit that is dedicated to promoting  
19 humanitarian volunteer work to artists and supporting  
20 the creation of art work that's derived out of  
21 volunteer action, community involvement and  
22 participation with culture outside of the artist's  
23 studio.

24 So in my time working as the Founder and  
25 Director of The Artist Volunteer Center I've come to

1 see a great deal of arts organizations that are  
2 working independently of each other but with a  
3 similar mission of promoting culture and supporting  
4 artists and it's wonderful to see so many incredible  
5 organizations in one room, and what I'm hoping for is  
6 in the creation of this cultural plan, that arts  
7 organizations are supported to continue to get  
8 together to be able to, you know share resources, you  
9 know, support each other and come up with a  
10 comprehensive list of needs that then can be brought  
11 to you on a consistent basis to develop a dialogue  
12 that's kinda brought from the communities that the  
13 arts organizations are engaging with; then together  
14 to kind of find what are the common threads and then  
15 brought to you. And then in that process also; how  
16 can you also engage the private and corporate sector  
17 to incentivize and promote more arts funding and  
18 allow those corporations greater access to smaller  
19 non-profits that are often overlooked in the grant  
20 writing process. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

23 Christina.

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COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS

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CHRISTINA LEM: Thank you. Sorry for my handwriting and I'm sorry; I also didn't realize that I... [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: No, it's more my eyesight probably than your handwriting.

[laughter]

CHRISTINA LEM: No, it used to be very good, but since I don't write anymore it's like chicken scratch.

So thank you Chairman Van Bramer and members of the Committee; I'm Christina Lamb and I Direct Partnership through Poets House. Poets House is a 26-year-old organization and one of the country's premier poetry libraries, as well as [background comment] a space for public programs, exhibitions and free class trips, and I'm going to provide a brief background about Poets House so that you understand our perspective on the issues I'll be touching on today, and it's really three; many which have already been discussed -- space and capital, long-term commitment to small organizations and inclusion of all voices in gathering community feedback.

1  
2 In 2004, Poets House was awarded a space  
3 with a 69-year rent-free lease in Battery Park City  
4 because of our commitment to being a space where  
5 everyone is welcome. We then embarked on an \$11  
6 million capital project which was made possible by  
7 city, state and private donors bannin together  
8 because they believed in having a place for poetry  
9 which would create a deeper experience of language in  
10 our city and in our society. The need for such a  
11 place is demonstrated by the 66,000 on-site visitors  
12 we receive every year, including international  
13 tourists and the 14,000 children who learn about  
14 poetry at Poets House, most on free class trips.  
15 Every year those trips are increasing as arts and  
16 cultural funding continues to get cut by 30 to 50  
17 percent on the federal, state and city level.

18 We believe a critical component to city  
19 cultural planning should be a commitment to space and  
20 capital to artists and arts and cultural  
21 organizations; there should also be distinguishing  
22 between spaces for living, working, performing and  
23 convening. Convening spaces are sorely lacking in  
24 the city; we actively try to offer this by partnering  
25

1  
2 with libraries, fellow arts organizations and  
3 schools.

4           As has been discussed, artists and  
5 organizations are being priced out of neighborhoods;  
6 we don't wanna be in a situation in which the only  
7 people that can afford to be artists in the city are  
8 those with money. Space works, art space and the  
9 arts collectives that are purchasing their own space  
10 should be a start; they should not be the only  
11 solution. Those programs also don't address the  
12 needs of small organizations that struggle with  
13 maintaining their spaces; there is real need for  
14 long-term political and economic commitment to small  
15 organizations that serve local communities. We know  
16 from our own experience that there is support for  
17 small organizations as they're starting up and moving  
18 to a new space, but little to no support for their  
19 sustainability and growth and that really needs to  
20 change.

21           Lastly, as the Council reaches out to  
22 each community for feedback, whether through focus  
23 groups or town hall meetings or conferences, the  
24 Council should include practitioners of the arts, not  
25 just organizations, as well as patrons, teachers,



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students; everyone that supports and benefits from the organizations; that is the only way to understand the full extent of each organization's level of service, as well as the needs of the communities. This reaching out should also include immigrant communities. I can say from our own experience that when we presented programs in other languages or that deal with other cultures, usually through collaborations with other organizations, we attract entirely new crowds who are grateful to have their voices included in the cultural activities of the city; they should be incorporated into arts and cultural programming in general, not just marginalized to minority and specific ethnic organizations. [bell] Thank you.

[background comment, laughter]

ELLEN POLLAN: Perfect. Wow.

[background comments]

ELLEN POLLAN: Uh-oh.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Very powerful, very compelling and... timed perfectly... [laughter] no [background comment, crosstalk]

ELLEN POLLAN: The pressure's on.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right; no  
3 pressure.

