

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 JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

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March 23, 2016  
Start: 10:26 a.m.  
Recess: 03:57 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E:

JAMES G. VAN BRAMER  
Chairperson

ANDY L. KING  
Co-Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

COSTA G. CONSTANTINIDES  
ELIZABETH S. CROWLEY  
HELEN K. ROSENTHAL  
JAMES G. VAN BRAMER  
JULISSA FERRERAS-COPELAND  
LAURIE A. CUMBO  
PETER A. KOO  
STEPHEN T. LEVIN

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

Tony Marx  
President  
New York Public Library

Linda Johnson  
Brooklyn Public Library

Tom Finkelpearl  
Commissioner  
Department of Cultural Affairs

John Hyslop  
President  
Local 1321

Cuthbert Dickenson  
President  
Local 374

Val Colon  
President  
Local 1930

Catherine Skrzypek  
Vice President  
Local 1482

David Paskin  
Associate Director  
Research and Negotiations

Peter Vreeland  
President  
Local 1559

Jeremy Sanders  
President  
Local 1501

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

Christine Lebeau  
Scientific Assistant  
American Museum of Natural History

Poppy  
Student  
Queens Library Adult Learning Center

Mona  
Licensed Specialist  
Queens Library

Corina Yanez  
President  
Friends of Richmond Hill Library

Thelma Golden  
Director/Chief Curator  
Studio Museum in Harlem

Sheila Lewendowski  
Founder/Executive Director  
Chocolate Factory Theatre

Carl Goodman  
Director  
Museum of the Moving Image

Anne Dennin  
Chair  
NYC Arts Coalition

Walter Scott  
Senior Librarian  
Faith Chester Library

Caroline Schill  
Branch Manager  
Aguilar Library

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

Lorraine Ruiz  
Library Manager  
Saint George Library Center

Jane Addison-Amoyaw  
Library Manager  
Muscle Branch

Elsa Horroda [sp?]  
Self

John Calvelli  
Executive Vice President of Cultural Affairs  
Wildlife Conservation Society

David Freudenthal  
Director of Government Relations  
Carnegie Hall

Lisa Robb  
Executive Director  
Center for Arts Education

Lynn Kelly  
President and Chief Executive Office  
Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden

Stephanie Hill Wilchfort  
President/CEO  
Brooklyn Children's Museum

Nicole Bryan  
Librarian  
New Lots Branch

Mark Daly  
Librarian  
Brooklyn Public Library

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

Jamie Kulakowski  
Librarian  
Mill Bason Branch, BPL

Lauren Comito  
Chairman of the Board  
Urban Librarians Unite

Catherine Green  
Executive Director/Founder  
Arts East New York

Heather Woodfield  
Executive Director  
One Percent for Culture

Lisa Declarico [sp?]  
Artist  
Queens

Ann Marie Lonsdale  
Director of Programs  
Alliance of Resident Theatres New York

Jennifer Wright-Cook  
Executive Director  
Field

David Johnson  
Executive Director  
Exploring the Metropolis

Joe Gregori  
Administrative Director  
Ballet Tech

Noah De Necochea  
5<sup>th</sup> Grade Dancer  
Ballet Tech

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

Julienne Gwenfentora  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade Dancer  
Ballet Tech

Wendy Niekerk-Rose  
Director of Institutional Relations and Campaign  
Apollo Theatre

Niles French  
Historic Richmondtown

Karen Meyerhoff  
Executive Director  
Wave Hill

Shannon McFee  
Development Director  
Shushama

Robert Federico  
Repitory Espanol

Andrea Louie  
Executive Director  
Asian American Arts Alliance

Alec Duffy  
Artistic Director  
JACK

Brian Morris  
Vice President for Marketing and Development  
Staten Island Zoo

Heather Levine  
Director of Marketing and Outreach  
Healing Arts Initiative

Mark Rossier  
Director of Institutional Advancement  
New York Foundation for the Arts

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

Yuki  
Resident  
New York City

Michael White  
Co-Founder  
Citizens Defending Libraries

Daniel Winiker  
Retired Librarian  
New York City

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

8

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So before we  
begin I would just like to give this audience deep  
appreciation proving that librarians and library  
workers are amazingly responsive, that when you  
were asked to come down and be quiet you could hear  
a pin drop in this audience which is not always the  
case here at the New York City Council. So I thank  
all of you for doing that. And we're going to get  
started in a couple of minutes but just like at our  
libraries today we don't have to be completely  
silent until we begin the formal testimony. So feel  
free to talk amongst yourselves about how much you  
love libraries and then we'll get back to you in a  
couple seconds. Good morning. Good morning and now  
we... we will officially begin. First of all, I want  
to thank everyone who came to the press conference,  
the spirited press conference this morning and was  
very very productive. And my name is Jimmy Van  
Bramer and I am the Chair on the Committee on  
Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International  
Intergroup Relations and I am thrilled to be  
chairing this oversight hearing on the fiscal year  
2017 preliminary budget. We were going to hold this



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

9

committee meeting jointly with the Subcommittee on  
Libraries but unfortunately Council Member King is  
not feeling well this morning and won't be able to  
join us. But I am sure that he will be listening  
and paying very close attention to the testimonies.  
Obviously we're thrilled to have the heads of our  
three library systems here. And we'll be hearing  
from them in a moment. And we have a number of  
people who have registered to testify today from  
the public and from DC 37. I will start by saying  
that for almost 18 years now libraries have been a  
big part of my... my life and indeed I think are... are  
somehow going to be defined as my life's work. And  
I'm grateful for... for the opportunity to have  
worked at a library and even more grateful now to  
be in a position to fight for libraries from inside  
city hall. And the reason that I... I fight for  
libraries is because I know how invaluable our  
public libraries are in every single neighborhood  
in the city of New York. And I've seen firsthand  
the value of the work of all of the folks who work  
in our libraries; the people who are on the front  
lines serving the public and demonstrating as I  
said earlier those New York values. Libraries

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

10

represent the best of what are New York values. And  
when we talk about what we value as a city and as a  
society; we value diversity, New York certainly  
values our immigrant communities, we value the  
immigrant experience. And libraries as all of you  
know are among the first places, if not the first  
place that immigrants go to. They are free. They  
are open to all. There are no questions asked.  
There are no requirements. It is a welcoming open  
democratic place and... and that is the best of who  
we are. Libraries are the best of what this city  
is. And so we have been fighting for several years  
as all of you know to restore the funding that was  
cut from the libraries beginning in 2008. Last year  
we had a record year, a banner year. 43 million  
dollars was restored for libraries across the city  
so that we could implement six-day service. That  
has been an amazing success, something we're very  
proud of. We have continued to urge the  
administration to baseline all of that funding. And  
we're very pleased when the mayor baselined roughly  
half of that in the preliminary budget. But it is  
equally important that the remainder be baselined  
in the executive budget. And then we continue to

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

11

work towards full funding for libraries; 65 million  
dollars and that complete restoration of all that  
was lost in the difficult days. Needless to say the  
capital needs of the libraries continues to grow.

And while we have had again a record commitment and  
investment in the 10-year capital plan for the  
first time there is still so much more to be done.

I am anxious to hear from the three presidents and  
CEOs of our library systems and of course would be  
remiss if I did not welcome Dennis Walcott for his  
first appearance before this committee as the new  
president and CEO of the Queens Library, someone  
who as he detailed outside I have known for well  
over a decade. And had the pleasure of organizing  
friends chapters at Queen library in my job and  
recruited his wife to be the Vice President of the  
Friend of the Cambrian Heights branch. And I  
believe Dennis was the Deputy Mayor at the time and  
he would come to the library as we were having our  
organizing meetings and sit in the back of the room  
very unassuming and supporting his wife and his  
community and his library and I... I grew to have a  
tremendous amount of respect for Dennis and... and I  
know that he loves and cares about the Queens

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

12

library. So we're grateful to have him here. And  
other members of the committee will be in and out  
as we have a busy day. But I wanted to get started  
because we have so many people who are signed up to  
testify. And we'll throw it to the three library  
systems to organize the testimony as they wish.

TONY MARX: Thank you Mr. Chairman for  
your support and for this opportunity to speak. I  
want to thank the speaker as well as council  
members Ferreras-Copeland, Andy King, the rest of  
this committee, the entire city council for your  
amazing leadership. We're here... I'm here together  
with my colleagues from Brooklyn and Queens to talk  
about the mayor's 2017 preliminary executive budget  
and like you I am particularly delighted to be  
joined today by longtime friend and great New  
Yorker and now colleagues in the library world more  
formally Dennis Walcott. We've each submitted  
written testimony. We're not going to read that to  
you. We're going to try to be brief so that there's  
time for question and answer but also to hear from  
all the rest of the citizenry who care so much  
about their libraries. As you all saw on the steps  
of City Hall libraries are on the front lines of

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

13

tackling inequality. The most pressing issue of the  
day and our city and our nation and in many  
respects in our world there is no institution that  
does more for more New Yorkers and that more New  
Yorkers use than the libraries. From helping to  
bridge the digital divide to helping new immigrants  
use English providing essential services  
particularly to high need communities the libraries  
are where everyone comes and where everyone relies  
on. The city government calls on us repeatedly to  
help with their most pressing challenges; from  
hosting the largest IDNYC sites to offering early  
literacy training for pre-K classrooms and homeless  
shelters. We are ready to serve. We are happy to  
serve. We... we are unique in our reach across the  
city and our ability to deliver quickly on key  
priorities. There simply is no other institution  
that is as welcoming of all New Yorkers that has as  
many physical visits as the libraries and is able  
to innovate to meet the pressing needs... agenda set  
by the public, by the libraries, and by the elected  
officials. That is an extraordinarily powerful  
combination. But you know all this. You... you know  
all this because you restored the 43 million

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

14

dollars out of the 65 million that had been lost  
last year and we are so grateful to you, Mr. Van  
Bramer, to all of your colleagues for your  
leadership in that. We also... you also together with  
the mayor included libraries in the 10-year capital  
plan for the first time. Thank you. Thank you to  
the mayor. Thank you to all the elected officials,  
New Yorkers thank you. But more is needed because  
New Yorkers need more. We are asking for an  
additional 22 million dollars so that we can  
provide more. Because of the real demand for our  
services and the needs in our communities, and we  
are in every community. Last year's investment in  
libraries shows the dramatic and immediate impact  
that increased funding for libraries can and has  
had. The New York public library received 19  
million dollars. System wide we went from for... on  
average of 46 hours a week to 50 hours a week. We  
added 293 more hours every week or 15,000 over the  
course of a year. We also added hours in two of our  
key research facilities; the Library for Performing  
Arts and the Schaumburg in Harlem. We added Sunday  
services at four branches so that we're now at  
seven across our three boroughs. We added a million

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

15

dollars to our materials budget so that New Yorkers  
can have more great material to read. And we hired  
142 new great colleagues including nearly 100  
librarians so we can do more in early literacy  
work, more across the system. The results have been  
dramatic. So looking ahead to FY '17. We have  
prioritized with the city two key challenges that  
we want to do more in. We want to expand our early  
literacy services so that we can help close the  
achievement gap that too many young New Yorkers  
still suffer from. And we want to bridge the  
digital divide because that technology needs to be  
available to all so that we can have a fully  
informed citizenry and a greatly skilled job core.  
We have been able to expand our programming to  
address these pressing needs based on the increases  
of funding and private funding. What we are living  
through is simply put a transformation of what a  
library means in our neighborhood. It continues to  
mean the great space, the great collections, the  
great gatherings that bring more New Yorkers  
together than anywhere else. But we are now the  
education centers in every community meeting the  
educational needs of New Yorkers of all ages. And

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

16

we want to continue that. We want to make sure that  
all of our children succeed. And I say that in a  
moment when shocking to say and... Dennis and his  
colleagues at TWEED have done so much on this but  
it is still the case that only 30 percent of New  
York City's third graders are able to read at grade  
level. 30 percent of New York City's third graders  
are able to read at grade level. We know that the  
city council together with all the other elected  
officials want to lead the way to change... produce a  
different result and we must get to that different  
result. We partnered with you in the... in the city's  
first readers program. We're working with the mayor  
and his colleagues on universal PK. The... there are...  
by 2026 every child needs to be able to read at  
grade level by the third grade. We agree with the  
mayor and we are here to serve towards that result.  
We've hired 41 children's librarians. We've  
partnered with Universal Pre-K sites and early  
grades. Over a couple months we've increased our  
school visits by 145 percent just in the last  
couple of months. Our early literacy programs have  
expanded by 20 percent. We're ready to create 84  
family literary centers, literacy centers across



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

17

our system. We're ready to work more closely with  
our colleagues in the school system and the great  
teachers of New York. We're ready to expand our  
literacy programming by 50 percent to half a  
million attendees. We're ready to have more  
materials that builds on the work that the three  
systems are already doing with the schools through  
My Libraries which has seen 161 percent increase in  
the distribution of library books into the city's  
classrooms. We're ready to add thousands of hours  
of workshops. We are ready to do more. Mont Haven  
is just one example of where we need to do more.  
Hot spots in a neighborhood that is a digital  
desert. It remains the South Bronx as Andy King and  
I talk about all the time, the poorest  
congressional district in the United States within  
two miles of one of the richest congressional  
districts in the United States. The libraries in  
the front line with you, with the city council,  
with the mayor to turn that situation around. We  
need to hire more children's librarians like  
January Sinalic [sp?] who's joined us and increased  
our story times and our outreaches so dramatically.  
It's not just in educational programs. It's also in

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

18

digital equity. Over two million New Yorkers live  
in the digital dark at a moment when many of take  
for granted that we can carry something like the  
library of Alexandria in our pocket. And yet  
millions of New Yorkers, the information capital of  
the world do not have that connectivity at home.  
Seven out of 10 of our teachers require our  
students to go online to do homework. How can it be  
that we want our students to do homework online and  
we know that so many of them simply cannot afford  
to get online to do the homework they need to do  
and we need them to do. The library is a key point  
of digital access. Over the last four years we've  
expanded our technology training offerings by 300  
percent. We are now offering coding classes for  
free in the poorest neighborhoods of New York. We  
have 5,000 people on our wait list for that program  
Mr. Chairman. We draw in mostly women and  
individuals of color who are training for jobs in  
an industry that needs that talent, needs that  
diversity. We've been lending 10,000 families hot  
spots so that we can break the log jam of the  
digital divide and provide poor families in New  
York with Wi-Fi at home. And we are eager to extend

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

19

that hotspot program for another year. We're eager  
to add 150 percent more coding classes. We can't  
have Rosemary Perez in... in Staten Island need to do  
a three-hour round trip commute to Manhattan to  
learn to code so that she can start home... so that  
she can have a blog, so that she can learn to  
create a... a home page for a business she might want  
to start. There is so much more to do. We need to  
and will with the requested budget increase add  
more programs. We will add 50 more staff. We will  
add more hours and Sunday openings. We will add  
more to our collections. Last year Mr. Chairman.  
The city with your leadership, the leadership of  
the city council, the leadership of the mayor made  
a historic move. You put the libraries in the 10-  
year capital plan for the first time. Four million  
square feet of essential space that have been  
funded year by year making planning impossible. We  
got to a much better place. The New York public  
library. That means we're going to take five of our  
Carnegie branches in the poorest neighborhoods of  
New York and totally redo them. But there is more  
to do. As the center for urban futures and the  
Revson Foundation funded project demonstrated

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

20

through independent analysis is more than a billion  
dollars of maintenance prices in the libraries.