4 ELLEN POLLAN: Yes. Good afternoon  
5 Council Members and thank you for this opportunity to  
6 testify. My name is Ellen Pollan; I'm the Deputy  
7 Director of the Bronx Council on the Arts, which is  
8 celebrating its 50th year of service to the Bronx  
9 creative community. A pioneering advocate for  
10 cultural equity, BCA nurtures the development of a  
11 diverse array of artists and arts organizations and  
12 builds strong cultural connections in and beyond the  
13 Bronx. I'll skip to the next paragraph.

14 There is obviously a strong consensus  
15 [background comments] for a collaborative, community-  
16 driven, authentic, artist centered, asset-based New  
17 York City cultural plan going forward. Boasting of  
18 hundreds of museums, arts galleries, professional and  
19 non-profit theatres, dance companies, orchestras and  
20 more, all generating more than 400 million true  
21 artists, our New York City, which includes the rest  
22 of the City, known as the Bronx, Staten Island,  
23 Queens and Brooklyn, are all equipped to meet the  
24 challenge. It does seem appropriate to harness the  
25 power and be intentional in creating strategies that

1 will improve community access and participation,  
2 provide an opportunity for transparent discussion of  
3 critical issues, devise enhanced capacity building  
4 and leadership development opportunities with a focus  
5 on the young that extend beyond support of real  
6 estate development and trendsetting.  
7

8 Therefore, similar to creating a  
9 Thanksgiving survival guide for a successful meal,  
10 may I suggest some tips to ensure a successful  
11 cultural plan, a game plan -- pull together a city-  
12 wide cultural assets inventory, create and implement  
13 a city-wide arts and cultural census; only then can  
14 we complete a shopping list of goals and objectives  
15 that will be simple and quick to use. Add variety --  
16 include artists and culturals from all the boroughs  
17 in all budget sizes with diverse viewpoints,  
18 backgrounds and community textures; this will add  
19 visual appeal and authentic cultural richness. Take  
20 stock, understand that every arts and cultural  
21 organization cannot be jammed together into one  
22 category or demographic or analysis; do the work to  
23 understand the different methods and approaches that  
24 exist. Use all the methods of outreach; harvest all  
25 the energy, it may get messy, but that is where the

1 heart of the arts is located. Make advance plans,  
2 invest in infrastructure -- community dialogue will  
3 save valuable time going forward; know what you are  
4 going to try to accomplish in the first, second and  
5 fifth years out. Stay flexible, different courses of  
6 action will arise in reaction to accidents,  
7 emergencies and new technologies. Miraculous things  
8 can happen along the pathway, but to take advantage  
9 of them, one needs to know where we are going, how we  
10 will get there, who will be with us and what is  
11 expected. Keep arts and culture hot, infiltrate  
12 every sector with creative planning, using arts to  
13 identify and solve problems. Care for us, tap our  
14 resources, knowledge and abilities; you already know  
15 that the arts are integral to the future, so ideally,  
16 strengthen cultural institutions through increased  
17 cultural collaborations which could ideally reduce  
18 costs, convene cultural organizations to explore  
19 educational programming, grants, sales and  
20 importantly, technology and websites as avenues for  
21 collaboration and sharing best practices. [bell]  
22 Create economic conditions for artists that are  
23 directed toward growth; our city can look at the  
24 creative economy as a force to alter and develop;  
25

1  
2 promote creative entrepreneurial activity and  
3 development by increasing access to capital,  
4 professional development and business and incubation  
5 with an eye on youth. Enhance New York City's  
6 cultural products through marketing and promotion  
7 initiatives that tap into the reserve of our business  
8 community and could help redirect flow of cultural  
9 products and create consortiums to build audiences,  
10 affordable spaces and more. Do not allow the media  
11 culture to commercialize the arts. Build new  
12 leadership models that value teamwork and open  
13 communication and plan to go green. Remember to  
14 please make sure that arts are invited to the table  
15 with educators, housing and employment specialists,  
16 health care, social service providers; let's align  
17 our vision with policymakers and investors for a  
18 cultural plan that works for the New York City of the  
19 future. Happy Thanksgiving.

20 [background comments, laughter]

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
22 much and Happy Thanksgiving to you as well.

23 [laughter] And so I just wanna thank you. Jason,  
24 you said something at the beginning, which I often  
25 have this feeling of awe, right, of all of the

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various organizations that are in this room and that testify and it should make us all feel really, really good [background comment] that there's so much talent, there's so many people who care about this and that there's actually a lot of power in this community, which we don't often talk about the arts and power, but there is actually a lot of power in this room and I think that's important and part of this plan is harnessing that power and strengthening it, but allowing the power to drive.

JASON MAAS: Sure. And how can we keep these people in the same room; you know, who's the driving force; who's gonna be the connector; is it gonna be you; is it gonna be the largest fish in the pond that's gonna have the largest microphone to say this is when we're meeting; you know how often do we meet that's effective? You know, I think those are the questions that... [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right.

JASON MAAS: I'm curious about.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well I think it's not necessarily me... by the way, you and I have the same size microphone right now... exactly the same, so [laughter, background comments] very democratic

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here at the City Council. But the truth is, we don't know all of that, but that's why we're here, right... [interpose]

JASON MAAS: Uhm-hm.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: to sort of talk about it and I don't really think that a top down approach is really what people are looking for; it's certainly not what I'm looking for and I don't think I should be, you know, the final arbiter; I think it really comes from you all; right, I mean... and the importance is making this as transparent and as democratic as possible and then I think we'll have a meaningful product and a meaningful end result. You know, the... I certainly know how to get in trouble; sometimes you know the less elected officials are involved the better; we should be vehicles to be able to achieve great things, right, for all of you who are doing all of the work and that's what's really important and I think one of the goals of this. So transparent and democratic, but I think, you know for all of you, just to keep letting us know how you envision it going and what you'd like to see happen here and uh... [interpose]

1  
2 JASON MAAS: May I ask when the next City  
3 Council meeting on this topic will be held?

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You know, we  
5 don't know that yet; this is a piece of legislation  
6 that's been introduced; this is the first hearing on  
7 this piece of legislation; normally what happens at  
8 this point is as a result of all of the input that  
9 we've received and will receive we'll probably change  
10 the bill, so we'll amend the bill, take into  
11 consideration a lot of what's been said here today  
12 and then we'll probably have a second hearing on the  
13 bill and have another hearing where we get feedback  
14 and present the new plan, if you will... the new bill  
15 for the plan and there is no timetable on that;  
16 obviously I would like for it to happen as quickly as  
17 possible and should that second hearing take place  
18 and go well and we move forward, then the bill would  
19 be scheduled for a vote and would be enacted into  
20 law. But there is no set timetable, particularly  
21 because we want this to be an inclusive process and  
22 we want there to be meaningful input and so we will  
23 move it as aggressively as possible within that  
24 framework.

25 JASON MAAS: Okay. Great.



1  
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So we'll be in  
3 touch for sure, but it's very important to Council  
4 Member Levin and I to move this and I think this  
5 hearing will actually move it further along.

6 JASON MAAS: Great. Well I... and I ask  
7 and challenge the arts organizations in this room to  
8 find a time to come together maybe in that interim  
9 period to speak and share our concerns and thoughts.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure. I'll let  
11 you work that out amongst yourselves [laughter] and  
12 we get to call the next hearing. So with that I  
13 wanna say thank you, to all of you and the next panel  
14 is Marco Antonini from NURTUREart, if Marco is here,  
15 Catherine Green from ARTs East and it's Noel, or Noel  
16 Allain from The Bushwick Starr. Uhm... what's that?  
17 What's that? [background comment] Yeah; did they  
18 leave? ARTs East New York, Catherine Green?  
19 [background comment] There we go. And Marco aren't...  
20 oh... let's see... that's alright, James, you're good.  
21 So Marco Antonini is not here or in the overflow  
22 room, so we will go to Susan Goldberg... Goldberg...  
23 [crosstalk]

24 SUSAN GOLDBETTER: Goldbetter.

25 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Goldbetter...

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2 SUSAN GOLDBETTER: Better than gold.

3 [laughter]

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Better than

5 gold. I love it, Circuit Productions, Inc. Uhm...

6 [laughter] uhm... it's my eyesight; I need to go to the

7 eye doctor. Thank you Susan and... now we have two

8 more panels after this, so thank you so much everyone

9 for your patience and for sticking with us.

10 [pause]

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Do you wanna go?

12 CATHERINE GREEN: Uhm...

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah.

14 CATHERINE GREEN: Susan decided to go

15 first. [crosstalk]

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay.

17 SUSAN GOLDBETTER: I'm elected.

18 NOEL ALLAIN: We voted her.

19 [laughter]

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes; it's a very

21 democratic process situation.

22 [laughter, background comments]

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Go ahead.

24 CATHERINE GREEN: Press the button.

25

1  
2 SUSAN GOLDBETTER: First, a thank you  
3 goes to Chairman Van Bramer, Council Member Levin and  
4 all the Council Members who participated in  
5 introducing this bill to amend the New York City  
6 charter in relation to a comprehensive cultural plan,  
7 the first I think of its kind in New York City  
8 history.

9 My name, as all of you know now, is Susan  
10 [laughter] Goldbetter and I'm the Executive Director  
11 of Circuit Productions, an organization who for the  
12 past 25 years has used diverse music and dance to  
13 bridge locally diverse cultures and communities and  
14 this experience has given me, our staff and the  
15 senior and emerging artists we represent unique  
16 opportunities to meet and perform for the  
17 constituents living in the five boroughs.

18 Before I go on, I just wanna say that  
19 more than 70 percent of the artists that we work with  
20 are seniors and these artists are some of the artists  
21 that created the jazz music, the tap dance, the world  
22 music and dance so significant to New York City  
23 history.