Linda is going to talk more about that. The New  
York Public Library itself has 100 million dollars  
in outstanding maintenance needs for the next  
fiscal year. At 115<sup>th</sup> Street we have 100-year-old  
pipe. We have leaks. It is making it impossible for  
us to use our basement for teens and adult  
programming in a neighborhood that is a... needs  
those programmings so much more. We do not want our  
librarians and our educators, and all of our great  
staff to be distracted by pipes leaking and roofs  
leaking and HVAC not working. We need to give them  
great facilities and working facilities so that  
they can do their great work. Again Mr. Chairman  
all the members of the city council who have joined  
us. Thank you for your leadership. Thank you for  
your support. Thank you for your vision of what New  
York values really mean and how the libraries can  
continue to play an unequal role in bringing those  
values further into reality. If I may Mr. Chairman  
I'll turn it to Linda Johnson for the Brooklyn  
Public Library.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

21

LINDA JOHNSON: Thank you Tony. Thank  
you Chairman Van Bramer. And of course thank you to  
all of the city council and the Brooklyn delegation  
for the wonderful support that the libraries have  
received. We are extremely appreciative of the 12  
million dollar increase we received last year for  
our operating budget. And with your support every  
Brooklyn library is now open at least six days a  
week for the first time in nearly a decade. This  
means working parents are now able to bring their  
children to the library on weekends and busy  
professionals can access our resources in the  
evenings. In total we added an extra day of service  
in 22 branches including six libraries that are now  
open on Sundays. Brooklyn public library is  
providing an additional 217 hours of service per  
week throughout the borough with an average branch  
hour of operation increasing from 45 to 49 hours.  
As a result, the number of people participating in  
our programs has increased over last year which  
means that we are on pace to break our record highs  
for attendance. At our ESOL programs for example  
attendance is up 12 percent from a year ago. While  
our first five years programming has seen a seven

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

22

percent jump. The number of sessions logged on our  
Wi-Fi is also rising; up nine percent since last  
year. Over the first three months of our expanded  
service Brooklyn public library branches hosted an  
incredible 100,000 visits during the hours that  
they had previously been closed. We would not be  
able to meet this demand without the hard work of  
our incredibly talented staff. Thanks to this  
council and the administration, we were able to  
hire 95 new staff members last year in addition to  
26 the previous year all of whom have contributed  
enormously to the communities they serve. Thanks to  
Highlawn Children's Library and Brian Muldoon  
Families [sp?] in this diverse community near  
Bensonhurst can now attend a weekly babies and  
books program that features stories designed to  
help participants develop critically important  
language skills. And while Brian on our... and what...  
and with Brian on our team in Highlawn is now able  
to serve more schools and daycare centers. He and  
neighborhood library supervisor Daniel Shapiro are  
a dynamic team. While one stays in the branch to  
offer programs to visiting daycare groups the other  
can travel to providers that are located too far

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

23

from the branch to visit it regularly. We're also proud of the librarians who have been active in the Brooklyn incubator, a new BPL initiative that supports innovation in our branches by funding programs and training staff in areas such as proposal writing... and project management. DeKalb Libraries Janice Dees hired thanks to your increased funding is coordinating Reading the Rhythm an incubator supported program that helps teens express themselves through literature and dance. And at our Cyprus Hills branch librarian Abby Garnett will lead the Future Leaders Career Awareness Series, a partnership with city year to help participants develop research and communication skills while accessing free library resources for professional development. With more staff in our branches we also have the capacity to expand several of our most successful initiatives. You've heard us speak before about the TeleStory program which hosts virtual story times, sing-alongs, and other bonding activities for incarcerated parents and their children. New Yorkers who might otherwise be separated from their families for long stretches can connect by video

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

24

from Central Library and Ryker's Island. Now thanks  
to the increase in our operating budget we are  
preparing to expand TeleStory to four additional  
locations; New Lots Library in East New York, New  
Utrecht Library in Bensonhurst, Macon Library in  
Bedford-Stuyvesant, and Sunset Park Library. In  
addition to helping patrons visit with their  
incarcerated children or parents staff at these  
branches including those hired with the additional  
funds received last year will used.. will use the  
TeleStory technology to serve immigrants and  
homebound seniors. The Immigrant Justice Corps  
fellows who assist patrons at Central Library will  
now offer free legal services remotely to  
immigrants in each of these four branches. And  
homebound patrons and nursing home residents who  
are not able to visit our branches in person will  
be able to remotely attend creative aging programs  
helping to keep them engaged with the community.  
Our outreach services team visits these patrons in  
person as needed to make sure they are able to use  
the technology. We are proud to have delivered on  
an extraordinary return on the investment that you  
made last year. And I said thank you a lot this



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

25

morning but I think you can never say it frequently  
enough. Last year's budget reversed years of  
neglect that took a great toll on the city's  
libraries. But as we noted then the 2016 budget was  
not the end of a process but rather the beginning  
of a conversation. The time has come for us to take  
the next step together because much of the library..  
city's libraries are doing now with increased  
funding we could be doing so much more for the New  
Yorkers who rely on us. With the restoration of 22  
million in funding for the libraries BPL's capacity  
to serve the borough will increase significantly.  
One of our highest priorities is the expansion of  
literacy services for children and families. With  
your support we will offer weekend programming for  
children five and under such as story time, babies  
and books, and ready set Kindergarten in all 60 of  
our locations. Every branch will host STEM  
programming for children six to 12 on weekends and  
after school while successfully young adult  
programming such as teen tech time will be made  
available to youth in every Brooklyn neighborhood.  
And our presence in borough schools will expand  
beyond the My Library NYC institutions as we offer

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

26

our resources to more educators with a particular  
focus on pre-kindergarten. As we reach more young...  
young people and families with life transforming  
early literacy services we will also ensure that  
more Brooklynites are able to access our many free  
digital resources but again only if the city  
increases our funding in fiscal 2017. Brooklyn  
Public Library is the borough's largest provider of  
free wireless internet and as I mentioned earlier  
demand for this service continues to rise. With  
your support we will increase our bandwidth system  
wide so that our public Wi-Fi will be faster and  
more reliable than ever. And Brooklynites who use  
our Wi-Fi will also have access to more computers  
as the in branch laptop loan program that currently  
operates in 10 locations will expand to serve 40  
libraries allowing our branches to meet the high  
demand for free computers. We'll offer more tech  
programming with 46 distinct classes ranging from  
computer and internet basics to coding. We'll host  
more drop in tech services for patrons and we'll  
deploy 10 portable units equipped with the latest  
technology to serve participants in our various  
classes so that public computers need not be taken

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

27

offline for use in these programs. Finally, with additional funding every one of our facilities will house wired tables and we'll install more electrical outlets to better accommodate our patrons' digital devices addressing an overlooked but very distressing shortcoming of our current physical plant. In addition to providing literacy and technology resources inside our branches we will expand our outreach services so we can do a better job reaching members of vulnerable and marginalized populations. We currently host library collections in nearly 200 locations outside of our branches. In total we provide services in 550 branch outreach sites throughout the borough. With increased investment from the city we will deliver services and collections to more sites than serve... that serve hard to reach constituents including the residents of homeless shelters, senior centers, and Department of Correction facilities. We'll also host more English conversation groups, citizen preparation classes, and multilingual materials. Our in branch creative aging program will serve more seniors and the our streets our stories digital archiving project will be expanded to serve

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

28

new neighborhoods. Following years of reductions  
your increased investment allowed BPL to boost our  
collections budget by 1.25 million dollars adding  
more books to our shelves and more materials to our  
electronic catalogue. This year BPL proposes to  
finally bring our collections budget to over 10  
million dollars if you restore our funding to... to  
previous levels. And we will... and we will further  
expand our hours of operations throughout the  
borough adding weekend, morning, and evening  
services to accommodate patrons from every walk of  
life. All told with additional funding for fiscal...  
fiscal 2017 we will hire more than 40 new staff  
members to expand our literacy and technology  
program, conduct our increased outreach to  
underserved patrons and staff our branches during  
their expanded hours. As you can see we have an  
ambitious vision for the next 12 to 18 months. And  
our staff and volunteers are up to the challenge.  
All they need is your support. All public  
institutions in New York City face challenges but  
few must contend with anything on the scale of the  
capital crisis that we confront in our 217  
libraries. And frankly I fear for the soul of a

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

29

city that allows the libraries to deteriorate so completely. These buildings should be the pride of their communities. Yet in many of them the failure of essential equipment and infrastructure is sadly all too common. Last year we asked that the administration include 1.4 billion dollars for libraries in the city's 10-year capital plan. This is the amount of money that would be required to bring all of our branches into a state of good repair. It would have addressed urgently needed emergency repairs and branches throughout the city such as failed HVAC systems that render our libraries uninhabitable in very hot or very cold weather, elevators that frequently trap patrons, roofs that leak water onto our collections not to mention our patrons and staff and boilers and other equipment that have long exceeded their useful lives. The city's inclusion of 300 million in last year's 10-year plan was an encouraging start. The first time that the needs of a library have been addressed there. And we were very appreciative of the administration for taking this important step. But to be clear this investment amounted to less than one quarter of what the libraries needed and

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

30

included no additional funding for Brooklyn Public  
Library in the fiscal 2016 budget. While the funds  
in the capital plan will provide for five badly  
needed branch overhauls per system, per system they  
do not address the infrastructure needs of more  
than 90 percent of the city's public libraries. And  
so we are asking that the administration provide  
100 million dollars in new capital funding for the  
three library systems in this fiscal year. While  
this number represents only a portion of the three  
systems' emergency maintenance needs the allocation  
would better equip us to address our capital  
challenges while also establishing an annual  
funding level that would allow us to solve our most  
pressing problems over time. Coupled with an  
additional investment from the city council and  
private resources and with Brooklyn Public library  
funds from the redevelopment of the Brooklyn  
Heights Library these funds would put the systems  
on a path towards the modernization of our  
buildings so that we might someday hopefully sooner  
rather than later serve the public in attractive  
appealing facilities that our patrons deserve.  
Without your support New York public... New York

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

31

City's libraries will be forced to continue  
applying piecemeal solutions to crippling  
deficiencies. We have tried that approach for  
decades and it has failed. The vision we have put  
forth today would prove far more cost effective  
over the long term as it would disrupt the current  
cycle of chronic neglect that continues... that  
culminates in expensive emergency repairs. In  
Brooklyn alone I am said to report that patrons  
lost nearly 15 hundred hours of service last year  
as a result of unplanned branch closures, most of  
which were caused by emergency building maintenance  
issues. Please remember that 70 percent of our  
branches and more than... are more than 50 years old.  
Nearly a third of our buildings are over 100 years  
old and nearly all of our facilities require more  
than a million dollars in capital repairs with a  
quarter requiring more than five million. In  
Brooklyn we've faced nearly 300 million in unfunded  
capital needs including some 80 million in  
emergency repairs and over one million square feet  
of library space. Our challenges are dire in the  
branches like McKinley Park, a formerly leased  
building that is among the smallest but most

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

32

heavily used in our entire system. Indeed, it would be almost easier to tell you what isn't wrong with a branch than to run through the full litany of its needs which include a new roof, HVAC system, and boiler. McKinley Park illustrates the stark contrast between the high demand for our services and the unwelcoming environments in which we provide them. With 100 million dollars in funding this year for the three library systems we can begin to address decades of deterioration at branches like McKinley Park in desperate need. While McKinley Park Library is not yet slated for renovation many Brooklyn branches do have funded capital project in the city's pipeline. We have tried to be creative, flexible, and patient in our approach to these products. But to date libraries have not been well served by the city's process for capital work. We hope that current and future library projects will move from conception to completion more quickly than they have in the past. And we are doing our part to ensure that this is the case. This council has proven time and again that it values libraries and cares deeply about the people who rely on them. By providing New York's



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

33

three library systems with sufficient capital  
funding the city can reverse generations of neglect  
and help us bring more of our facilities into a  
state of good repair. A year from now when we  
appear again before you may we do so in celebration  
of the project we have made toward addressing our  
capital needs otherwise a decades long crisis will  
simply be another year older and New Yorkers who  
value libraries will rightly question the  
priorities of those who are entrusted with the care  
of their venerable civic institutions. Brooklyn  
Public Library is grateful for the opportunity to  
testify this morning. And we're proud to join New  
York public Library and Queens Library in asking  
the administration to baseline the increased  
operating support we received last year to provide  
us with an additional 22 million dollars in  
discretionary operating support and to appropriate  
sufficient capital funding for libraries to finally  
address the emergency needs that threaten our  
ability to serve the public. Thank you for your  
time and for your continued support of New York's  
public libraries.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

34

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much Linda Johnson. I want to take a moment to recognize all the council members who are here; some of whom are on the committee, some of whom are joining us. To my left Council Member Elizabeth Crowley from Queens, Corey Johnson from Manhattan, Peter Koo from Queens, Costa Constantinides from Queens. And to my right only in positioning is Council Member Brad Lander. And I want to recognize that we were joined by Council Member Helen Rosenthal who will be back and Council Member King who is home sick is texting me that he's watching this on Channel 74. So we say hello to Council Member King. And I know the Sergeant in Arms were... were giving instructions on proper etiquette but I do want to remind everyone as Tony just attempted to that if you agree that we should baseline all of the funding that was restored last year you can do this now right. Librarians are very polite but you can celebrate too. And if you would like an additional 22 million on top of the 43 you can do this now. And if you believe the administration should allocate at a minimum 100 million dollars in capital funding this year for three systems you

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

35

should do this now. And.. and then as we keep going  
feel free to exercise your hands as often as you  
like. I want to now have the distinct pleasure and..  
and Dennis it's great that there are four Queens...

DENNIS WALCOTT: So I noticed.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...council  
members right here. So for the very first time as  
the president and CEO of the Queens library I'd  
like to ask Dennis Walcott to speak.

DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you Chair. And  
good morning to all of you. It is a pleasure to be  
here to the council members, to Andy King who is  
home and watching on television. I want to thank  
all of you for your support. I must say this  
hearing is a lot different than the hearings I used  
to be a part of many years ago.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So far.

DENNIS WALCOTT: So far. Well... we'll see  
what happens. I'm on good behavior so hopefully  
it'll stay the same. Before I start I want to  
acknowledge our hardworking staff who are sitting  
in the audience. Because they have worked very hard  
for a number of years on behalf of the people not  
just of Queens but for the entire city. I want to

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

36

acknowledge our friends who are in the audience as well who are there volunteering and giving back on a regular basis to make our libraries a better place for the citizens of Queens and also throughout the city. Prior to my official start I have visited a number of libraries across the borough. I rode on a truck as some of you know and delivered books and picked up books. Tony and Linda I encourage you to do that if you haven't done so already. And it really gave me unique insight into the important aspect of library operations. I was doing it in the snow. And the gentleman who was accompanying me was very protective but at the same time it really gave me an opportunity to really get to meet the people, see what was happening, to learn about the back room operations as well as what was happening in the front. And as some of you know one of my first acts in starting as the president and CEO of Queens was to move my desk down to the main floor. And as a result of that it really provided me an opportunity to get into the life blood, divide, the rhythm of the library. And I must say it has been a fantastic experience. Normally instead of being on the steps of City Hall

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

37

at 9:30 I'm at my desk at 9:00 and even before  
that. But at 9:00 when the doors open up at the  
central office. And it's an amazing experience to  
watch people rush in and go to their particular  
sections whether they're reading or they're in the  
cyber center, in the media room. They're going to  
Mother Goose Time. And it's just a golden  
opportunity to watch the customers of our library  
take advantage of all the services that are  
available. And that would not be possible without  
all of you. That would not be possible without the  
Mayor of the City of New York. That would not be  
possible without my two colleagues who were sitting  
here and all the people who were sitting in the  
audience serving as advocates on behalf of the  
citizens of this great city. To date... especially to  
the delegation from Queens I have been to 44 of our  
community libraries. And I have touched at least  
one library in every council person's district in  
the borough of Queens with the goal of hitting all  
of our community libraries within the next two to  
three weeks and really meeting firsthand the people  
who are there. Whether it's providing free services  
like Universal Pre-K, after school programs, adult

learning classes, IDNYC enrollment, and job  
training assistance, or helping to bridge the  
digital divide by offering free internet, and 7,500  
public computing access points to millions of  
people New Yorkers depend on their libraries.

Having my desk on the first floor I had the  
opportunity last week, my first week to meet a man  
who would literally just gotten out of prison. And  
he had served some hard time. And he was telling me  
his story about the various prisons he had been in.  
But he was there at our central office to get  
services, to access information, to go to our cyber  
center to use the computers. And he was asking me  
directions and programs of where to go and what to  
do. And I tried to fudge it since it was probably  
my third day on the job. But at the same time as a  
result of great orientation I was able to point him  
to our cyber center. And then from my prior  
experiences knowing the different programs he could  
take advantage of. And I tell you that story  
because not just here in the borough of Queens  
where we're located or the areas served by New York  
or Brooklyn Public Libraries throughout the city  
people rely on our libraries for those types of

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

39

services; day in, day out. Now our folks know where my desk is located but for some of you, especially those of you in Queens where my desk is located it's just about off the main door. It's right next to the three seats that people use to watch the TV sets, whether it's information and our propaganda or the television that's on the news channels. And we've developed this type of connection with each other. They'll come in, they'll nod, they'll say hello but they're there to get the services of our library. And thanks to the extraordinary efforts of the speaker, the mayor, the finance chair, the majority leader, the library subcommittee chair, and the entire council 43 million dollars was restored to the operating budgets of the three library systems for the current fiscal year. This investment has ensured universal six-day library service and enhanced programming for all of New York City residents. Queens library received 12 million dollars in additional operating funds this year. We hired 129 new employees. Our HR director is in the audience and she's been working extremely hard in processing information and making sure w'ere getting the talent to serve the people of

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

40

Queens. And she has just been tremendous in what we've been able to do in recruiting new individuals including librarians, custodians, maintenance people, as well as clerical and other support staff. 115 of those positions are union jobs. 22 percent, or 2.6 million was used to purchase sorely needed library materials including new books and periodicals. We are also investing in more eBooks which are high... in high demand by our customers. All of our libraries are open at least six days a week. And the central library and the flushing community library are currently providing seven-day service. And we've been able to expand weekday hours at both locations and on average our libraries are now open 45.6 hours per week. But even with that great investment, even with our metrics going up people are saying we need and we want more. And that's why we're here; to talk about how we baseline but also ask for more. That has had an impact on people like Julio Silivren [sp?] who works for a catering company. He knows he will not be able to advance in his job without better English skills but his work schedule simply did not permit him to take ESOL classes during the week.



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

41

Now that our library in East Flushing is open on  
Saturdays Julio is beginning his studies. At our  
Queens Village Library we were able to hire a new  
children's librarian; Erica Anthony. Queens Village  
has a high population of children who go to after  
school, many of whom are new immigrants. The number  
one request for parents is for homework help.  
Matter of fact the day I visited the Queens Village  
Community Library was in the afternoon and I was  
watching them receive the homework assistance. And  
it was watching a very interesting dynamic because  
a tutor was working with one of the children and  
then he was also playing chess with him. And here  
you had... you talk about the diversity of our city,  
you talk about what Tony and Linda have talked  
about. You talk about the immigrant population. You  
had this elderly citizen working with this very  
young student and you could just see the bond, you  
can just feel the connection. You knew the  
chemistry was there based on relationship. And you  
knew that as a result of this increased investment  
they were receiving and getting quality services.  
That to me what this is about. That's what this  
advocacy is about. This is what your support is

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

42

about. Whether it's homework help or parents who  
endure the trauma of displacement so their children  
who could get a good education and rely on the  
library to help them succeed in other ways as well.  
That is why Erica single handedly trying to help 40  
grade-schoolers do their assignments every school  
day, 40 children, really require our support. Their  
parents have limited English and they have no other  
resources. They only have our libraries. It is so  
wonderful to have Erica on our staff but it's just  
not enough. In the last fiscal year 11.3 million  
visits were made to the Queens library, 11.3  
million visits. But I tell you what. We're greedy.  
We want more. We want to increase that number.  
Folks are fully charged and empowered to make sure  
we reach every Queens resident to make sure they  
take advantage by either walking through our doors  
or using the various media portals that we'll have  
available to them. We'll have 13.6 million  
educational and cultural materials in circulations.  
Queens Library loaned more than 544,000 eBooks,  
6,700 tablets, and loaned mobile hotspots 4,700  
times. That's 4,700 times New Yorkers took to the  
internet in their home pocket absolutely free.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

43

Nearly eight million visits were made to our website, close to one million visits to our e-account, our virtual library. Our talented staff provided guidance and answered more than three million questions from our customers and I guess that would make 3,000,001 when you count me last week. Free library programs are more popular than ever. Attendance at library programs in Queens is projected to hit one million by the end of 2017, an increase of more than 13 percent in only two years. We are encouraged to see 21 million of the 43 million baselined in the mayor's preliminary budget. But let me stress the importance of baselining and locking in these gains is extremely, extremely imperative. It is not hard to imagine the impact of having millions of dollars of your annual budget in question just weeks before a new fiscal year. The uncertainty of continued funding has a detrimental affect across the board from staffing continuity and customer service hours to programming, planning, and delivery. Queens library increased its ESOL seats by 6.6 percent last fiscal year adding classes, location, and more weekend sessions. However, we still turned away more than

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

44

1,100 students due to the lack of capacity. The  
2016 investment was historic but too many needs  
remain unmet including funding for literacy  
programs, workforce development, high school  
equivalency, early learning and our STACKS After  
School Programs, technology training, electronic  
content, and additional hours of service. That's  
why we need the mayor and the city council to  
continue to invest in libraries with 44 million  
dollars in additional baseline funding. The people  
of this city would then have access to more  
services and increase opportunities. Queens library  
would provide robust six-day service every week and  
be able to hire more librarians and library staff.  
This would enable us to increase our program  
offerings in well maintained and safe facilities.  
We would increase our operating hours adding 223  
total hours per week across the borough while  
bringing seven-day service to every council  
district enriching the lives of hundreds of  
thousands of more people each year. We would be  
able to hire 60 new staff members to provide added  
service. We would be able to offer 500,000 more  
computer sessions and increase<sup>3</sup> the materials we

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

45

have in our collection by 40,000 items including more homework help material, more eBooks, more ESOL support, and more high demand items for adults and children. We would be able to provide our free curriculum based after school stacks program and every community library in the borough. This equates to 8,800 additional sessions and 26,400 more instructional hours for 1,100 young people. Maintaining our 65 locations and aging infrastructure is also a short and long term challenge for the library. The average community library is 61 years old. More than a third are over 50 years old. They are heavily used. And most were not constructed to conduct... to accommodate the traffic that we see due to the growth and demand of our services. Additionally, the vast majority of libraries are poorly configured to meet the demands of the digital age with too few electrical outlets, too little space for classes, group work, or space for individuals working on laptop computers. Our challenge is to modernize our facilities, maintain our critical infrastructure, and to expand our public spaces in order to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We have identified an unmet capital need

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

46

of roughly 300 million dollars in our 10-year capital plan to modernize and expand our facilities and address critical infrastructure needs. In the next fiscal year alone we have 71 million dollars of unmet need for critical infrastructure including roof replacements, HVAC, ADA compliance, building envelope, and mechanical projects, and to relieve overcrowding. These includes projects with ADA compliance components, at Astoria, and north Hills, security systems for 16 community libraries, and also making sure that we're able to address the significant amount of overcrowding at our busiest libraries where the public is no longer adequately served and these include libraries throughout the system as well. Libraries as you well know are indispensable institutions and the cornerstone of a strong democratic society. With greater hours comes greater responsibility. We are tasked not only with maintaining the excellence and quality of our programs but we must also provide more opportunities to the people who have been without weekend programs in their neighborhoods for almost a decade. When we are asked to do more with less we step up, we deliver, we produce, and we produce at

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

47

a high level with quality. When the city needed a  
reliable partner to advance the key initiatives  
such as IDNYC, UPK, or the new Americans Corner we  
successfully took the challenge. Though we did not  
receive the full 65 million restoration that we  
advocated for last year we never the less found a  
way to deliver six day service and increase our  
program... programming for this year. In order to  
lock in the gains we have all worked so hard to  
achieve I urge the city council to work with the  
mayor and all of us to baseline the operating funds  
of New York City's three library systems at our  
current funding level. Additionally, I urge the  
city council and the mayor to work together with  
all of us to provide the three library systems, the  
additional 22 million dollars to restore and  
baseline the full 65 million dollars needed to  
deliver the programing, the materials, and the  
hours and services necessary for essential library  
service across the city. As you well know investing  
in our libraries is an investment in the people and  
the diversity of this great city. Together we do  
great work but we can do more. We need the city to  
continue to invest in New Yorkers by investing in

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

48

libraries. And thank you very much for this  
opportunity to testify.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much. Such excitement about your testimony Dennis.  
[cross-talk]

DENNIS WALCOTT: They're the holdovers  
for the old education days who don't know how to  
listen, that's all.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Fair enough.  
Well thank you all three of you. I want to  
recognize some more colleagues; Council Member  
Steve Levin from Brooklyn was here, Council Member  
Daneek Miller from Queens is with us. And I know  
some of the council members are checking into other  
committee meetings and then coming back to ask some  
questions. I'll... I'll start off with a few before  
handing off to my colleagues. The first of which I  
just want to say... and... and Dennis you just made  
this case. Libraries have come through for this  
administration in a very big way working with the  
administration and the council on programs that are  
vital to the city of New York. IDNYC is one such  
case where the libraries have been unbelievable in  
making sure that folks have access to the cards



1 and... and marrying your services with the needs of...  
2 of so many New Yorkers including our immigrant  
3 communities. And... and... and yet I know that IDNYC  
4 places a little bit of strain on... on... on the  
5 systems and the places where you are registering  
6 folks and... and I wonder if... if you can speak to  
7 that a little bit and... and whether or not you've  
8 received you know funding specifically for the work  
9 you're doing with IDNYC and... and whether or not  
10 you've seen a need for additional funding as a  
11 result of... of IDNYC.

13 TONY MARX: We are... we were... we... all  
14 three systems been proud to partner with the  
15 initiative of the city council and the mayor. All  
16 New Yorkers should have identification so they can  
17 visit their kids in school and use all the great  
18 facilities and be full members of this society. We...  
19 I think we were all pleased and somewhat surprised  
20 at the explosion of demand for these services. At  
21 the New York Public Library we signed up over  
22 177,000 people. I know similar results in Brooklyn  
23 and Queens. At the mid-Manhattan for instance we  
24 started with three places where people could sign  
25 up for IDNYC. We couldn't stand to see people

1 waiting for hours so we went to 15. We've been  
2 partnering with the city in terms of the staffing  
3 of those stations. But we've also been putting our  
4 resources into play whether it's space, whether  
5 it's staff. This is an important... important element  
6 and... and we are proud of the fact that the  
7 libraries are the place... the immigrant community in  
8 particular though they are not alone in needing  
9 these... these IDs feel welcome and come and... and use  
10 our services and now get these identifications as  
11 well.  
12

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's a  
14 staggering number, almost 200,000 folks have signed  
15 up at NYPL alone for IDNYC.

16 TONY MARX: I believe it's true that the  
17 three library systems together are by far the  
18 largest single location for the IDNYC sign ups and  
19 we're proud to be partnering in that way. And  
20 that's just fabulous.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: It's  
22 tremendous. It's just another example of how  
23 libraries deliver for the city of New York every  
24 day and... and why I certainly believe at a minimum  
25 we should baseline all of the restorations from

1 last year and then get to the 65-million-dollar  
2 number so everyone here can continue to do the  
3 great work. Speaking of all the folks who are in  
4 the audience by my calculations with the funding  
5 you receive last year somewhere in the neighborhood  
6 of... of 400 new library workers were hired and  
7 brought online. And that's an exciting thing  
8 because I know that those folks are making real  
9 differences in the city of New York. And I think  
10 that speaks to the absolute necessary for  
11 baselining because you went and hired 400 new  
12 people, 400 New Yorkers who are working in their  
13 neighborhoods delivering incredibly important  
14 services. And in order to maintain all 400 of the  
15 current folks who were hired you would need to at a  
16 minimum maintain the 43 million dollars. Is that  
17 accurate?  
18

19 DENNIS WALCOTT: Yes. Yes, Sir.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Because I know  
21 that none of us would want to even contemplate what  
22 would need to happen if somehow the 43 million  
23 dollars was not restored. And so we shouldn't even  
24 be engaging in that discussion anymore. We know the  
25 43 million dollars was needed. Six-day service is

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

52

a... a floor, not a ceiling. And so I certainly am  
calling on the mayor to include this baselining in  
the executive budget. Let's baseline the 43  
million. Make sure that everyone knows their job is  
secure and the work they're doing is secure and  
then we shoot for the 65 million dollars. And you  
all touched on it with the additional 22 to get to  
65 you would hire another 150 or so staff members  
and who would they be and what job titles would  
they occupy.

DENNIS WALCOTT: Well for us I mean it  
would be an expansion of the existing programs that  
we have. So it's expanding the number of librarians  
through... throughout the system as well as with the  
various programs that we have that are meeting the  
needs in the local community libraries throughout  
the borough of Queens. And so it's building on  
them. And that's been our core purpose as far as  
that type of expansion itself. So it would be  
building on top of and also taking a look at some  
of the new ways we are reaching programs for the  
people of the borough Queens.

TONY MARX: The... so we also would use  
the... the vast majority of these funds to hire more

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

53

staff, the vast majority of whom are... are union  
jobs and were... so partner... so proud to partner with  
DC37. Some of this goes to research libraries but  
the vast majority would be for librarians in the  
branches and other staff in the branches  
particularly who can deliver on what the city  
council and the mayor had been leading the way in  
increasing the city's commitment to literacy work  
from Pre-K up to second and third grade so that we  
can really get at that program that so many had  
been working at for so long as well as the digital  
side of literacy, not just connectivity, but  
helping people understand how to do that. Adding to  
the programs. We're all proud of the additions of  
millions of slots of... of users of our programs. And  
we want to... we want to do more. In addition, every  
time we add staff and hours and days we need to add  
to our facility staff, security staff just to make  
sure that you know... Particularly because of our  
maintenance issues we need to be able to make sure  
that the facilities are up to snuff as best we can  
adding you know hopefully to capital dollars to do  
so and then we need to make sure that everybody is  
safe.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

54

LINDA JOHNSON: In Brooklyn we're  
looking to add 40 headcount which would be branch  
librarians and then we would be hiring tech  
resource specialists and outreach staff largely to  
increase programming and to focus on the digital  
divide.

DENNIS WALCOTT: And if I may just to  
add one quick point to that because one of the  
things that all of us have seen is demand from our  
youth around after school services and our stacks  
program and just meeting that demand as you go by  
your respective community libraries you see in on a  
regular basis where the youth who are there and  
taking a look at that and as Tony and Linda have  
indicated part of that is making sure that once we  
open our doors people want to take advantage of our  
services. And so just responding to that type of  
demand is important.

TONY MARX: Sorry. So for instance at  
the New York Public Library four years ago or so  
we... we saw that we have 20 to 30,000 kids coming  
into our branches after school and we kept them  
safe and that was great but we weren't helping them  
do better at school. And we know what a difference

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

55

extended time makes for school students. So we are...  
we're at about 10,000 spots for... for after school  
from having been at zero. So that's just over the  
last two and a half years. We want to continue to  
grow that. We use some private money to help us  
start that. But now with the city's investment we  
can sustain and grow those programs. And that's  
just one example of how we need to partner with the  
electives but also with the school system to meet  
the needs of the city and staffing and budget is  
the essential ingredient as well as facilities  
where if we can do this rather than be mopping up  
floods in the basement.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Couldn't agree  
more and I just want to say I'm very proud to be  
the chair of this committee and a part of a council  
that has led the way. I think it's fair to say and  
not an overstatement that... that none of the things  
that we've seen happen over the last year for  
libraries would have happened without the council  
leading the charge and making sure that this was a  
priority from all of our budget responses on. And...  
and partnering with the administration. But... but  
the council has led the charge in making sure that

1  
2 this happened. And I believe we'll lead it again in  
3 terms of baselining and... and getting additional  
4 help for libraries. I wanted to say of the 400 or  
5 so who were hired how many of those are... are union  
6 and... and not union?

7 LINDA JOHNSON: In Brooklyn they're all  
8 union.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: All union.

10 DENNIS WALCOTT: I think the figure I  
11 used were 115 were union out of the 122 or 29 were  
12 union. So super majority.

13 TONY MARX: Ours is also about a 85  
14 percent. The difference is that we have the  
15 research libraries as well that we use some small  
16 number of the positions for.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And... and tutors  
18 and... and... and other educators are they union or  
19 non-union?

20 DENNIS WALCOTT: Tutors are not. But  
21 again we... we are continuing to work with the unions  
22 as our essential partners to think about these  
23 issues.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, I think  
25 it's fair to say that DC37 has been very helpful in



1 this struggle as well to get where we... we... we need  
2 to go. You know and we noticed a few things in the...  
3 in the PMMR and obviously being a... a library guy I...  
4 I look at all those statistics because I used to...  
5 is one of the things that I did at the library I  
6 used to compile them and provide them to the  
7 mayor's office. That was one of my jobs at the  
8 Queens library. Talk to me how... how the use of  
9 libraries is changing. Library cards fluctuate. You  
10 know visitation sometimes fluctuates. So the way in  
11 which we measure the success of a library itself  
12 is... is changing right. Because if you're just  
13 looking at those numbers you might draw a  
14 conclusion that... that's false.

16 LINDA JOHNSON: No I... you make a great  
17 point. For decades librarians and library systems  
18 have measured by looking at circulation. And we  
19 feel passionately that that metric alone doesn't  
20 tell the whole story. More and more people are  
21 gathering and... and... and using information in  
22 different ways which doesn't require them to check  
23 a book out of the library in the traditional way.  
24 And more and more people are coming to libraries  
25 for programs. It's not about just walking in and

being given some information or some knowledge to  
look at but rather learning how to learn. And  
that's really what libraries are in the business of  
doing today. So I... we're struggling with how to...  
how to quantify that and how to measure our  
success. But we're looking across a broad spectrum  
of metrics. And I'm sure over time because our... our  
business is in... in a time of change and a time of  
transition. And as we move forward we'll... we'll be  
developing new metrics along the way.

TONY MARX: Let me reiterate. So I... I  
used to be a college president and the metric there  
was US News and World Report. That did not produce  
the best possible results. So we need to be  
thinking about our metrics. And we are partnering  
and talking particularly with the administration  
about that. We do not want to be... we need to be  
held accountable. We need to be assessed. But we  
need to be smart about what we're being assessed so  
that we can make it real rather than just hitting  
points. So for instance we've seen some changes in  
our library card distribution. That's because we  
were lend... we were giving library cards and they  
were never being used. For instance, in our my

libraries program. So instead we hired staff that went out and talked to teachers and students. We reduced the automatic cards but we've seen an explosion in the actual use of the libraries materials. So the metric may have gone down but actually the substantive result has soared. Similarly, when we partnered with you all to do Wi-Fi lending; 10,000 households. Maybe those folks came and used our computers less because they had access at home. That was better for them. We didn't let the metric drive it. We let the substance of the result drive it. Similarly, as we move into an era in which e-book lending and use is exploding we want that to happen if it means that people choose to borrow at home, not come in with visits to do that. So they're coming in for educational program and for space but they may come in less for physical barrowing because they can more readily borrow books at home. As long as the result there is a substantive result of a more educated and informed citizenry that is a great result. And we look forward to working with you and with the mayor and his colleagues to make sure that we are being assessed but we are being assessed in ways that

1  
2 don't drive us just to meet numbers but to meet  
3 substantive results of what the public needs.

4 DENNIS WALCOTT: So being the new kid  
5 really helps in this discussion because I come with  
6 a fresh set of eyes. And so I come with the old  
7 history of how we work and working with great staff  
8 on what we're doing and then collaborating on what  
9 we should be doing to improve the services to the  
10 residents of Queens. And... and I say that in the  
11 context of several things; one, I'm greedy, I want  
12 people through my doors. I mean I want to drive  
13 people through my doors to get quality programs. So  
14 it's not just having them come in, I want them to  
15 have the quality when they come in so you have that  
16 type of measurement to say they are receiving what  
17 we want them to get and what they are also asking  
18 for as well. But I'm also... I took the subway down  
19 this morning and I was telling one of my colleagues  
20 that when I was on the subway two people were  
21 reading the newspaper, everyone else was on their  
22 iPhone, on their whatever, and they were reading  
23 the information there. So how we explore and expand  
24 our various media platforms to reach people as  
25 well. And that's a metric I want to make sure that

1 we have but it's also not just a metric, it's the  
2 quality that goes along with it. From my  
3 programmatic point of view, the same thing that  
4 both Linda and Tony talked about. I want to make  
5 sure that we're providing the right program, making  
6 sure it's providing the right service and people  
7 leave there better educated more informed. And I  
8 think Majority Leader that that to me is where  
9 we're going as a system. And then when you have an  
10 attractive place, a safe place, a secure place, a  
11 place that doesn't leak, and then allows you to  
12 provide those services in a qualitative way where  
13 people will then come more and more and more  
14 because they know they have a safe haven to go to.  
15 They have a place to get the technology. They have  
16 a place to get the programs. And all that packaged  
17 together is what the libraries represent now and  
18 definitely moving forward.

19  
20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Agree. And  
21 obviously that's why I asked the question because I  
22 very much believe in recording and... and  
23 accountability and I think the truth is the  
24 libraries more so than some of the other folks  
25 report in... in some great detail some very important

metrics but... but libraries are also changing the way in which information is received and sought as changing. And... and Dennis is someone whose... whose father was a pressman and printed newspapers. That industry has changed so very much. And although I still like to read the printed word both in books and newspapers, a little old-school but very... very important that we assess libraries appropriately.