24 Below are a few key points we feel are  
25 relevant in devising this plan: (1) to identify New

1  
2 York City's current scope of cultural services,  
3 including arts education and individual artists; (2)  
4 to include council districts, neighborhoods and  
5 borough-wide input to determine what cultural  
6 services and/or activities are currently available  
7 and what is not available; (3) to determine what, if  
8 any, is the cultural infrastructure in each borough  
9 and how an infrastructure could help identify future  
10 cultural needs; (4) to measure the economic impact  
11 that cultural institutions, performing arts  
12 organizations and individual artists have on our  
13 city; and last, to recommend using strategic  
14 planning, including convening cultural partners and  
15 arts partners, which may provide future policies,  
16 resources and opportunities, as well as the means of  
17 increasing the participation of neighborhood groups,  
18 including youth and senior populations. Thank you  
19 for giving me this opportunity; I wish you all good  
20 luck in the process and I too am available to assist  
21 in this endeavor when and wherever possible.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
23 much and I very much appreciate you including seniors  
24 in this discussion, which is very important to me as  
25 well.

[background comment]

NOEL JOSEPH ALLAIN: Hello, my name is Noel Joseph Allain; I'm the Artistic Director and Co-Founder of The Bushwick Starr Theater in Bushwick, Brooklyn. I'd like to thank the Council for inviting me to testify today considering this exciting initiative. I would like to just use our theatre as an example to reiterate a point that many have made today, and that is about the multi-faceted character of many arts and cultural organizations.

Over the past seven years The Bushwick Starr has grown from a makeshift loft theatre for rent to an Obie Award winning presenting organization -- Time Out just named New York's Off Off Broadway venue -- so we are a grassroots organization that's come a long way.

The Starr is committed to serving multiple communities in our area, which seems increasingly important as development of our neighborhood increases, rents rise and stability is threatened; we are a destination for a city-wide theater-going audience who help support our neighborhood economy and we provide a place for emerging artists to develop their work.

1  
2 We also serve our immediate neighborhood  
3 and community through a number of programs each year;  
4 our Big Green Theater and Puppets and Poets Festivals  
5 bring us into PS 123 to work with their 5th graders  
6 after school and then, bring the entire student body  
7 and their families into our theater to see the  
8 performances of the students' work. Also, Flako  
9 Jimenez' Brooklyn Gypsy curates an evening of local  
10 poets and musicians, bringing members of our diverse  
11 communities together for a night with the intention  
12 of creating communication and dialogue.

13 Bringing a city-wide theater-going  
14 audience to Bushwick, presenting emerging New York  
15 City performing artists and investing in the growth  
16 of local youth are very different tasks, all worthy  
17 endeavors that serve different communities.

18 The key is finding the places that these  
19 communities overlap and that quality is what begins  
20 to make an organization a real center in a  
21 neighborhood. So when looking at how a cultural  
22 institution serves its communities, I'd just like to  
23 say it's important to understand all its different  
24 functions and how they come together to form the  
25 whole. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

CATHERINE GREEN: Hi, good afternoon. My name is Catherine Green; I'm the Executive Director and Founder of ARTs East New York, we're a grassroots non-profit organization in the East New York section of Brooklyn. I wanna thank you so much for inviting me here today; very excited about the new plan for New York City, it's an amazing city of... you know in my youth, just like Councilman Levin, you know; went around the City in my youth and just discovered all that New York City had to offer and also found that not was not to offer in my East New York community, so I wanted to thank you for helping us be a part of the plan and my interest is the East New York community; we have been, quite honestly, left out of a lot of plans in special and cultural affairs and we want to make sure that we are represented in the coming years.

So just to tell you a little bit about the organization, ARTs East New York is a 4-year-old grassroots organization; we have event programming that includes our Summer Saturdaze program where we are at East New York Farmers Market, where we provide free programming for performers from all over the

1 world for the community for free, it's also dual  
2 purpose; we want to bring more people to the farmers  
3 market so that people learn how to eat healthy,  
4 reduce obesity and those such things. The  
5 organization's goal is to make sure that we provide a  
6 strong cultural infrastructure for the East New York  
7 community [dial tone] while addressing the social and  
8 economic issues that plague us.  
9

10 We also have an event coming up --  
11 shameless plug -- December 7th, which is called  
12 ARTsPLOsION, where we do a holiday tree lighting  
13 ceremony at nucleus, New Lots... it's the New Lots  
14 Avenue train station at the three-stop where everyone  
15 sort of gathers and we address gun violence in the  
16 community, somethin' that we've struggled with for  
17 many years and we really invite everyone to come and  
18 support that effort.