DENNIS WALCOTT: Yep.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And of course quality is incredibly important and... and how we quantify value is always a challenge in government but... but it is impossible to quantify how valuable libraries are in terms of immigrants reaching their dream through the library you can't actually put a price tag on that right? It's absolutely priceless. So I know several of my colleagues have questions and we will go to Council Member Koo first.

CM KOO: Thank you Council Member Van Bramer. And I want to welcome all the presidents and CEOs of the free library systems especially our... CEO... Queens Library System Dennis Walcott. I'm Councilman Koo. I represent Flushing Council District 20. And I'm going to happy... I have one of

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

63

1 the most busy library in the whole state, in all  
2 your whole country yeah. So I'm very happy. And you  
3 walk into the Flushing Library like you're walking  
4 in the Grand Central Terminal you know. So... it's  
5 special now we do in so many... like I... NYC IDs and  
6 you know so... so the whole lobby's full of people.  
7 And then you put on a... a strain on our system  
8 because so many people using the library. I think  
9 the city should keep investing in our library  
10 system. It's really critical for... for the community  
11 to have good library. Because we all know knowledge  
12 is power. And library provides power, information,  
13 and it's free. And that's why... but a lot of people  
14 working and they cannot use the library when  
15 they're working so it's critical that we open  
16 hours... open the libraries more hour. I would  
17 suggest that we try to open some libraries on... even  
18 on Sundays because Sundays the time when most  
19 family can bring the kids to the library. They can  
20 have family time. So other than the... the... the hours  
21 I think Mr. Chair we have to invest more in the  
22 infrastructure on the libraries. I see in the  
23 Flushing Library our elevator is really slow. And  
24 too many people waiting for library. The roof is

1  
2 leaking. The bathrooms are not working well. You  
3 know with so many people using the bathroom that we  
4 should have a good bathroom system. And that's  
5 really critical. People are sometimes laughing of  
6 our bathroom but this is... actually it's one of the  
7 most important things in life. You go to the  
8 bathroom two... two times a day, three times a day  
9 right. So... so when they use the library they have  
10 to go to the bathroom too. So... but people don't  
11 talk about but this is one of the most criticals  
12 infrastructure. I'm stressing in all libraries we  
13 should have a good clean working library... bathrooms  
14 in our... all the libraries. So I'm asking our new  
15 CEO what are your priorities in infrastructure  
16 improvements in our Queens library system

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: So we have been very  
18 clear in the importance of the capital improvement  
19 of Queens community libraries. And we have a very  
20 detailed book laying out all the projections and  
21 the requirements that we're trying to put forward  
22 to make sure all of our libraries and meeting the  
23 needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century whether it's capital  
24 improvement or new libraries itself. And part of  
25 that is taking a look internally as far as the



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

65

facility use including the bathrooms and other  
public spaces because again with high demand comes  
increased usage. And so we have a responsibility to  
make sure we constantly focus on the internal use  
of our facilities. So we have a very detailed look  
at it. We have broken it down in the borough of  
Queens by each library, each councilmatic district  
so people have that overview. I will be going out  
meeting with all of you in Queens so we can talk  
about that as well. And also working with the  
borough president of Queens to make sure that the  
capital needs are met. I must say that what's  
happened at central as well has been extremely  
impressive as far as the improvement is concerned  
and we have a plan in phasing in other capital  
improvements at central as well as the other  
community libraries and me going around again gives  
me a fresh set of eyes in looking at some of the  
things that need to be done and talking to our  
staff about those. So we'll be meeting with you  
Councilman as well as the other council people from  
the district on their specific plans.

CM KOO: Mr. Chair I want to say... I  
wanted to congratulate our Queens Library staff.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

66

They have been doing a wonderful job, a good job in maintaining our library service despite of all the difficulties. So... but we want to continue our best to support them. Not only the Queens library, all the library systems... system. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much Council Member Koo. And it is incredibly important to maintain every aspect of our libraries so that all of our visitors have as pleasant an experience as they possibly can. And I want to recognize Council Member Laurie Cumbo from Brooklyn who have joined us. And some of the other council members have gone on to other hearings and... and will probably return. But we are running a little bit late and the Commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs is waiting in the wing so we're going to change things up a little bit. We're going to take a two-minute break. The three president and CEOs your testimony is now concluded. But we will in two minutes hear from the Commissioner of Cultural Affairs and then we will come back to all of the other folks who are here for libraries. So if you're here to testify for libraries do not leave. The only three people who can leave are the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

67

three president and CEOs. But we'll take a two-  
minute break and then we'll be back and we'll have  
the Commissioner of Cultural Affairs.

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good morning  
again. Still morning technically. And Sergeant at  
Arms are we ready to go? Okay. So we are going to  
continue with our daylong hearing on... of the  
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and  
International Intergroup Relations. We're switching  
things up just a little bit because we're running a  
little bit behind and our commissioner is here so  
we wanted to allow him to give his testimony and  
then we will go back to all of the public  
testimony, both libraries and cultural affairs and  
proceed in that direction. I want to I think on  
behalf of all of us welcome back our Commissioner  
Tom Finkelpearl.

[applause]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So as all of  
the cultural folks come in we... we're all thrilled  
to have our Commissioner back. And... and if everyone  
who is here and... and taking their seats again we  
can... we can try that again because you're not

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

68

1  
2 really supposed to clap. So the Sergeant in Arms  
3 are... are doing their jobs. But if you're absolutely  
4 thrilled that Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl you can  
5 do this right now right? Are we all very very  
6 thrilled that Commissioner Finkelpearl is... is back  
7 and... and here to testify and I also want to say  
8 that now I'm looking out into a room that's... that's  
9 half Orange shirts and library supporters and... and  
10 half cultural supporters and... and all of you should  
11 talk to each other because there's great synergy  
12 between libraries and our cultural organizations  
13 and I'm proud to be the chair of the committee that  
14 oversees both. So we are pleased to have all of you  
15 here. And again if you're coming into the audience  
16 new just because we have so many folks who have  
17 signed up to testify and both libraries and  
18 culturals are here and we're kind of mixing them  
19 together which sometimes I like to do as well after  
20 the Commissioner testifies and takes questions then  
21 we're going to go back to the public and we're  
22 going to take some libraries... library panels first,  
23 and then we'll do some culture, and we'll... we'll  
24 mix it up and try and make sure that everyone is  
25 heard in a timely fashion as possible. And we're

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

69

very proud at the city council to have increased  
every single initiative that we have at our  
disposal when it comes to culture and the arts.  
Every single initiative has been increased in the  
last two years. And we've created some new  
initiatives which we're very very excited about as  
well. Now I think a lot of folks here, and I would  
agree with them, believe we should still do more.  
And... and for many that means making sure that  
there's a substantial investment in culture and the  
arts beyond the already substantial investment that  
is made. And that is to make sure that both our  
cultural institution group members and all of our  
program groups, our... our smaller and neighborhood  
based cultural organizations and groups also  
receive funding increases. Both those who are  
already receiving funding through the CDF but also  
to bring more and more folks into that funding  
stream and this year I'm proud to support the push  
for 40 million dollars in additional increase; 20  
million each for the CIGs and 20 million for the  
program groups. That is something that is a  
priority of mine and something that I would very  
much like to see happen as well as seeing some of

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

70

those initiatives at the council further increased  
which has been a particular success story of the  
city council over the last two years including the  
cultural immigrant initiative which the speaker and  
I formed two years ago that's now over three  
million dollars. So I'm anxious to hear the  
commissioner's testimony to talk about some of the  
successes, some of the challenges faced by the  
department and also ultimately hear from the  
culturals themselves and to hear from them about  
how they're performing, how IDNYC has changed the  
game in so many ways for the... for the cultural  
organizations. Because as we just heard libraries  
are signing everyone up which is very exciting to  
the tune of several hundred thousand. And then  
folks are coming back and then going to our  
cultural organizations and redeeming those IDNYC  
free memberships. And that has a cost associated  
with it that takes its toll. And while we are so so  
happy that everyone is both getting the IDNYC and  
then redeeming all of those memberships we want to  
make sure that the... the cultural organizations that  
have stepped up are getting what they need and  
rightly deserve. So with that I want to again

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

71

recognize Council Member Laurie Cumbo from  
Brooklyn, Council Member Peter Koo from Queens who  
are here as members of the committee. And  
Commissioner Finkelpearl.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Thank you  
very much.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: But first...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Oh.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...because you  
are a commissioner we need to swear you in.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Oh yes.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Commissioner  
Please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell  
the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the  
truth in your testimony before the committee  
members today and to respond honestly to council  
member questions?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I do.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Please begin.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay. Good  
morning Chair Van Bramer and members of the  
committee. I'm here today to present testimony  
regarding the mayor's preliminary fiscal year 2017

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

72

budget for the Department of Cultural Affairs. I'm  
joined by a bunch of my colleagues at Cultural  
Affairs that were here in the first couple of...  
First I'd like to provide a summary of the numbers.  
We are proud to be the largest local funder of  
urban culture in the United States. DCLA's total  
expense budget is forecast at 145.2 million dollars  
including 110.2 million for the cultural  
institutions group, 28.56 million for the cultural  
development fund, \$370,000 for our capacity  
building initiative, and 6.1 million dollars for  
the agency operations. I'd like to point out that  
the agency's operations account for just 3.6  
percent of our total expense budget for fiscal year  
2016. The rest goes directly to our constituents.  
By any... by any standard this is an efficient  
funding operation. Our capital program supports the  
equipment and construction projects of all sizes  
across the five boroughs. Currently it has 746  
million dollars allocated over the next four years  
for 386 projects at 190 cultural organizations.  
Some upcoming highlights from this citywide  
portfolio include the ribbon cutting for the fully  
renovated Bronx River Art Center this summer, the



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

73

renovation of the Nuyorican Poets Café, a new  
administration facility for the Louis Armstrong  
House, upgrades to the Snug Harbor Music Hall, a  
new facility for the downtown Brooklyn cultural  
district with space for the Brooklyn Public  
Library, BAM 651 Arts, as well as a new home for  
the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Art.  
Many of you are already familiar with DCA's  
programs. These include the cultural development  
fund, our competitive grant program which provides  
funding to around 900 non-profits each year for  
publically accessible arts programming, materials  
for the arts which collects donated supplies at its  
Long Island City warehouse and prove them.. provides  
them free to non-profit schools and government  
agencies with arts programming. At MFTA we also  
train local educators and artists how to  
successfully integrate creative re-use into their  
work. We administrate other targeted funding  
schemes such as the accelerated conservation and  
efficiency, ACE program, which supports energy  
efficiency projects at cultural institutions. And  
I'm happy to provide additional information for  
these core programs during Q&A. There are also a

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

74

number of programs as the Chairman mentioned and initiatives that we manage in partnership with the city council. These include the Cultural Immigrant Initiative which thanks to the efforts of Speaker Van Bramer provides funding to more than 100 groups for cultural programing that engages immigrant communities across the city. We also manage SU-CASA, the council funded creative aging program. This program expanded on DCLA's partnership with the Department of the Aging and five borough arts councils placing artists and art groups in senior centers through 102 residencies. And through the Cultural After School Program, or CASA, council members continue to designate cultural organizations to partner with schools for after school programing. This provides additional cultural education opportunities in all 51 council districts. This year is also the first year we have collaborated with art as a catalyst for change which thanks to Council Member Cumbo's leadership supports 18 cultural organizations for programming that seeks to reduce gun violence in our communities. What a great list of council partnerships but there is more. I would also like

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

75

to take this opportunity to give an update on the  
legislation sponsored by Chair Van Bramer and  
signed by the mayor last spring that created  
greater public input into the percent for our  
commission process. Our new director Kendal Henry  
who is sitting over here who took this new position  
around this time... around the time of the  
legislation, the legislation was passed has  
embraced more public engagement in public art. He  
and his staff have been hosting... have hosted four  
of these public meetings to date including one at  
Snug Harbor Music Hall earlier this week and  
there's another coming up at Nuyorican Poets Café  
next month. These meetings are successfully  
bringing local residents into the process at the  
start so that they can have a voice in the art that  
will grace their neighborhoods. They have been  
highly successful at getting residents engaged and  
formed early in the process so that they can have a  
voice in the process. As you may know I was  
director of this program many years ago and I  
understand the value that public engagement has  
when commissioning the art that defines our shared  
spaces. So I want to thank you for your leadership

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

76

and support for this important program. Finally, we  
are gearing up to start working on the city's first  
comprehensive cultural plan later this year. Public  
engagement will continue to be central for the  
plan. We thank the council for their leadership in  
this important project. And we look forward to  
continuing our close collaboration. This is now my  
second week back at work as the chairman mentioned  
following six month leave no... no... clapping. Thank  
you. Leave of absence that I took for medical  
reasons. I'm feeling great. Six months have  
provided a lot of time for reflection. As I wrote a  
letter... in a letter to our constituents several  
weeks ago I've returned to public service with a  
renewed sense of urgency eager to build on the  
achievements, on our achievements while continuing  
to work towards the de Blasio administration's  
vision of a more equitable city. I'd like to  
provide an update on some of the programs we've  
developed to further this mission. One new program  
we're proud of is building community capacity which  
seeks to strengthen the organizations and cultural  
networks that connect residents in targeted  
neighborhoods. The program takes a collaborative

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

77

and comprehensive approach to building cultural capacity by bringing together local stakeholders from across sectors for training, workshops, public programs and more. We announced in January that East New York, Cypress Hills, and Brownsville will be the first neighborhood to host this new program. We hope to ensure that local cultural groups are deeply engaged in the community planning process currently underway there. We're working to expand the program to several more neighborhoods including the south Bronx and Jamaica Queens. In December then asking commissioner Torres and Moya Commissioner Nisha Agarwal appeared before this committee to update you on the successful IDNYC program and the strong partnerships with the city council with the city's cultural institutions. This collaboration between the city and... our remarkable cultural organization continues to be an enormous success. To date New Yorkers have redeemed more than 340,000 pre-memberships at these institutions demonstrating just how important culture is to card carrying New York City residents. I'm sure that many of the cultural partners for this program are here in the audience today. So I want to thank you

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

78

for your contribution to this incredible program as  
it opens this city up for many residents. Last July  
we announced that Tania Bruguera would be... would  
serve as the first Artist in Residence with New  
York's... with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant  
Affairs. This is the first new residency in what  
we're calling the Public Artist in Residence or P-  
A-I-R PAIR program. In November we announced that  
the social design collective became the second PAIR  
at the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs. They're  
working in Harlem, in the Harlem Vet Center to  
better engage female veterans. We're also close to  
announcing our third PAIR this time with the  
Administration for Children Services working with  
LGBTQ youth to... in foster care in Brooklyn and  
Queens. I'm also aware that this committee held a  
hearing on our efforts to promote more diverse and  
inclusive cultural workforce last month. To update  
you on our progress last week the city's theatre  
sub district council launched the application  
process for up to two million dollars in grants for  
the theatre community to support programs...  
cultivating more diverse professionals in theatre.  
There will be three information sessions at the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

79

Department of City Planning starting tomorrow so please spread the word amongst your constituents. More information that's available on the website, on our website, NYC.gov slash culture. As you'll understand from these descriptions the key to each of these programs is partnerships. It's through the energy, ideas, and commitment of individuals, and leaders at community based organizations, local leadership, and city government that real meaningful progress is possible. Our partnership with you at the council and the groups in the room is important to all these achievements and we still have lots to do. So we look forward to continuing to work to foster more vibrant, accessible, and inclusive cultural sector. I'm happy to answer questions you may have at this time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much Commissioner Finkelpearl. It is indeed great to have you here and feeling great and back in the saddle so to speak. So I want to get right into a little bit. Because as I sort of alluded to while we're enormously proud of the city council's initiatives having increased substantially over the last two years, and I'm proud to have led that

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

80

1 effort and... and the cultural immigrant initiative  
2 is just one of them, we've not seen increases in...  
3 in the cultural development fund for example in any  
4 meaningful way of... in... in some time. And I think  
5 that's something that we're definitely in need of.  
6 And you know I... I wonder if... if you can speak to  
7 that. Because you mention a few things and I'll  
8 mention a few other things. The cultural community  
9 has delivered. They always did deliver. But... but  
10 over the last year or so 340,000 free memberships  
11 to the institutions and organizations that are  
12 participating, that's an enormous, enormous gift to  
13 the people of the city of New York. Recently the  
14 administration announced 59 million tourists.  
15 That's a record that the city rightfully takes  
16 great pleasure in and also quite frankly reaps  
17 billions and billions and billions of dollars in.  
18 And then the diversity initiative that you launched  
19 and that the administration launched, and we talked  
20 about this last month at our hearing, there... there...  
21 our industry should be applauded because we are one  
22 of the few that are actually looking within and  
23 actually tackling this issue. So in addition to  
24 making the city what it is and giving the city a  
25



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

81

heart and soul and... and... and then by doing that and  
in so doing that providing billions in revenue,  
eliminating barriers to access to cultural  
organization, making sure this is one city as the  
mayor says, and then even going in and sort of  
tackling how diverse are we when so many others are  
not even seriously undertaking that. We're not  
vesting in the community as we should and... and if  
we did let's say increase the budget by let's say  
40 million we would see so much more of that  
activity that we all love so much and want so much.  
So I realize your position within the  
administration but I still want to ask you to  
address all that.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So there are  
a couple of... let me actually... maybe I'll talk about  
IDNYC first and then get to the other part of the  
question. So it is amazing and it... you know 340,000  
free memberships is... is spectacular. There is a  
nuance to that story which is that there are  
organizations now that have hundreds or thousands  
even or tens of thousands of new members. And I  
want to remind you that... that these are not  
existing members. And if you're a member of the met

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

82

you don't come in and get a new free membership.  
And you... nobody who is a current member who has  
been a member since 2012 is eligible. These are new  
members. And the big question in terms of the  
impact on the organization is retention right. So  
what percentage of that 340,000 become new members.  
If we ended up with let's say 75,000 new paying  
members to all those groups that would be a... a  
fantastic achievement that would reap long term  
benefits for those organizations. That's not to say  
that... that we're minimizing the idea of giving away  
340,000 free memberships and the impact that's had  
on the success of a... one of the signature projects.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Can I just... I  
hear what you're saying but then do we have any  
information yet on that...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah so...