19 Again, you know arts education, extremely  
20 important; we go into all of the schools; do an  
21 assessment of what educa... I'm sorry, arts that are  
22 being offered in the schools in East New York; sad to  
23 say, maybe 10 percent have arts programming in the  
24 schools in the East New York community; something  
25 that we are too small to address, you know as an



1 organization, but we would really like to shed light  
2 on that; we do offer intergenerational as well as  
3 youth programs in our gallery space, which we are  
4 fortunate to have, but as someone else said, you know  
5 we definitely need the resources to continue that  
6 work. We also do beautification initiatives  
7 throughout the community -- murals -- we're creating  
8 a corridor of murals on Livonia Avenue, which is a  
9 very dark and dangerous space, to sort of brighten  
10 and have wonderful conversation along that corridor.  
11 We're also transforming vacant lots throughout the  
12 East New York community, transforming them into  
13 beautiful recreational art spaces. We have also just  
14 been awarded the... [bell] from EDC... oops, sorry..  
15 [interpose]

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Keep going.

18 CATHERINE GREEN: from the Economic  
19 Development Corporation an RFP that they put out last  
20 year for vacant lots; we were awarded two lots on New  
21 Lots Avenue where we will be transforming those lots  
22 into artist and vendor incubator spaces, so we will  
23 be providing entrepreneurial services for artists in  
24 the community as well as out and affordable spaces

25

1  
2 for vendors, as well as providing another venue for  
3 East New York residents to have access to the arts.

4 So we've been working very hard and as  
5 Anusha said, we are very hungry in the East New York  
6 community for the arts and apparently contrary to  
7 popular belief, you know we are ripe with want and we  
8 are trying to serve the need. So my... you know, my  
9 charge to you all is to really look into our  
10 community; make sure that we're part of the process;  
11 make sure that you see our community is at the  
12 forefront. So again, that's my interest, so thank  
13 you so much for this opportunity today.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you so  
15 much and I wanna formally recognize that we've been  
16 rejoined by Council Member Levin [laughter] who  
17 apparently democratic caucus is over at City Hall.  
18 So first of all, thank you all and you know, you  
19 talked about using art as a way to tackle obesity,  
20 gun violence and present more healthy food options  
21 and I just think that that's brilliant and I think  
22 that you should be commended for that and I just  
23 wanna say that the cultural plan for me is about  
24 making sure that no adult can say what you just said,  
25 which was that growing up in East New York, right,

1 there weren't many cultural options in my  
2 neighborhood, [background comments] right; our goal  
3 should be that no child in the City of New York feels  
4 that there aren't cultural options in their  
5 neighborhood [background comment] where they're  
6 growing up right now, [background comment] no matter  
7 where they're from; no matter how much money their  
8 family has. So I think you for saying that; I thank  
9 you for the work that you're doing and you know, I  
10 think we're all committed to making sure that there  
11 is vibrant culture everywhere, in every neighborhood,  
12 so... [crosstalk]

14 CATHERINE GREEN: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I think we'll  
16 get there with the help of this plan and that's  
17 really what we're trying to accomplish here. So...

18 CATHERINE GREEN: If I could say really  
19 quickly...

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah.

21 CATHERINE GREEN: just to echo what  
22 Councilwoman Laurie Cumbo mentioned earlier, about  
23 working with the Arts Councils; we've started to work  
24 with Brooklyn Arts Council on mapping and this sort  
25 of work already to make sure we strategize and sort

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COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS

of outline the needs in the community, so it's been very helpful for us as a small organization to really address the needs... [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's great.

CATHERINE GREEN: and it's worked well.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sounds like you're small but growing...

CATHERINE GREEN: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: which is very exciting. So thank you all for your testimony, for being so patient and sticking with us and for your meaningful contributions to this process.

Ethan Vote; is Ethan Vogt... Ethan... Diane Jacobowitz... Diane Jacobowitz and Jessica Silverman; is Jessica Silverman here? And then we have more panel, Melissa Chapman, [background comments] Kathleen Gilrain, I think and Rosalyn Smith, uh... [background comment] Oh, okay, thank you so much. There we go, got it. Okay. Alright. Thank you. [background comments, laughter]

ETHAN VOGT: Alright. Thank you. Okay. Sure.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Choose amongst yourselves who goes first. [background comments]

1  
2 ETHAN VOGT: Okay, I think I'm gonna  
3 [interpose]

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Go for it.

5 ETHAN VOGT: I'll start. I guess it's  
6 on. My name is Ethan Vogt; I'm the Executive  
7 Director of Nuit Blanche New York, which is an  
8 organization that creates platforms for artists that  
9 work with light, sound and projection... [interpose]

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: 'Kay.

11 ETHAN VOGT: I'm really thankful to have  
12 the opportunity to speak today; we may be well-known  
13 to some people as the producers of the Bring to Light  
14 festival, which occurs in Steve's district. And I  
15 wanna testify broadly in support of this plan and  
16 specifically I wanna highlight two -- a policy and a  
17 possibility -- and while this is unique probably to  
18 the space that we inhabit, I think it can provide a  
19 model for other ways the plan can be developed.