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...retention  
question?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: ...so...

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And... and so...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Right.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...if 340,000  
free memberships have been given away and... and... and

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

83

the hope is that a certain percentage of those  
would then become paying members and... and in some  
ways pay for the program or at least get those  
organizations to be whole, so to speak. Do we have  
any information yet so far...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So very  
little.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...on that.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So if you  
remember at this time last year where just that  
upswing in terms of the members... just beginning. So  
there really aren't that quantitatively out of  
those 340,000 there are very few who have now lapse  
to their memberships. So I was actually talking to  
some of the groups before and there really is very  
little information on that. Some early indications  
look pretty good but we're not... we're just not  
sure. And that will play out I would say the next  
three or four months. So if you remember by the  
middle of the summer was when there was this huge  
onslaught and then very late in the year was when  
the numbers went up almost exponentially. So I  
don't have the information. I'm not sure if the  
groups can provide that but basically not enough of

the percentage wise of the memberships have lapsed  
for us to know much. So no I don't have good  
information on that but I think it's because the...  
most of them haven't lapsed. So... so that having  
been said the other substance of your question  
related to... and of course I heard about the  
proposal for the 40 million dollars in additional  
funding. And you know I'm here to say that the  
administration believes that the... that the budget  
presented is a budget that can allow us to do the  
core... what the agency has been doing and that we're  
very happy to continue to talk to you and to the  
council about this proposal all the way up until  
adoption.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So I... I... I hear  
what you're saying and I think while we are pleased  
with the work that's currently happening and it's...  
it's... it's a good solid investment in culture I'm  
sure you wouldn't disagree that we would be able to  
do that much more if we were to have a significant  
increased investment in for example the cultural  
development fund.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So you know  
my position once again is to present the budget as...

as written. The 28 and a half million dollars if  
you remember the history of the CDF this is a very  
historically high amount that you know hasn't had  
an increase I will grant you during this  
administration has not had a cut. There's no cuts  
you know often. There had been... at this hearing...  
I've been at this hearing in one of those seats in  
the past and talking to you about the proposed cuts  
which haven't happened right. So this is a healthy  
amount of money and... and that's what I'm here to  
say.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So I... I  
appreciate that you can't jump out in front of the  
mayor but I would... I would say that given the  
city's finances, given where we find ourselves, and  
given all of the success stories that we've both  
talked about in the... in the culture plays we've got  
to go beyond not having budget cuts as a... as a sort  
of sense of what is successful and... and what we're  
looking for. Yes, those were dark days when... when  
all of the folks in this room were facing down  
multi-million dollar budget cuts seemingly every  
six months and we've all been through that. And so  
it's great that we're not there and this

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

86

administration does value culture. But we... we've  
got to take it now to the next level and... and... and  
see this as the floor but... but not the ceiling.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I look  
forward to further discussions on exactly that  
topic with you all the way up until adoption.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great. You're  
on message Commissioner Finkelpearl.

[laughter]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You've been  
fully briefed in these two weeks that you're back.  
So with respect to the... the cultural development  
fund and the numbers that we're seeing of folks  
applying and the folks receiving where are we at?  
Because I know there's certainly a... and rightfully  
so a great deal of interest in getting more groups  
to apply for the cultural development fund.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Mm-hmm.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right? We  
always want more and... more from the boroughs and...  
and... and newer groups and more diverse groups.  
That's exactly what we should be doing. But there's  
sort of a... a... a strange twist to that right because  
if we get more and more groups to apply for a

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

87

static pot of funding it... it creates even more  
competition and... and then some folks won't be able  
to get it or maybe folks are getting less and it...  
what... what are you seeing there?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: You know... so  
Cathy Hughes who runs that program, we actually  
have a panels going on right now at the agency and  
I think in terms of the numbers I know it's a  
robust numbers and I think it is slightly up but  
I'm going to have to get back to you with the exact  
numbers because Commissioner Hughes is not here  
today to answer that question.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I appreciate  
that. And but would appreciate you know that...  
[cross-talk]

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, okay.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...that analysis...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yep.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...as well  
because if in fact that's what we're seeing you  
know we... we want to know that and we... we definitely  
should know that. And in terms of the... the council  
sponsored initiatives...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Mm-hmm.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

88

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...what kind of  
response are you seeing? What kind of success  
stories have you seen with the cultural immigrant  
initiatives through CASA. Obviously CASA is a... one  
of our... our oldest and... and most important ones.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So you know  
I've been gone for the last six months. A lot of  
this has kicked in in my absence. Everything that  
I've heard has been positive. These are incredible  
programs that are making big differences in the  
communities. Whenever I've gone to the sites the  
only question is how can we get it again for next  
year. How can we make the... these residencies  
longer? And... and I think it... that all was you know  
substantially made better by the additional funding  
that the council put in last year. And we look  
forward to council funding again this year  
hopefully. So I think it... that my sense is you know  
of course I participated in CASA when I was at the  
Queens Museum. I was a recipient of that. I'm a big  
fan of the program. Again I've been to multiple  
sites on the Su Casa just incredible, great  
programming. So... and I want to get back out and...



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

89

and see how these things are doing right now...

[cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Of course. We  
just want to bring you more joy...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: It is...

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...Commissioner  
by providing even more great programs for you to go  
out and see.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: No quite  
honestly you know when I'm in the office there's  
all these you know whatever problems are happening.  
You go out into the field and you see these  
programs and I... and I know you do the same and it  
just makes it all worthwhile really.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Could not agree  
more. And I realize some of these questions are...  
are... include significant time where you've been  
away so I don't know... recognize that as well. And I  
know that Council Member Cumbo has some questions.  
I have a few more. But we'll go back and forth  
between Council Member Cumbo and myself. Are you  
prepared Council Member Cumbo? Alright.

CM CUMBO: Hello Commissioner  
Finkelpearl. So happy to have you back and happy to

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

90

have you here with us today. And you were also very  
well represented in your absence by Eddie Torres  
who was quite phenomenal and held down the team...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Thank you.

CM CUMBO: ...in your absence and I  
couldn't get anything past him while you were gone.  
Nothing that I wanted to...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Not quite  
sure what that means but... What were...

CM CUMBO: ...sneak by.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: What were...

CM CUMBO: I couldn't get anything to  
sneak by while you were gone.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: What were you  
trying to sneak by Eddie Torres?

CM CUMBO: All kinds of things. I'm  
going to start talking about them now.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: We are on the  
record.

CM CUMBO: Wanted to follow up on our  
Chair's questions in terms of the IDNYC program...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay.

CM CUMBO: ...just so that I understand  
it.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

91

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Mm-hmm.

CM CUMBO: So that... currently right now  
for the IDNYC and its implementation there's no  
funding or additional funding being administered to  
any of the cultural institutions at this time.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes, you're...  
you're correct.

CM CUMBO: And there's also a discussion  
about from a past hearing that there will be an  
expansion of the IDNYC program to other cultural...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

CM CUMBO: ...institutions. How many  
cultural institutions additionally will be added?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: There were  
six. There's now 40... there's six new ones added.

CM CUMBO: Mm-hmm. And as you're  
presenting today you're presenting it as there will  
be no additional funding for the IDNYC moving  
forward into this fiscal budget?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Correct, Yes.

CM CUMBO: How do you feel about that?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Well again I  
mean I'm... first of all the administration has said  
repeatedly how grateful we are for the cultural

1 organizations that are participating. There is a  
2 question... a long term question about whether this  
3 is actually going to be beneficial depending on  
4 retention rates of those memberships. So this is  
5 you know something that the cultural organizations,  
6 the cultural institutions group for many years you  
7 know has been this great partner to the... to the  
8 city and has gotten tremendous funding and that the  
9 memberships for New York City residents was kind of  
10 a logical extension of that partnership. And then  
11 the... you know the new groups that have entered in...  
12 you know all voluntary... they all voluntarily  
13 joined. So I mean I think it's an incredible  
14 success story. I think it's one that is larger than  
15 anybody anticipated, that the success of the... this  
16 is the most successful municipal ID card by far in  
17 America. When we are looking at the projections  
18 early on we are looking at other cities and how  
19 that... we expected to be more successful by the way.

20  
21 CM CUMBO: As always.

22 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: We expected  
23 it to be the most successful in America; not just  
24 by size but by percentage of population. And then  
25 it exceeded our... our optimistic expectations.

CM CUMBO: And I think that that's  
fantastic but from your answers to Chair Van Bramer  
you were stating that the success of the program in  
terms of retention rates and those things won't  
really be realized until the summer after the  
budget's closed. So... [cross-talk] three to four  
months from now everything will be over and we're  
going to understand the vitality of this program.  
And from many of the conversations that I've had  
with many of the cultural groups and organizations  
what they continue to express to me is that this  
has been an exciting program, a way to greet new  
audiences. But at the same time you and I both know  
membership programs are very extensive; the  
bookkeeping, the tracking, making sure that the  
quality of service remains consistent for their  
existing members as well as their new members. And  
for this to be such a outstanding success I think  
in some ways or in every way organizations should  
be compensated or rewarded for the fact that this  
has broken all ideas of what success is for New  
York City. And I think that often cultural  
institutions are asked to bear the brunt of things,

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

94

that somehow the arts are a magical thing that can  
just take place...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Mm-hmm.

CM CUMBO: ...and I don't have to preach  
to your choir because I've read all of your books  
on dialogues and public art and many other things.  
So you get it. You've written... [cross-talk]

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

CM CUMBO: ...the book on it. And just  
wanted to you know express my passion for making  
sure that we advocate as fiercely as we can for the  
new organizations as well as the... the ones that are  
existing. And I also want to say with Van Bramer's  
initiative the... the immigrant cultural fund I think  
is fantastic but I also think that that could be  
another vehicle to utilize if funding were to be  
made available for other organizations to  
participate in the IDNYC program.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah.

CM CUMBO: Because those organizations  
are already servicing an immigrant community and  
they're often small and local based organizations  
in the bedrocks of our community.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

95

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I agreed. And  
the... we've done analysis... we have the zip code of  
every single person who signed up for an ID, NYC  
free membership. We know exactly... we don't know  
their names or anything, we just know their zip  
codes. So we know where there are large  
concentrations, people with the ID card so for  
example Corona or Sunset Park or... or Washington  
Heights, there are big concentrations of people who  
redeemed memberships in those neighborhoods. And so  
one of the questions then is you know so these are  
maybe parts of the city that didn't... where... where  
there weren't memberships of these big cultural  
organizations in the past. And so one of the  
questions is how to bridge the gap to these new  
members for retention and for audience development  
and that is maybe a way in which you know those  
immigrant group... immigrant rights group etcetera or  
immigrant serving groups can bridge to those... those  
members as well. So I think that... that there's a  
lot of potential there. There are a lot of  
potential for... not just for retention of membership  
but retention of membership in parts of the city

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

96

that didn't have large numbers of members at  
certain cultural institutions in the past.

CM CUMBO: Can... can you talk about  
moving forward with the budget? When was the last  
time? Because we've said in... it's been in some  
years that the agency has received a major increase  
for both the program groups as well as the capital...  
excuse me, the cultural institute groups. When was  
the year that the last time an increase was made  
substantial?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Well and...  
Right depends on how you define increase.

CM CUMBO: Substantial, big.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So there was  
a big baseline increase but it was a... it was  
baselining money that happened one year... like so  
two years ago with the first de Blasio budget but  
it was actually money put in by the Bloomberg  
administration... right. That the... there was a  
baseline increase that baselined a bunch of money  
that had been subjected to pegs etcetera where the  
budget was going down right. So the first budget...  
the first time I came to a budget hearing here a  
couple of years ago we were announcing those large



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

97

baseline increases which was a very happy moment  
for everybody. Now again it depends on how you  
define increase.

CM CUMBO: I would say increase from my  
vantage point and please forgive me that I don't  
recall the years...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Mm-hmm.

CM CUMBO: But under the... the former  
commissioner Kate Levin [sp?] I almost remember  
that there was like an increase from maybe three  
million dollars for the program... for the  
programming groups to about 30 million dollars.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

CM CUMBO: Do you recall that?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I do but I  
don't remember exactly which year it was...

CM CUMBO: Well...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: ...because I  
was not Commissioner and... [cross-talk]

CM CUMBO: Right. I understand. And you  
weren't in the... okay. But I do remember when that  
happened.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, yes.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

98

CM CUMBO: And that was a major major  
increase particularly for the program groups  
because it meant that you know we may go from  
getting a 15 hundred to 2,000 dollar grant to maybe  
now getting a 75 hundred dollar grant if you were a  
smaller group and more if you were larger  
obviously.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Mm-hmm.

CM CUMBO: But I would say the fact that  
we haven't had a substantial increase of that  
caliber since a time that was so long ago no one  
can even remember every year that we don't increase  
the budget and every year we don't have a  
substantial increase is really the equivalent of  
having a cut every single year. So by staying where  
we were we're cutting ourselves because we're not  
keeping pace with the rest of the city and the  
rising costs of... of living in New York City. So to  
keep us... well I'm not with you guys anymore but to  
keep... to keep the cultural where they are is really  
depreciating and cutting their budget and not  
allowing them to grow. And I would say that this  
agency and the organizations that are part of it in  
my narrow view in some ways are... is the only

1  
2 agencies that generates a vast amount of money for  
3 the city of New York. I can't think of another  
4 agency that generates and brings in funding like  
5 the department of cultural affairs. I mean of  
6 course you have finance with tickets and all that  
7 sort of stuff. But I'm saying like in industry.

8 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yep. So I... I  
9 also... I hear you. But I'd also like to say the  
10 second half of that question of how you defined an  
11 increase right... So last year obviously as Chairman  
12 Van Bramer mentioned there were increases and... and  
13 as you sponsored increases in funding that weren't  
14 baselined but there were you know all of a sudden  
15 CASA became that much bigger and... and... various  
16 initiatives. So there was more money circulating to  
17 cultural groups that wasn't baselined. Anyway... but  
18 I hear... I hear what you're saying.

19 CM CUMBO: Okay. I definitely want to be  
20 heard. And I hope that in this budget we can see  
21 those very important increases that organizations  
22 need because they have been... they have remained  
23 flat for so long in terms of seeing any major  
24 increases in that way. Wanted to ask... I asked Dean  
25 Fuleihan about this as well in terms of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

100

1  
2 increase to \$15.00 an hour. And so it was stated at  
3 the finance meeting and I didn't get enough clarity  
4 on it that any organization that has a contract  
5 with the city of New York would be required to then  
6 move to the \$15.00 an hour whenever that goes into  
7 effect and implemented. But I couldn't get clarity  
8 of... in terms of our organizations that I consider  
9 having a contract with the city of New York also  
10 going to be held to this particular increase in  
11 terms of salaries that's so needed but wanting to  
12 know how will that impact our budgets and whether  
13 it applies to these organizations or doesn't apply  
14 to these organizations \$15.00 increase is going to  
15 raise costs in many ways that we haven't even  
16 calculated all across the board for other services,  
17 independent contractors, people that work for us in  
18 other sectors, it's going to have an impact.

19 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah so  
20 actually this is another one. I... look I... I was  
21 talking to Alisha Glen and other people about this  
22 before I left. And I think I'm going to have to get  
23 back to you with an answer on how that would apply  
24 to groups that are under... that are funded by the  
25

city. So I don't... actually don't have an answer to  
that. I'm going to have to get back to you on that.

CM CUMBO: I appreciate that. I... I  
believe this is going to be a critical point for  
organizations.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yep.

CM CUMBO: There... they're certainly  
going to have to have an understanding of this  
because that would mean we would have to keep pace  
with such an increase in salaries because not for  
profit organizations as you know as well as  
cultural institutions salary ranges aren't on the  
high end. And so this would definitely impact their  
organizations, particularly smaller not for profit  
organizations. The other thing that I wanted to  
talk about was your capital budget and wanting to  
know is there going to be any increases to your  
capital budget over the next year?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So the  
capital budget is something where it's not set in  
stone and something that... that happens in you know  
negotiation with the city council. I can say that  
the first two years we've had very healthy capital  
budgets. The council particularly was fantastic,

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

102

1 last year partner on that. And we ended with... 167  
2 million dollars to the capital funding last year  
3 which was a very very respectful capital budget. It  
4 was spread throughout the city. And again we look  
5 forward to working with council... with the speaker  
6 to... to have a very healthy capital budget for  
7 cultural again this year. That's not set. That's  
8 not part of my testimony. That's something that...  
9 that unfolds in the next month.

11 CM CUMBO: That's something we could  
12 increase then.

13 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: The council  
14 was very generous last year. Thank you.

15 CM CUMBO: Okay. Wanted to talk about  
16 the summer youth program and then I'll have one  
17 more question and we'll conclude my questions.  
18 Summer youth... there has been a great movement on  
19 the part of the city council to increase summer  
20 youth so that every child throughout the city of  
21 New York, every young adult as I should say who  
22 wants to apply for a job would be given the  
23 opportunity to do so. We're looking for of course  
24 the necessary funding in order to do so. But wanted  
25 to know could the Department of Cultural Affairs

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

103

1  
2 continue to expand because we know that summer  
3 youth employment does happen already. But are you  
4 in a position would you say for cultural  
5 institutions to expand their ability to be able to  
6 host more summer youth employment?

7 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So as I  
8 understand the summer youth employment program is  
9 under DYCD. It's not under our agency.