20 So as active presenters of free public  
21 art in New York City, we are strongly in support of  
22 this legislation proposed by Council Member Levin and  
23 co-sponsored by Chairman Van Bramer, to create a  
24 comprehensive cultural plan. We are in full  
25 agreement with the Council Member's assessment that a

1  
2 systematic analysis of the social and economic  
3 benefits of increased cultural activity will provide  
4 tremendous opportunities for better developing  
5 policies and funding to support those goals.

6 Of particular concern to our organization  
7 would be an analysis of the policies regarding the  
8 presentation of new forms of public art. I was taken  
9 by the comments that talked about New York being  
10 number one; wanting to stay number one; creating new  
11 icons, and a lot of these new icons are gonna be  
12 working in new forms. One of the forms that we  
13 promote is the use of projection as an art form.

14 The policies regarding these forms of  
15 public art need to be evolved, we believe. We firmly  
16 believe the at the City has the responsibility and  
17 the authority to regulate expression in public space,  
18 maintain acceptable civic standards, curtail  
19 commercial messaging and not prevent undue  
20 disturbance to city residents. However, current city  
21 policies make no distinction between the exhibition  
22 of projected artwork that contain text and lighted  
23 advertisement signage, effectively prohibiting the  
24 expression of writers and artists engaged in an  
25 established and important medium of contemporary art

1  
2 practice. If these policies are not updated to keep  
3 pace with these important developments in artwork and  
4 public art, the City's cultural potential will  
5 continue to be curtailed with ongoing social and  
6 economic costs.

7           The second point I'd like to speak to is  
8 the idea of investigating, for the plan to  
9 investigate the potential impact of an annual nuit  
10 blanche event in New York City. This proven  
11 exhibition format of nighttime art festivals was  
12 established in Paris almost a decade ago and now has  
13 spread to dozens of cities around the world and  
14 attracts millions of people. We have confidence that  
15 a nuit blanche in New York could have... could grow to  
16 similar scale as global counterparts and draw a  
17 significant amount of domestic and international  
18 visitors. [bell] I will sum up. If you look at  
19 Toronto, they now bring in \$36 million and a 100,000  
20 tourists with their event and I wanna conclude by  
21 firmly supporting this plan and doing everything I  
22 can to support it.

23           CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
24 much. I'm not sure Toronto is the best example right  
25

1  
2 now of a city well-run, but uh... [background comments,  
3 laughter] yeah. [background comments, laughter]

4 DIANE JACOBOWITZ: Is this on? Yeah.

5 Hi, good afternoon; my name is Diane Jacobowitz; I am  
6 the Executive and Artistic Director of Dancewave and  
7 thank you very much, Chairman Van Bramer and also  
8 Steve Levin, who just ran out of the room and all  
9 other Council Members who have put forth this  
10 incredible opportunity for the arts in New York City;  
11 it is an incredible moment for all of us; I am so  
12 happy and thrilled to be in conversation and hear the  
13 great testimony that my colleagues have made and some  
14 wonderful points that they have brought; I think this  
15 is an amazing moment; also that the new mayor is  
16 about to step in; that this happening right at this  
17 moment I think is very important; I hope that he gets  
18 to hear all of this.

19 So Dancewave is a non-profit whose  
20 mission is to transform the lives of young people  
21 through dance and we do this by going into the public  
22 schools, we have our school; over the course of one  
23 year we reached thousands of young people who have  
24 the opportunity to dance and that is such a life-  
25 changing experience, particularly when it is in an



1  
2 immersive after school program that Dancewave offers  
3 both at our organization and in the public schools,  
4 which are sadly lacking in any kind of physical  
5 exercise and just as a side note, I know we have  
6 brought up arts in education; the public school  
7 system very often does not have gym and when  
8 Dancewave goes into a public school they greet us  
9 with open arms because very often they do not have  
10 any kind of physical exercise during the school day.

11 Dancewave is currently building a  
12 building that has been supported by City funding and  
13 we are very grateful to Councilman Levin, as well as  
14 several other Council people and the Department of  
15 Cultural Affairs, who is making this new dance center  
16 happen at 182 4th Avenue in Downtown Brooklyn, on the  
17 corner of Degraw and Fourth; it's slated to open in  
18 2016; we hope that we can bring this new dance center  
19 to everyone in the community; that they can partake  
20 of culture and dance. We are now currently, as I  
21 said, reaching thousands of young people; we hope to  
22 grow that number and we hope to be able to stabilize  
23 and flourish as an art center; we have those  
24 concerns; we're all looking at the new administration  
25 for this funding and I think that the fact that you

1  
2 have put forth this cultural plan is really important  
3 at this moment, as I've said.

4 I think we all know that the benefits of  
5 what art brings to young people; I just very quickly  
6 wanna say that at Dancewave, it's very evident that  
7 dance increases improved academic performance, that  
8 research has shown time and again that students that  
9 are involved in the arts, particularly after school  
10 immersion programs such as what Dancewave provides,  
11 have higher GPA scores, lower dropout rates, better  
12 attitudes about community service; the arts grow our  
13 young people into better citizens.