10 CM CUMBO: Right, understand.

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So I mean  
12 this is a situation where we have brought to for  
13 example a CIG meeting representatives... were talking  
14 about summer jobs and summer employment to  
15 encourage people... it's not something we've mandated  
16 to the cultural institutions. It's another  
17 partnership that we encourage. So I think that  
18 that... it's not... that's not under our agency  
19 specifically but we're trying to be a good partner  
20 with other city agencies that are doing the summer  
21 youth...

22 CM CUMBO: And my final question; I've  
23 met with a number of organizations that are doing  
24 substantial and important work with our NYCHA  
25 developments.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

104

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

CM CUMBO: And I'm really very proud of  
the work that the Caribbean Culture Center, Lincoln  
Center, Botanic Gardens, Molcoda [sp?], many others  
are doing work in a formal way with our NYCHA  
developments. And wanted to know is there something  
that the Department of Cultural Affairs is thinking  
about in terms of creating a more formal way or  
opportunity for organizations to work  
collaboratively with our NYCHA developments?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So we've been  
talking to NYCHA and I've been spending some time  
you know visiting some of their facilities and are...  
can we announce the...

CM CUMBO: Yes. Yes.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay so... We...

CM CUMBO: These are the things I've  
been trying to sneak... sneak and find out about  
Jimmy.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: No so... so  
there was one particular partnership with NYCHA  
which is in Mont Haven Community in the South  
Bronx. And we got... we got some funding from the  
National Endowment for the Arts to start that. It's



going to be a... you know a program that engages  
NYCHA residents. And I think it'll be a way forward  
to talk about more substantial cultural initiatives  
within NYCHA. So that's something that... that have  
been awarded and then is now at what point Eddie?  
It's in the beginning.

CM CUMBO: Okay.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay so... so  
we are... we're thinking about it. It's a substantial  
percentage of people living in the city that we  
would love to engage more fully in cultural  
programming. I've seen tremendous partnerships at  
lost of cultural institutions, some that you've  
mentioned, others as well. So it's definitely on  
our radar.

CM CUMBO: Okay. Well I appreciate all  
of your answers. And I just want to say in closing  
that the Department of Cultural Affairs and many of  
the organizations that are under your portfolio are  
somewhat different from a lot of the organizations  
or staff or employees of other organizations and  
that they... they are often not the ones going gang  
busters on the steps of city hall and pounding and  
yelling and... and falling out on the floor about

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

106

1  
2 needing more funding. And so with that I... I just  
3 want to make sure that because they have not  
4 typically been those to go... right? I want to make  
5 sure that because they're not the loudest  
6 squeakiest wheel in all of city government because  
7 most of them are doing their work on an everyday  
8 basis, they're doing the programming. They're  
9 working in a collaborative spirit, in a partnership  
10 spirit that because they are not busting down the  
11 doors that they are not given the level of support  
12 as maybe other agencies who are... who are yelling  
13 and rightfully so and being that loud wheel. So  
14 that's... that's my... my final comment.

15 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay. And  
16 it's all relative because I... I would not say  
17 busting down the doors but I would say that I hear  
18 a lot very passionately, very frequently from the  
19 community about funding.

20 CM CUMBO: Okay thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
22 Council Member Cumbo. And I would just add that the  
23 cultural community and artists are not shy and the  
24 most creative people in the world and... and you  
25 should raise your voice all the time, every time

1  
2 when it comes to funding for the arts. If other  
3 people are on the steps of city hall you should be  
4 too. That is all of our collective responsibility.  
5 And then on the inside Council Member Cumbo and I  
6 are going to fight as much as we can to get  
7 everything that you need. And... and speaking of  
8 which... and... and I see Council Member Levin from  
9 Brooklyn, great champion of the arts and culture is  
10 here as well. I just want to say obviously when  
11 Council Member Cumbo and I press you on... on these  
12 issues we're really looking beyond you and we're  
13 seeing Mayor de Blasio. And... and you are his  
14 representative as the Commissioner of Cultural  
15 Affairs.

16 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yep.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: But we really  
18 need the administration to... to make this more of a  
19 priority. We're thrilled with some of those capital  
20 numbers. And obviously we're thrilled with how the  
21 council has responded in these last two years. And...  
22 and you pointed that out in terms of our council  
23 initiatives, even our council of cultural capital.  
24 And... and I believe that this is a priority for this  
25 administration. But I believe what we're saying is

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

108

1 that it needs to be more of a priority. And... and  
2 that we need to see an increase in the investment  
3 from the administration. I believe the... the... the  
4 cultural development fund in the agency really saw  
5 a meaningful increase last in 2008 roughly or so.  
6 And... and so this has been a long time coming. And...  
7 and now... and now is the moment. And in some ways if  
8 not now then when given the economy, given where  
9 the city is at this is the moment for... for culture  
10 in the city of New York. And quite frankly given  
11 all the success that is... is surrounding our... our  
12 industry. I also want to make a couple of... of  
13 points though because the cultural capital is great  
14 but not all of our cultural organizations can share  
15 even in... in that success. Some are much smaller.  
16 Some have harder time drawing down that money. And...  
17 and so... and also I want to just address the IDNYC.  
18 We want everyone to participate in IDNYC who can  
19 participate in IDNYC. But the truth is for some of  
20 the smaller cultural organizations it's impossible  
21 to give away free memberships or free performances  
22 because they rely so heavily on that for... for  
23 income and... and to sustain themselves. And I would  
24 just say using that as a way to say that you know  
25

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

109

1 we... we should... we should have additional funding  
2 for... for... for the arts when it comes to IDNYC. I  
3 just think that's a sort of... it makes sense. Folks  
4 are giving and there is a cost associated with it.  
5 We've got to make sure... Because I think it speaks  
6 to the value and the dignity of art. It's not free.  
7 Artists should be paid for their work right. We  
8 can't sort of keep asking right... it happens so  
9 often in our communities where artists donate their  
10 time, they donate performances right out of the  
11 goodness of... of their heart. And that's great. But  
12 we want to value art. We want to value artists. We  
13 want to make sure that we're not taking anyone for  
14 granted. And...

16 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: If I could  
17 just add...

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yep.

19 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: ...that we  
20 should not forget the hard work being done by  
21 animals and plants as well. Animals and plants at  
22 the zoos and the gardens.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes. Yes.  
24 Absolutely. But I think you hear what I'm saying.

25 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

110

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I think...  
collectively we're... we're saying we can't rest  
where we're at. We need increases. We need a  
significant increase and this is the year to do  
that. And I know that you'll take that message to  
everyone on the other side of City Hall. Council  
Member Levin.

CM LEVIN: Thank you very much Mr.  
Chairman. Commissioner welcome back.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Thank you.  
Thank you.

CM LEVIN: I... I wanted to just ask... I  
know that we... you know we worked together on the  
legislation around the cultural plan.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yep.

CM LEVIN: And I know you... you spoke a  
little bit about it in your testimony. I was  
wondering if you could give a little bit of an  
update as to where things are in the process in  
terms of... of FY '17 budget if there's any... any of  
those... any actions are reflected in the... in the  
budget itself.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah. So we  
have met with the... the cultural... the Cultural Plan

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

111

Advisory Committee. I'm... I get it confused with the  
Cultural Affairs Advisory Commission. We had a  
fantastic meeting to talk about sort of scope and...  
and you know penetration into different parts of  
the city. We're far along in the... you know the  
selection of a... a consultant to work with us at the  
cultural affairs department to kind of you know  
structure the plan. And yes there is discussion  
about the funding for the cultural plan that's  
ongoing between us and... and city hall and OMB.

CM LEVIN: Do you expect that... so if...  
I'm assuming if there's a you know a contract with  
a... with an organization to do the... the... some of the  
administration work around the plan itself that is  
likely to be reflected in maybe the executive  
budget or are we going to figure out the way to do  
that before... before adopting...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Before  
adoption. Yeah so the contract would start in... in  
July. Actually the idea is to really start actively  
working on a plan in August.

CM LEVIN: Okay so then I'm assuming  
that we will be able to... to see something reflected  
in... in... in the executive budget. Maybe.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

112

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: ...in executive  
budget but...

CM LEVIN: Okay.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: ...that's the  
plan... [cross-talk]

CM LEVIN: Okay we'll keep the... we'll  
keep the... the conversations going.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah.

CM LEVIN: And... are... are you... are we... is  
DCA feeling exuberant around...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

CM LEVIN: ...this plan or...

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes I think  
we... we would... we've graduated from acceptance to  
exuberance. I think it's going to be fantastic. I'm  
really excited. We're all in.

CM LEVIN: Great. Great.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Thank you.  
All of you who have pushed that. It's really going  
to be amazing. I think that the able... ability to  
really get out and listen carefully to what's going  
on in the city, to you know compare notes also with  
other cities about their plans and... and how they've



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

113

1  
2 been executed because it's not enough to make a  
3 plan. It has to be a plan that sticks.

4 CM LEVIN: Mm-hmm.

5 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: That's one of  
6 the things we talked about...

7 CM LEVIN: Right.

8 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: ...extensively  
9 with our committee you know to... to have goals that  
10 are achievable, that make sense, that's what New  
11 Yorkers want out of their arts and cultural  
12 sectors. It's great, yes.

13 CM LEVIN: Excellent. I look forward to  
14 working with...

15 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay.

16 CM LEVIN: ...welcome back.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great. Thank  
18 you very much Council Member Levin. And I think in  
19 the three council members that you see here you see  
20 three of the biggest champions for the arts and...  
21 and culture in the city of New York and grateful  
22 for Council Member Levin and Council Member Cumbo  
23 for their work. I do want to say in... in closing...  
24 and it's already been said but we are thrilled to...  
25 to have you here. You are one of the most

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

114

impossibly decent people in city government. And I  
don't say that lightly because not everyone is as  
good and... and full of integrity as you are. So it's  
great to have you with us and... and fighting this  
fight. And... and so again we have a lot to be  
thankful for both for the people in the room but  
also for the work that's being done by the people  
in the room. And I look forward to working with my  
colleagues as we advocate for a substantial  
increase in funding for all of culture this year.  
And we are grateful... grateful to all of the animals  
and all of the science at our cultural  
institutions. But as someone in the audience  
reminded me artists need to eat too. So we need to  
make sure everyone is well fed in this budget  
cycle. And with that I want to thank you  
Commissioner and your team and say that we are  
anxious to get to work once again. I know you've  
already been hitting the... the... the trail in your  
two weeks back. So thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Thank you.

Thank all of you. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And now we are  
going to go back to libraries. And hopefully the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

115

DC37 representatives are still with us. Cuthbert  
Dickenson, Catherine Skrzypek, John Hyslop, Val  
Calon. Sorry about that. Where's John? Alright we  
have the DC37 library union local heads  
approaching. So if you are leaving the hearing  
please exit in the back and we will commence. We  
are going to go to a three-minute clock. Three-  
minute clock for all members of the public  
testifying as we have somewhere in the area of 40  
folks registered to testify between libraries and  
culture which is great and exciting and I will  
listen to every single word that every single  
person would like to share today. So with that I  
think John you're going to speak...

JOHN HYSLOP: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...on... on behalf  
of the team assembled. So if everyone could refrain  
from talking while the testimony is being given we  
are going to start with John Hyslop.

JOHN HYSLOP: Thank you Chairman Jimmy  
Van Bramer and Chairman Andy King. Thank you for  
giving my fellow presidents and me an opportunity  
to testify at this year's joint Committee on  
Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

116

Intergroup Relations and the Subcommittee on  
Libraries hearing on the three budget... libraries...  
the three library systems budget. Val Colon,  
President Local 1930, Cuthbert Dickenson, President  
Local 374, Eileen... Eileen Muller who's not here  
today President 1482, and representing Ilene is  
Catherine Scrie... Skrzypek Vice President of  
Librarians of Local 1482 and I John Hyslop,  
President of Local 1321 come before you united in  
our plea for library funding. This year's plea is  
so much more challenging than recent years, not  
because we have a huge budget shortfall, cannot  
meet the public's demand for six-day service and  
are in desperate need of more staff but because  
none of these deficiencies exist. Our plea is more...  
our plea is more nuanced addressing a deeper need.  
In fiscal year 2016 the city council and the mayor  
gave a historic increase in library funding and  
mandated six-day service. That mandate met the  
threshold of the public's impression of good  
library service more... good library service more  
library hours. However, that funding was not  
permanent and was not enough. As representatives of  
the union staff our challenge this fiscal year is

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

117

to convince our elected officials that even though they have met their political obligation for giving the people what they need and want they have not met the practical needs of running a library. The city council at the... at the minimum must match the mayor's fiscal year 2017 financial commitment to libraries so that we at least maintain current funding levels and avoid painful consequences. That commitment will be helpful but is not enough because it does not provide for... for an adequate staffing level that can meet the ever increasing demands of our patients. 21<sup>st</sup> century technology has... has a massive impact on library resources. We must now provide free Wi-Fi, hotspots, tablet, laptops, desk tops, original digital media, websites, mobile apps, printing, and scanning. All of that purchasing development, infrastructure, maintenance, and support is done by an overworked stressed out... overworked stressed out information technology staff. Their staffing levels have not increased much because libraries have had to hire a public service staff to provide six day service. Another suffering library service is adult literacy. New York City will always have a

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

118

population of native and foreign born adults who  
need basic English literacy classes. Our libraries  
have developed an amazing program reaching every  
part of the city attempting to meet this demand.  
However, the number of library staff that provides  
these services have not grown much because the  
libraries have had to hire public service staff to  
provide six day service. To meet the demand of six-  
day service the libraries did hire frontline staff.  
Librarians, custodians, clerks, maintainers,  
drivers. This hiring has been a boom to the library  
staff and public. However fiscal year 2016's  
funding was not enough to hire all the frontline  
staff the libraries need to meet libraries user's  
demands. As representatives of these staff we can  
attest that we barely.. we are barely meeting this  
demand. We have branches that are on some days only  
have two or three people all day and have to close  
floors for safety reasons. We have branches that do  
not have custodians to keep branches clean for  
those expanded hours. Additionally, the current  
level of staffing does not address our patron's  
demands for more free services, after school  
programs, homework help, story time, books and

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

119

digital media, programs of all ages, and career  
services. Six-day service has been great for our  
library systems with more people connecting with  
our libraries. New York City's libraries develop  
new services, provide new technologies, and provide  
more programs. We maintain our superior standing in  
every neighborhood and council district in the city  
and our patron... are... and are a paragon of public  
space. Sometimes the only one in the neighborhood.  
However, the fiscal year 2016 demand for six day  
service and the amount of money elected officials  
gave us as historic an increase it was strains our  
system causing hardship on all staff. If our  
elected officials want their constituents and our  
patrons to continue to receive the current  
inadequate services then recommit to funding  
libraries. However, if our elected officials want  
to make life better for library staff, improve and  
expand library services then they must give the  
library system the 65 million dollars needed to do  
that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much John and... and to all of our leaders for your  
role in making sure that we got the 43 million that

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

120

1 we did receive last year. And obviously it's been  
2 my honor and privilege to help lead the fight for  
3 and with library workers. And I will just say that  
4 the mayor baselined half of the 43 million dollars  
5 and we absolutely must and... and cannot in any way  
6 not commit to making sure that at a bare minimum  
7 that 43 million is there. I'm certainly not voting  
8 for any budget that decreases the libraries one  
9 dollar right. That just can't happen. The... so then  
10 let's... let's make sure we get that baselined. And  
11 then we talked about the additional 22 million. And  
12 I'm interested in how much you think things will  
13 improve with the 65 million because obviously we've  
14 had significant staff added on; roughly around 400  
15 or so. So that's helped. But if there's still two  
16 and three staff at... at branches how much is the 22  
17 million going to help and... and will we really get  
18 there?

20 JOHN HYSLOP: For... for Queens... I can  
21 speak for... on behalf of Queens that would be a  
22 great improvement. As I said our... our IT Department  
23 they haven't hired... they've hired a handful of  
24 people. Our... our customers are demanding free Wi-  
25 Fi, free hotspots, laptops, etcetera. All of that



1 infrastructure needs to be built and maintained by  
2 our staff. And they're struggling to do that now.  
3 They're working 60 70 hours a week just to do that,  
4 just to do... meet... meet that demand. So that back  
5 office work needs help... that... those back office  
6 staff need help. And we do have two people in a  
7 branch. That happens often because of the Saturday  
8 service. So we would hire... be able to hire more  
9 public service staff as well. So there's... a host of  
10 programs and services that the libraries provide  
11 that are still understaffed because we don't have...  
12 we hadn't had that money that we had in 2008 that  
13 we have this year.

14  
15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right so we  
16 still need additional funding...

17 JOHN HYSLOP: Right.

18 CUTHBERT DICKENSON: I just would like  
19 to add in... in reference to NYPL I think that  
20 security is a very vital part of New... not just the  
21 library but New York City these days. And you know  
22 I'm saddened to say you have not hired in that  
23 capacity. And folks are stressed out. I mean any  
24 deviation from the day... from the daily work process  
25 become chaotic and so I... I think the need to be

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

122

pressing hire more guards and to compone  
[phonetic]... and to compone matters what really  
happen is that they're contracting these cards to  
private contractors. It's not that they're not  
hiring these guards, they're contracting them out.  
And that's a problem for me.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Hmm.

VAL COLON: My part I'll add that what  
John was saying is the true. I've actually had  
recently one of my people tell me that their branch  
is a three floor branch. And sometimes the staffing  
level is so short they have to close an entire  
floor. And that means that if a patron comes in and  
requests something from that floor the staff member  
have to go all the way up to get it. In that time  
frame any other patrons who come in literally will  
have to wait for that individual to come back. I'm  
also hearing that sometimes what they do in order  
to open the room the librarian will be removed from  
the room stationed in another location and then  
what they'll do is they'll put the security guard...  
sometimes they're not that adequate to control the  
whole room and you know they're not the librarian.  
And they'll put a non-union person, what we call a

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

123

page and that's a person who should never be left  
alone to control an entire room. Technology is the  
same thing. My IT guys are stressed because there  
are a very few amount of them and you're talking...  
it's not just the branches. It's every facility  
with then NYPL that they have to handle. So that's  
a major stress to them. And you know... it's kind of  
what they're saying I'm... so my people also talk  
about maintenance. If the maintenance guys are not  
sufficiently manned that means that in order to  
open the building it looks good no, it means  
sometimes the staff have to go around and do some  
of the cleaning themselves.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Brooklyn...

CATHERINE SKRZYPEK: I'd like to  
reiterate what John and Val have already stated  
about IT staff being stretched thinly. They cover a  
lot of territory visiting branch to branch to take  
care of network problems to install new technology.  
And as our technology services continue to increase  
and expand we need the... we need... we need that  
support from IT staff more than we have ever. And...  
and I'd also like to say that custodial staff is...  
is always an issue that we deal with. We're still

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

124

trying in Brooklyn to... to provide one custodian for  
each branch. But as our usage increases as we see  
more people in the building that... that adds to ware  
and tare. That adds to the... the need to attend to  
things like the restrooms and the program rooms  
more often than one person may be able to do. So  
custodial I think is... is an issue as well.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well there...  
there's no bigger supporter of custodial staff than  
myself. Because some folks know that I was raised...  
my stepfather was a public school custodian and  
janitor so I value that work incredibly. So thank  
you very much and... and I want to send my regards to  
Eileen who we love. And thank all of you obviously.  
You point out the need for not only the 43 million  
dollars being permanently in our budgets but making  
sure that we get to the 65 and a million-dollar  
figure so library workers aren't stressed and have  
the capacity to do their jobs which is so vitally  
important. So thank you all very much. So we're  
going to... because we're alternating libraries and  
culturals and the first panel for libraries was the  
DC37, representatives of all the unions, we're  
going to do the same for our culturals. So we have

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

125

DC 37 representatives of our cultural organizations  
here. Peter Vreeland, is Peter Vreeland here?  
Jeremy Sanders... Jeremy Sanders? Christine Lebeau  
and David Paskin. I'm hoping I'm saying those names  
as correctly as possible. Go ahead in whatever  
order you'd like to proceed.

DAVID PASKIN: Good morning, or good  
afternoon. My name's David Paskin. And we're going  
to slightly different tack on the... on the cultural  
affairs issue because of a particular issue we have  
regarding the cultural institution retirement  
system pension. Good afternoon. Thank you Chair Van  
Bramer and council members of the Cultural Affairs  
Committee. My name is David Paskin Associate  
Director of Research and Negotiations at DC37. I'm  
here on behalf of Henry Garrido who could not be  
here today. We represent 13,000 dedicated... 13  
hundred dedicated public servants working at  
various cultural institutions in New York City. The  
hard work and dedication is vital to the daily  
operation, security, and maintenance to these  
essential New York institutions. The cultural  
institution retirement system is an efficient and  
well-funded multi-employer pension plan that's

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

126

provided pension benefits for over 20,000 cultural  
and day care workers for over 50 years at a  
reasonable cost. The current pension contribution  
is 11 percent compared to the... NYCERS contribution  
of 34 percent. However, the plan is structurally  
different from NYCER's in it is not  
constitutionally guaranteed. It's covered by... it is  
covered by a NYCER regulations, the pension dent...  
benefits don't cover overtime and there is no COLA.  
Our members don't get rich from this plan. The  
benefits are modest and the average retirement  
benefit for workers in cultural institutions is  
only about 17,000 dollars a year. It is in the best  
interest to the workers and the institutions and  
our elected representatives that stable funding and  
support is provided to this unique and valuable  
pension system. Its longevity is a testament to the  
unique partnership between the unions, the  
employers, and the city. The plan is facing real  
dangers from possible underfunding, lack of  
understanding of CRS' unique structure as a multi-  
employer plan and dramatic reductions to daycare  
participant population caused by unilateral  
decisions regarding early learn. We're fully aware

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

127

the fiscal pressures on the plan resulting from  
external factors such as a weak stock market and a  
new hire... higher actuarial assumptions since people  
live longer and new rules imposed by the federal  
government; the multi-employer pension reform act.  
These challenges can be overcome but they require  
the support and commitment of the city council and  
the mayor. The plan needs stable and increased  
funding in the budget to meet the current  
contribution rate and allow for the long term  
solution to be negotiated between the parties. In  
addition, the city needs to stand behind its  
historical commitment to maintain the pension  
system. Unilateral changes were imposed by the  
Bloomberg administration as a result of 13 hundred  
layoffs of daycare employees which resulted in a  
distortion between the act... the ratio of active  
employees and retirees. The union has faced past  
challenges directly in the last round of  
negotiations we agreed to eliminate the match... the  
401K match of 1.9 percent. That money was then used  
to fund the pension system.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: If you could  
wrap up.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

128

1  
2                   DAVID PASKIN: Okay. We're not seeking  
3 the council to intervene a collective bargaining  
4 process between the parties. What we're seeking is  
5 a long term support and commitment for the basic  
6 foundation of the plan which is to provide a  
7 pension system for the city employees and cultural  
8 institutions and daycare centers. This is  
9 consistent with the city's vision for secure  
10 retirement for all working people and prudent  
11 spending of city funds.

12                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. And  
13 as some of the folks know I... I did ask Dean  
14 Fuleihan this question and the administration has  
15 assured me and us that they are going to make this  
16 work. Obviously we have to hold them to that and...  
17 and we'll look to Henry and all of your team to...  
18 and keep us updated on... on what happens there. It  
19 is a big concern for all of us at the council. And  
20 no one can be hurt as a result of this issue. Do  
21 you want to... [cross-talk] go to the next one?

22                   PETER VREELAND: Sure. Hi, good  
23 afternoon. My name is Peter Vreeland. I'm the Local  
24 President of 1559 at the American Museum of Natural  
25 History and I want to thank you for this time. I've



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

129

1 been working in the culturals for almost 27 years.  
2 I was... six years at the Brooklyn Children's Museum  
3 as a museum instructor back when there were riots  
4 in the streets. Every time I parked my car you know  
5 batteries were missing and a whole bit like that.  
6 Things have changed around in Brooklyn. Things have  
7 changed around in the city. I've worked at the... my  
8 present location the American Museum of Natural  
9 History for 20 years. But every time there's a  
10 budget cut my members get shown the door; not the  
11 people making 400 and 500 and 1.7 million dollars.  
12 The testimony of the cultural department on page 14  
13 talks about a major production that's going on at  
14 the museum in excess of 350 million dollars and yet  
15 Dan Schneider who's the main guy at my museum  
16 supported management and put on the table to do  
17 away with certain things that would impact people  
18 who work for a long time. Case in point rule 85  
19 meaning that your years of service and your age  
20 equal 85 you get to retire at full benefit. Now if  
21 there's almost 350 million dollars kicking around  
22 to deal with a project that really doesn't need to  
23 happen but for some reason it needs to happen the  
24 analogy I think about is when I was a kid my dad  
25

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

130

would love to have color TV but we couldn't afford  
it at the time because we had to pay for other  
things. But now we're getting our color TV and  
instead other things are being taken away. That's a  
major problem. And that seems to always be the  
thing. What I'm looking for is justice, okay. Not  
just them. So every time there's a budget cut my  
members get shown the door, my members' benefits  
get eroded. That has to stop. My members live in  
New York City. My members vote for your council  
people. I can guarantee you most of the people  
making over 200 grand do not live in New York City.  
And they're making decisions that directly impact  
my members. And that has to stop. When I look at  
budgets and I see that there's a billion dollars in  
fiscal... going into fiscal '20 okay, and that  
billion dollars is earmarked for projects that at  
the American Museum of Natural History if you were  
going to ask me what's better; having a place that  
you can have big parties or having a pension plan I  
would say having a pension plan is a lot better  
because my members have worked really really hard  
for that. So there's money kicking around in the  
city. Things have picked up economically but yet

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

131

1 we're getting short draft and that has to stop  
2 okay. I'm here. I know I hurt feelings. You know I...  
3 I tell it the way that I see it. Perhaps other  
4 people don't see it the same way that I do but I've  
5 been work... doing what I'm doing for a really...  
6 really long time. I'm not asking to make a lot of  
7 money but I am asking to get the pension that I  
8 worked really hard for. So thank you for your time.

9  
10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
11 much. And you came in under time so you did not  
12 hurt my feelings...

13 PETER VREELAND: Okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...let me just  
15 say.

16 PETER VREELAND: That's good. That's  
17 good.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And look I... I...  
19 we've met before and... and I greatly value your  
20 members' work and very proud of the fact that my  
21 parents were union members and I believe very much  
22 in... in the work and in the... the pension need and...  
23 and all the issues you spoke of. And we don't want  
24 to talk about cuts at all. We're talking about  
25

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

132

adding and having more funding and... and hopefully  
more members in your... your local... [cross-talk]

PETER VREELAND: That'd be great.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...so thank you  
very much...

PETER VREELAND: Thank you for your  
time.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...for that.

JEREMY SANDERS: Hello, thank you for...  
thank you for allowing me to speak. My name is  
Jeremy Sanders. I'm President of District Council  
37's Local 1501 representing the New York  
Zoological and Museum Workers. My members work on  
the Bronx Zoo, New York Aquarium, Central Park Zoo,  
Prospect Park Zoo, Queens Zoo, Staten Island Zoo,  
as well as the Museum of the City of New York,  
[speaking foreign language], the hall of Science in  
Queens, and Staten Island Historical Society. As  
an... as an employee of the New York City Cultural  
Institutions, and as a union leader I have had... I  
have the duty to my members to bring these issues  
of the Cultural Institution Retirement Systems CIRS  
to your attention. Our pension plan was the model  
of... of... it really was the model... model of

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

133

efficiency. It is a well-managed healthy fund and  
it costs about a third of the amount of the average  
city pension. The union employees in the cultural  
institutions are part of a unique structure.  
Originally their salaries were 100 percent funded  
by New York City whereby the monies were funneled  
to the union staff through the cultural  
institutions. A percentage of our pensions has  
always been paid... paid to the fund by the employers  
and the percentage of... and a percentage by the  
city. Over the last several decades numerous  
mayoral administrations have drastically cut  
funding to the city's cultural institutions as a  
cost saving measure forcing the culturals to  
finance the difference. Because of this reduced  
funding from the city our union workers are now  
caught in the center of a political question. Are  
we city employees. We are... we are proud city  
employees with career paths that range from  
attendance to zoo keepers, all whom work in the... in  
the city cultural institutions. We take pride...  
pride in where we... we live and work. We inspire,  
entertain, and educate New Yorkers. Visitors from  
across the United States and around the world.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

134

Mayor de Blasio and his state of the city speech referred to the cultural as the jewels of the city. In the interest of time and not to repeat what's already been said basically our... what our members really need is dignity in retirement and not to be worried that on a day to day basis of not knowing whether or not they're going to get that. And to go back to what the mayor said considering us jewels if you... to have jewels... in order to pass them down to future generations they need to be polished and cared for. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much. And I was in the audience when the mayor gave his state of the city speech and was thrilled to hear him lead with an appreciation of our cultural organizations and institutions but of course there are no cultural institutions or organizations without the workers who are the... the real jewels right, and the gems. And so I appreciate that. And again we are very very much involved in the... question and making sure that no one gets hurt. Last on the panel.

CHRISTINE LEBEAU: Thank you for allowing us to speak to you today. My name is

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

135

Christine Lebeau and I live here in New York City  
in a dilapidated rent stabilized apartment in a  
five story walk up in Ben Kallos' district, the  
fifth district. I'm in my ninth year of service at  
the American Museum of Natural History as a  
Scientific Assistant. As you know the American  
Museum of Natural History is a world class  
institution that fosters ground breaking scientific  
research, educates our public and attracts tourists  
to our city from around the globe. I am one of a  
small and specialized group of employees that serve  
as caretakers to the museum's permanent collection.  
My position at the American Museum of Natural  
History is at the very core of the museum's  
mission. The collection for which I am responsible  
contains roughly eight million specimens and  
requires years of education and a very specific set  
of skills. My current salary is 53,524 dollars a  
year. And after I complete 15 years of service my  
salary will cap out at a modest 59,870 dollars. So  
without sarcasm I congratulate the members of the  
New York City Council on your recent salary  
increase and I know what it's like trying to make  
ends meet while working full time and bringing home

an income that doesn't adequately cover the cost of  
living in the city. My pension was promised to me  
in return for my years of service. The proposed  
cuts to my pension are unfair and are a direct  
threat to my future wellbeing. I urge the city to  
save our pensions. Please give full consideration  
to the comment... comments made here by David Paskin  
and the other speakers and on behalf of the  
employees of the American Museum of Natural History  
and all the other culturalists. Thank you for your  
time.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much. And I have always been a fighter for working  
men and women. And it's the first thing that I knew  
is that struggle. So I will continue to do that.  
And we as a council I know are very very committed  
to the members of DC 37 and... and many of us care  
very passionately about this issue. So thank you to  
all the members of this panel. And then we are  
going to hear from... So all four of you are excused.  
Thank you very much. And then we're going to hear  
from a Queens library panel. And then we're going  
to go to the cultural institutions group members.  
So if Thelma Golden is in or around the house she



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

137

1 should be ready. So representing the Queens library  
2 I believe we have Mona an adult literary specialist  
3 if she's still here. It looks like Poppy a library  
4 patron, and Carina Nieves from the Friends of the  
5 Richmond Hill Library. Is Queens library in the  
6 house at all? Did I say those names right? And then  
7 after that we have Thelma Golden, Anne Dennin, and  
8 Sheila Lewandowski in the first cultural panel.  
9 Whoever wants to go first. Are you ready? Just pull  
10 that microphone a little bit closer to you, yeah.

12               POPPY: Hello. Good... good afternoon Sir.  
13 I would like to thank you for allowing me to tell  
14 my story at the city hall today. My name is Poppy,  
15 a student at the Queens Library Adult Learning  
16 Center in Long Island City. I am currently in the  
17 process of earning my... and taking ESOL classes. I  
18 came from Bangladesh approximately one year ago and  
19 struggled a lot being in a new country not knowing  
20 the language or the culture. I had no friends or  
21 relatives. When I first arrived and felt very  
22 lonely my husband and children where I'd visit with  
23 while... and is school... and were unable to spend much  
24 time with you. In Bangladesh I was a well-known  
25 writer who had... 20 books and... and... who was in... with

the... and public... company. All this without having  
completed high school because I lost my mom when I  
was only nine months old. I was then married at 15  
years old and got so busy... and taking care of my  
family that I never got a chance to earn my high  
school diploma. After arriving in America I learned  
that there were many opportunities in this country  
for educational growth so I became determined to  
earn my degree. I was disappointed when I realized  
that I do not have the financial ability to pay for  
a school and... more and more frustrated as time went  
on. This led to me being diagnosed with depression  
so I began treatment at... Hospital. The doctors were  
worried about me because they did not see any  
improvement in my condition over a certain period  
of time. I finally made that decision that I was  
going to beat my depression. I searched on the  
internet and discovered that Queens library  
provided the courses that I was looking for for  
free. I got in touch with the Long Island City  
Community Library and began classes. It is there  
that I made many new friends and made getting... off  
my... of the library. The stuff... for helping people  
in needed they made me feel welcome. They were like

a big family and it didn't take long before they  
made me feel like part of their family too. They  
help me overcome my depression and pushed me to  
fulfill my goals. I like to say that... one minute...  
say that they well like the... I feel like... I... I can  
now proudly say that I own the first... community...  
dedicated to the struggles of women like me. That  
is my full issue... from November to February. And it  
is... March is now going on. On... on March is... on... And  
this is about my ESOL class. Our teacher and our  
classmates. And I... I have written it in English but  
my second language, only one year. I began my  
journey at Queens library on July 13<sup>th</sup> and then in  
November I published my first magazine. My life has  
since... in a very short time my doctor has informed  
me that I no longer have to take medication for  
depression. Queens Library has made me a self-  
confident woman. The library is not only a place to  
study. There are many different opportunities for  
computer training... job training, legal counselling,  
and even fitness. I want to whole heart... heartedly  
then thank Queens library and is wonderful...  
everything they have done for me as I work on  
getting on my degree I had waited to... so long for.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

140

Please honor the funding because you have heart...  
today. You must keep investing in libraries so  
women like me and all those who need... and life  
changing services the library has to offer and have  
the library... have the ability to try and become...  
Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [speaking  
foreign language] right? So, Aliya Ali who is  
seated to my right is a... our cultural affairs  
finance analyst on the committee and she also grew  
up in Bangladesh and she was talking about how the  
story was resonating and... and I asked her how to  
say thank you in Bengali so is [speaking foreign  
language] okay? It was a great story. And I'm glad  
you shared it. And I'm so very proud to represent  
the Long Island City Library which has changed your  
life in such a powerful way. So thank you for  
sharing your story. Next.