14 The arts are an industry; we know that  
15 they generate nationally \$135.2 billion annually; I  
16 don't have the figures for New York City, but I am  
17 sure they're quite impressive. The arts are good for  
18 local merchants; typical attendee at an arts event  
19 spends about \$25, just like \$24.60 per event that's  
20 outside of what an admission cost is; that's in their  
21 food and going to the restaurant, so obviously it's  
22 serving the businesses and other local merchants in  
23 New York City; it's great for tourism. I do feel  
24 that in all the discussions that we have been having  
25 about grassroots and transparency and I think those

1  
2 are important words; I also want to say that I think  
3 that this plan needs to be communicated loudly,  
4 broadly; globally to the business community; that the  
5 businesses in Brooklyn and me being downtown Brooklyn  
6 and seeing what's happening at Barclays is very  
7 impressive; the amount of money that is pouring into  
8 downtown Brooklyn is really overwhelming and if  
9 somehow what we're doing can be communicated to other  
10 parts of the population I think it's important that  
11 the arts sit at this table, but I also want to know  
12 that there are initiatives that are being brought  
13 forward to the business and corporate community,  
14 since they are doing quite well in Brooklyn and I  
15 think can somehow have some kind of incentive to  
16 support what this cultural plan is about.

17 [interpose]

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great. And...

19 [interpose]

20 DIANE JACOBOWITZ: Yeah.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Are you wrapping  
22 up?

23 DIANE JACOBOWITZ: Yes, I am wrapping up;  
24 I just wanted to thank you for the opportunity and  
25 thank you all for this dialogue today.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
3 much. Jessica. [crosstalk]

4 DIANE JACOBOWITZ: Yeah.

5 JESSICA SILVERMAN: Chairman Van Bramer,  
6 thanks so much for the opportunity to weigh in on  
7 this introduction; I... my name's Jessica Silverman;  
8 I'm really glad to be here today to participate on  
9 behalf of Carnegie Hall, but also be joined by so  
10 many wonderful colleagues with such terrific ideas.  
11 We applaud your interest in raising the awareness of  
12 the contributions of culture; as both you and Council  
13 Member Levin have pointed out, other cities have gone  
14 to great lengths to articulate a cultural vision and  
15 given New York status as the cultural capitol of the  
16 world; it's wise to encourage thoughtful expansion of  
17 our sector.

18 Extraordinary programs already exist  
19 within the cultural sector, but greater coordination  
20 of this work and an overriding strategic vision is  
21 important, as is creating opportunities for equitable  
22 access for artistic resources.

23 After reviewing other cities' cultural  
24 plans and speaking with leaders in the arts field,  
25 it's clear that creating a comprehensive cultural

1 vision in New York will have unique challenges, but  
2 this legislation is bringing to light a conversation  
3 that really needs to happen about how best to achieve  
4 this and we're really glad today to hear some of  
5 these ideas have begun.

6  
7 With this in mind, there's been so much  
8 that's come up and there's so many great ideas to  
9 address, so I'll just touch very quickly on four  
10 different points. First, we just hope that this  
11 legislation will make clear that arts of varying  
12 sizes and disciplines all have different but equally  
13 important contributions to New York City. Second,  
14 when addressing the equity of access to the arts,  
15 arts education is a central part of that equation,  
16 whether it occurs in schools or community settings.  
17 We encourage this legislation to include an  
18 assessment of the distribution of arts education  
19 resources and a plan to ensure that these resources  
20 can be accessed equally. Third, as several other  
21 people have said, this plan... for this plan to be  
22 successful it will need to be embraced by all levels  
23 of government, community stakeholders, arts  
24 organizations of all sizes, the funding community and  
25 artists and for example, in creating just the arts

1 education portion of the Chicago plan, there was an  
2 18-month planning period that was led by funders and  
3 the Chicago school system that was in coordination  
4 with over 250 arts organizations. This important  
5 planning process facilitated a set of common goals  
6 that the entire group was able to support and we  
7 encourage to have a similar process in New York.  
8

9 And then lastly, again, as many people  
10 have mentioned, the arts community impact is not just  
11 seen within DCA, but serves residents of New York  
12 that fall under the purview of a number of city  
13 agencies and we all know here that the arts are a  
14 valuable tool for personal and social development and  
15 we hope that the cultural plan will identify these  
16 contributions and look at how arts programming can be  
17 further integrated into these city agencies.

18 Finally, I think you've already touched  
19 on this today about a sense of how the funding plan  
20 for this will work, but it'd be great to have some  
21 additional details and we hope that this will help  
22 contribute to growing the pot for all cultural  
23 organizations.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Amen. So thank  
25 you very much and I appreciate the constructive

1  
2 thoughts from a very large cultural [laughter]  
3 institution in the City of New York and your  
4 thoughtfulness with respect to that and I thank all  
5 of you and in a day of shameless plugs, you had the  
6 best, Dancewave; that was great. But you also  
7 reminded me that I am dancing on Saturday and  
8 performing in the... we have a Queens Legislative  
9 Review that they call it at the Performing Arts  
10 Center at Queens College and I will be dancing and  
11 then acting, so I for a night anyway will be part of  
12 the cultural community, but not very well; I won't be  
13 doing either of them very well, but I will try.

14           So I thank you all very, very much for  
15 being here and your contributions and I believe we  
16 have Melissa Chapman; is Melissa Chapman in the room?  
17 And Kathleen Gilrain from Smack Mellon; is Smack  
18 Mellon still here? So Melissa, you are closing us  
19 out I believe, right? [background comment] Brooklyn  
20 Chamber of Commerce [laughter] and I think you will  
21 close the hearing, so we've saved the best for last  
22 and I thank you for your patience and working with  
23 us... whenever you're ready to go.

24           MELISSA CHAPMAN: Thank you Council  
25 Member...

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There you go.

MELISSA CHAPMAN: Oh. Thank you Council Member Van Bramer and Council Member Levin and all the other members of the Council Committee which invited the Chamber to weigh in on this issue. We come in full support of 1136. I'm Melissa Chapman, I serve as a Vice President of Government and Community Relations at the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce and I bring greetings on behalf of our President and CEO, Carlos Scissura, who could not be here today, who re... [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Tell Carlo I said hello.

MELISSA CHAPMAN: I will... we represent over 1,400 member businesses and together we are known as a voice of the Brooklyn business community.

We commend this Committee on introducing legislation to amend the New York City charter in relation to a comprehensive cultural plan. Cultural organizations are vital to our communities, as they positively impact many businesses and organizations in the communities in which they operate.

Our friends from One Percent for Culture was here today; I was in the other room, so I didn't



1 see that, but One Percent for Culture had approached  
2 the Chamber earlier this year to get the business  
3 community involved and really supporting the cultural  
4 world and they brought to us that there's a great  
5 value in terms of the cultural organizations and that  
6 23.8 million tourists visited the City in 2011 which  
7 generated \$7.6 billion in economic activities, which  
8 in turn created 100,000 jobs, even during a recession  
9 at that time.

11 A later report by New York City and  
12 Company in July of this year reported that in 2012  
13 24.5 million people attended the City's cultural  
14 institutions and that was up by 30 percent, which  
15 resulted in \$9.3 billion in taxes. Yet, as the  
16 Council has established, there is no comprehensive  
17 cultural plan for the City. The domino effect of  
18 this being that there is no clear pattern as to what  
19 are established levels of cultural resources and how  
20 funding for the operation of these entities should be  
21 allocated.

22 All sectors benefits when the arts and  
23 culture are sufficiently funded. According to One  
24 Percent for Culture, despite this high return on  
25 fiscal investment, less than one-fourth of one

1 percent of the overall City budget supports non-  
2 profit cultural organizations. This unfortunately  
3 leaves them scrambling for corporate funding, which  
4 takes away valuable human and financial resources  
5 that could be effectively used for their growth and  
6 developmental programs and services; we therefore  
7 strongly support an amendment of Chapter 6 to 7 that  
8 specifically recommends that before July 1, 2015 that  
9 Commissioner shall produce and post on the website a  
10 comprehensive cultural plan for the City; in so  
11 doing, strategic and strong support can [bell] be  
12 given to our struggling cultural institutions which  
13 will enable them to expand their programs, hire  
14 additional employees and make an even bigger  
15 contribution to our economy. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
18 much Melissa and I appreciate everyone for being here  
19 today; this was over three hours of testimony,  
20 although I reminded Council Member Levin that we had  
21 a five-hour cultural hearing two months ago, so this  
22 feels short in comparison to that one. But about 30  
23 cultural organizations and other organizations  
24 testified today... 30 from around the five boroughs and  
25 all in favor in one way or another of this

1  
2 legislation and feeling that this legislation would  
3 be important in driving to the very top of the list  
4 culture and the arts in the City of New York and that  
5 is our intention and I'm very, very thrilled with the  
6 turnout and the overwhelming support for this bill,  
7 Intro 1136, and I wanna thank Council Member Levin  
8 for his work on this issue and his staff and my  
9 staff, Matt Wallace and Cody Rider [phonetic], who  
10 just took a picture of me, and our counsel staff,  
11 Tymia [phonetic] and Tanya [phonetic] Cyrus  
12 [phonetic] who are here, who... and Jason Vanray  
13 [phonetic] from my office who is helping with the  
14 live tweeting and has done a great job. So on behalf  
15 of all of us, thank you so much; we look forward to  
16 incorporating so much of what was said today into  
17 this important piece of legislation and then coming  
18 back to you with a second hearing and a second look  
19 at this before we hopefully move forward with a vote  
20 and passage of this very important piece of  
21 legislation. So thank you all and with that [gavel]  
22 this hearing is adjourned.

23

24

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date            November 27, 2013