MONA: Hello everyone. My name is Mona.  
First, thank you so much for providing me the  
opportunity to share my story as a proud immigrant.  
My name is Mona and I'm from Alexandria, Egypt. I  
work for the Queens Library now as a full time  
specialist. I came to the United States two years

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

141

ago. Not... not... I didn't know where to go or how to  
start my life here. I stayed home almost three  
months with depressions and high blood pressures.  
No relative, no friends. Answering the phone was a  
nightmare for me because people spoke too fast and  
I wasn't able to understand them. Then one of my  
friends living in Florida she advised me to visit  
Queens library because she said that she heard the  
providing support to new Americans. And this is the  
point my whole life has been a changing. I went  
into the Queens Library specifically... learning  
programs at Queens... sorry at Long Island City where  
they offer me free advanced English classes and  
also computer. I took advantage of this opportunity  
and improved my English and also get more computer  
skills. They also helped me by evaluating my  
Bachelor degree to determine if it was acceptable  
here in America. I learned how to... and take care of  
my health and also attended the yuga [phonetic]  
classes at the library. Answering the phone wasn't  
a nightmare for me anymore. I became involved with  
my schools... with my kids' school and started to  
attending parents teachers conference each month  
and follow up with their education... I gained a

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

142

friend from different cultures and background and  
this is all because of the Queens library. I missed  
so much progress that the library offered me as a  
part time teacher assistant. Then I worked as a  
part time case managers where I had the chance help  
a lot of immigrants like me and respond to their  
different needs. After that I became a full time  
teacher assistant and then in less than one year  
go... promoted again and became a licensed  
specialist. I am also happy to report that I have  
begun applying to graduate school so I... so that I  
can get my master degree to teaching English as a  
second language with aid and support with... from the  
Queens library. The library is not only for  
immigrants. It's for everybody. For example, people  
who weren't able to complete their high school for  
whatever reason the library offers two ways to  
receive a high school equivalency degree. The first  
one is a task... calling task which... which meaning  
test... program. It was calling... GED and the also  
NEDP it's meaning that National Extended Diploma  
Programs. This programs help individual receive  
their high school diploma by offering courses  
several time a month and in different language. We

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

143

1  
2 help students gain the necessary tools they need to  
3 succeed in their... in this country. I am so proud to  
4 be a member of the Queens library family. I hope  
5 that you understand that impacts... impacts that the  
6 library has on communities and in the people them  
7 like me. I and a million of New Yorkers need city  
8 hall to keep investing in the library so that they  
9 may continue to given... to give not only immigrants  
10 but everyone in the city the service they deserve.  
11 There is no other institutions that has such a  
12 different and a profound impact on the lives of the  
13 people they touch. Thank you so much.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

15 Which library did you go to?

16 MONA: Queens Library of Long Island  
17 City.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Long Island  
19 City as well?

20 MONA: Yeah.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great.

22 CORINA YANEZ: Oh sorry. Hello. Thank  
23 you Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer and thank you  
24 for holding this Committee. My name is Corina  
25 Yanez. I'm still the President, I was here last

year, still the President of the Friends of  
Richmond Hill Library, Queens Library. And as you  
had said and some of the speaker said earlier the  
capital needs are... are great for the library system  
overall. They are many libraries that have yet to  
see... receive renovations as well as my branch. And  
that is... you know we can't have most... you know the  
21<sup>st</sup> century libraries if we don't have you know  
the electrical outlets, the you know lighting and  
you know and all that tech... because technology  
runs... you know needs energy. And so one of my main  
concerns is that DDC is... take... takes a long time  
with the process. And if DDC has an allocated  
specific staff to work on just libraries maybe the  
process can run a lot quicker. We're expected to be  
receiving library renovations. We're in the process  
with DDC. And my biggest concern is that we're  
going to be like Kew Garden Hills is. From a  
newspaper article we were... we're going to be closed  
for 14 months. We had two construction meetings  
with Queens Library and they gave us a broad  
overview, not a actual specific breakdown budget of  
like what is going to cost what. And you know we  
feel like 14 months for a library closure for the



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

145

Cue Gardens [sp?] and Richmond Hill Community is  
way too long. For the past ten years, central  
branch has been in renovation after renovation  
after renovation and it's been open. There's no  
reason why our library for some extended amount of  
time maybe close to like six months like Ozone Park  
is going to be for a specific you know branch  
renovation. And what they're providing, going to be  
providing us is trailers. For 14 months that is way  
too long to be in trailers. And we have a lot of  
children and seniors who... and especially immigrants  
who use our new... you know the... the new classes that  
we're providing now to be closer that amount...  
period of time is... is unacceptable and we would  
like to see a specific draft and proposal and  
design of what is going to be coming to our  
library. And we have yet to see that. And so we  
def... I definitely do feel like DDC needs to be more  
transparent on what is the process and be...  
communicate with the... the friends groups because  
we're like the front line base for the community to  
know what's going on. And... anything else I'm going  
to say? No, I just feel like that's one of our main

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

146

concerns and I'll give up my time for other people  
who might have something else to say.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You're now my  
favorite person of the day for closing early and  
giving your time to someone else. And trust me  
someone else will take it.

CORINA YANEZ: Oh go ahead, right, go  
right ahead. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I want to thank  
all of you. And... and I was expecting a lot of  
things for the Friends of Richmond Hill but like a  
shot at DDC that came out of nowhere. But I... I bet  
a lot of people in the audience were kind of  
shaking their head yeah I sort of know that story.  
We'll definitely talk to the folks at the Queens  
library and obviously we want that work to happen  
and obviously all of us want to minimize the  
disruption to the community and obviously any time  
a library closes for renovations and... and the  
trailers are needed. I know that's... that's a really  
difficult thing and I knew that when I worked at  
the library and I certainly still know that now.  
But thank you for being the president of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

147

Friends of the Richmond Hill Library. Are you  
running for reelection?

CORINA YANEZ: We have to schedule it.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well I guess if  
you don't schedule it you're still the president  
right? So...

CORINA YANEZ: Yeah. That... that is true.  
Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, just a  
little advice... but anyway...

CORINA YANEZ: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So thank you  
very much for that and we will call...

CORINA YANEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...the cultural...  
some of the cultural institutions group members;  
Thelma Golden representing the Student Museum of  
Harlem and... Anne Dennin New York City Arts  
Coalition, Sheila Lewendowski from the Chocolate  
Factory, and Carl Goodman from the Museum of Moving  
Image. And I know that we were just handed some of  
the copies of your magazine Poppy. So thank you so  
much for that. And this is very special and... and  
your journey and... and the story you shared is... is

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

148

very meaningful to me and.. and to everyone here. So  
thank you very much.

THELMA GOLDEN: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thelma you're  
up.

THELMA GOLDEN: I am.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you so  
much.

THELMA GOLDEN: Good morning Chair Van  
Bramer and members of the Cultural Affairs,  
Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations  
Committee. My name is Thelma Golden. I'm the  
Director and Chief Curator of the Studio Museum in  
Harlem. I am also the chair of the Cultural  
Institutions Group; a coalition of 33 arts and  
culture organizations each of whom provide crucial  
programs and services to New York City residents.  
Our coalition is composed of an incredibly wide  
range of disciplines. Our member institutions  
include historical societies, theatres, concert  
halls, performing arts centers, botanic gardens and  
zoos, and museums. Each of these organizations work  
to provide accessible, educational, and culturally  
relevant services that both reflect and help

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

149

promote the vitality of New York City's diverse  
populations. On behalf of each of these  
organizations, their respective boards, their  
staffs, and the nearly 150 million visitors they  
serve each year I would like to express our deep  
gratitude for the city council's continued support  
of our... for arts and culture. I would also like to  
give special thanks to the Department of Cultural  
Affairs for continuing to excel in its mission to  
promote and advocate for quality arts programming.  
This agency also continues to articulate the  
contribution made by the cultural community to the  
city's economic vitality. And for its sustained  
advocacy we are eternally grateful. I'm thrilled  
that working with DCLA in calendar year 2015 we  
welcomed over 250,000 new IDNYC memberships. And  
that to date brings the total membership to 340,000  
free memberships through that... this program. This  
year I am so proud that through collaboration with  
cultural partners across all five boroughs we have  
launched an unprecedented campaign entitled  
Inspired by NYC Culture. I say unprecedented  
because this campaign represents a historic  
partnership between members of the cultural

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

150

institutions group organizations and organizations  
who receive funding from the cultural development  
fund, arts advocates, educators, artists, and  
individuals from nearly every corner of New York's  
cultural sector. All of our partners are working  
tirelessly to demonstrate the central importance of  
arts and culture to the life of this city and its  
residents. Our campaign goal is clear. We are  
advocating for an increase of 40 million dollars to  
the budget of the Department of Cultural Affairs to  
support art and culture citywide. This increase in  
funding would support the cultural community's  
continued effort to promote and enhance key  
priorities of the city and its many diverse  
communities. These priorities include augmenting  
educational opportunities for city school age  
children by increasing access to dynamic cultural  
programs, strengthening the city's civic life by  
providing welcoming spaces for all New Yorkers to  
reflect, engage, and debate crucial questions which  
shape all of our lives. Supporting workforce  
development by employing full and part time staff  
from the very communities that have given birth to  
so many of our organizations. And while we have an

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

151

1  
2 incredible amount of data that demonstrates the  
3 social and economic significance of this war  
4 inspired by NYC culture is a campaign which will  
5 communicate our impact by using one of the cultural  
6 community's most reliable and trusted tool; story  
7 telling. My colleagues from the cultural sector are  
8 excited to present some of their programs and  
9 stories to your... today. Our campaign's aim is to  
10 increase the city's support for our organizations,  
11 their programs, and millions of visitors but also  
12 just importantly to show the depth of commitment to  
13 continue to serve New York City's children,  
14 families, communities, neighborhoods through the  
15 art and culture. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
17 much Thelma.

18 SHEILA LEWENDOWSKI: This is new. Good  
19 afternoon and thank you Council Majority Leader and  
20 Chairman Jimmy Van Bramer, my council member as  
21 well, members of the committee for holding this  
22 hearing and giving me the opportunity to testify. I  
23 am Sheila Lewendowski, founder and executive  
24 director of the Chocolate Factory Theatre, a non-  
25 profit award winning incubator for experimental

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

152

performance in Long Island City Queens. I'm going  
to read which you know I normally don't do but I  
got some really important points to make. The  
Chocolate Factory supports individual artists each  
year to create performances to premiere at our  
venue by providing commissions of 5,000 to 15,000  
to nine to 10 lead artists, this is every year. We  
pay the lead artists leading up to the premiere and  
during the time the show is run salaries, weekly  
salaries which also provides them with worker's  
comp, disability, and unemployment insurance, as  
well as FICA match. We subsidize all tickets for  
the public with funds from DCA and private sources  
to just \$18.00 when the cost is really about 160 to  
180 dollars per seat. We employ 10 to 20 support  
staff throughout the year to work with the artists  
on their shows. We do this with four full time  
employees and five year around part time employees  
for the budget of just about 700,000. 10 percent of  
our budget goes to facilities, 50 percent of our  
budget to payrolls and commissions, eight percent  
of our income is all it is that comes from DCA and  
is awarded through the panel process which I  
support, eight percent in 2016 will come from box



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

153

office, 50 percent from foundations. I sit here today with my colleagues and work in my community every day fighting for the rights of artists and culture to be elevated to a more just place. The work toward the city's first cultural plan is great. Thank you. It's going to be awesome. But it's not enough. Point two percent of the city's operating budget is not enough. You're asking for a 40-million-dollar increase and I have to add that I struggled with the word asking. I wanted to say imploring, demanding, or something stronger because I believe that it is that important. In the same way we are demanding new schools in my community, schools that we need but I will stick with asking. I'm asking for an increase so that the children in those schools grow up with city.. in a city with art. I've included in my packet pictures from a few of the thousands of refrigerator galleries, the dot households around the city and the country. Every parent applauds their child's creativity but those children need something to aspire to. Maybe one day their work will be at MOMA or at the Chocolate Factory or the public theatre. I've also included pages of comments from neighbors, friends, and

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

154

peers not able to... not able to be here today. There  
are photos of artwork from homes and working  
studio. That is what makes New York City vibrant  
and that is what increased funding will support.  
About 15 years ago I speaking with elected official  
in New York City about the importance of public  
funding for the arts and that person said to me;  
why fund the arts, artists will do it anyway. I  
know that you don't feel that way and this  
committee does not. So I sit here with my  
colleagues and ask for a 40-million-dollar increase  
so we can keep this city vibrant.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much Sheila. And you can demand. And... and we should  
all fight for what we believe in so I appreciate  
that. Carl.

CARL GOODMAN: Thank you Majority Leader  
Van Bramer, members of the committee, the entire  
city council for all of the support you've given us  
that has helped establish New York City as the  
cultural capital of the world. I am Carl Goodman,  
Director of the Museum of the Moving Image in  
Astoria, Long Island City, Queens, your district. I  
strongly support the request for 40 million dollars

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

155

increase to DCA to fund cultural organizations  
throughout New York City. I amend that, I demand it  
too. There are thousands of us. The... the funds this  
year would go toward... would be split between the  
program groups and the CIGs of which we are one.  
But what I... we hope to do is illustrate the  
collaboration, the community that exists out there,  
the ecology that combines and brings together these  
two groups whereas perhaps the government in the  
way we're... we're... we're described might think you  
know make... encourage people to think of us as  
separate. So at the museum we're dedicated to  
advancing and understanding the appreciation of  
film television and digital media. We're in a city  
owned building on city owned land. Funding from the  
city mostly goes toward operating this city owned  
asset. We also put our own money into this of  
course. We, like our colleagues, generate a lot of  
money for the city, tax revenue. We're a central  
part of the rapid economic growth in Queens. In the  
past we have been named one of the five best  
museums in the country for families by travel and  
leisure, the coolest museum ever by Con Edison  
traveler, and one of the top ten attractions in New

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

156

York city by US... USA Today. And that's all very  
nice but it's only a means toward an end because  
our real mission, what excites us, drives us, and  
gives us our unique character is that we're in  
business to provide cultural and educational  
services to diverse people of New York City and  
most specifically underserved populations. We do so  
through the development and leadership of  
partnerships with city agencies, community based  
organizations, artists, and New York City cultural  
organizations of all shapes and sizes. Our school  
programs serve 30,000 public school students a year  
or pilot organizations for the chancellor's team  
Thursday's initiative... middle schoolers to hang out  
at the museum. We're a partner in the mayor's CS  
for All STEM initiative where we provide teacher  
training and how to use moving image media to build  
skills in science, technology, engineering, and  
math. This connection between the arts and science  
is also echoed in our tech themed after school  
programs many funded by the council's CASA  
initiative. Thank you so much for that. And we're  
involved in the council at Arts as a Catalyst for  
Change, gun violence, anti-gun-violence after

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

157

school program initiated by Council Member Laurie  
Cumbo with allocations to the museum by Majority  
Leader Van Bramer. So we have developed much of...  
multiple touch points also with the residents of  
the NYCHA houses, especially Queens Bridge and  
Ravens Wood with the organization of Urban Upbound,  
on site screening programs with filmmakers in  
partnership with the Jacob Riis Settlement, if  
anyone's heard of W. Kamau Bell, he'll be coming to  
the... the facility to show his latest film about  
inequality, United Shades of America, it's on CNN.  
It's led to all these great things. The police  
liaison to the community is now going to provide  
busses to get some people, his name is Darrel  
Johnson, he's awesome. And so we're doing all of  
these things but it's really important to  
understand the bell of opportunity is ringing, that  
all of this innovation, creative thinking, and all  
of that hard work and success comes from the minds  
and hearts of our staff and the same is true for  
all my colleagues here. We need you to help us hold  
up our side of the equation. Support will enable us  
to fully fund our operations, hire more security  
staff, unfree certain key positions, meet the

1  
2 incredible demand for our programs, and develop new  
3 programming going forward. I'm not here to ask for  
4 more funding just for the museum. What we want and  
5 need is a field wide increase of 40 million in  
6 funding. This will have a catalytic effect on the  
7 cultural ecology of New York unlocking the power of  
8 our organizations to innovate and inspire and to  
9 serve as an engine of cultural, academic, and  
10 economic advancement, not to mention lifting the  
11 spirits of all New Yorkers in ways that only the  
12 arts and culture can. Thank you for your time.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
14 much Carl for... for two things. One I was so  
15 impressed with the... the bell of opportunity that I  
16 went back to see if that was actually in your  
17 written testimony or... or did you adlib that, I'm  
18 not sure which is more impressive but... but the  
19 adlib was great.

20 CARL GOODMAN: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And also the  
22 fact that Officer Johnson is a shoutout here.  
23 Obviously I know and work with him very well but  
24 thrilled that... at all the work that you're doing  
25 and that... and that Officer Johnson would get a

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

159

mention in this... hearing is... is something we'll be  
sure to tell him.

CARL GOODMAN: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Anne.

ANNE DENNIN: [off mic] Thank you... [on  
mic] Van Bramer. There much better. I'm Anne  
Dennin, Co-chair of the New York City Arts  
Coalition. The coalition is a membership  
organization comprised of cultural groups from all  
five boroughs including both CIGs and program  
groups working in all disciplines. Its mission is  
to advocate for arts and cultural policy on the  
city and state level. We do not take any... solicit  
or take any government funding for the advocacy  
efforts we do. For the second year as some have  
pointed out and precedent-ly the CIG's cultural  
advocacy groups and... groups across the city have  
been... been meeting regularly to come to consensus  
on initiatives and fundings for culture in our  
city. We've learned a great deal from the... this  
united effort and we're happy to see it expanded  
with the citywide campaign to involve all New  
Yorkers entitled Inspired by New York City Culture.  
Others are going to talk about some of the details

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

160

so I won't. We recognize the importance of the  
cultural cities who are sectors to our city and all  
its citizens from the youngest to the oldest its  
ability to strengthen all of our communities  
fiscally and spiritually with our colleagues. We're  
asking for an increase to the mayor's preliminary  
budget of 40 million dollars to be divided equally  
between the CIGs and the cultural development fund.  
The CDS is a program probably most known by  
individual arts organizations. It's where they go  
for their competitive grants. As you pointed out it  
was first funded in 2008 as the panel processed  
with 30 million dollars. It also supports the local  
arts council which offer re-grants to individual  
artists and even smaller organizations. For the CDS  
an increase of 20 million dollars would offer an  
opportunity for more groups to receive funding and  
those that are seriously underfunded to receive  
greater funding. Right now approximately 900 groups  
get funding. According to the CDP there are about  
15 hundred arts groups in the city. So you can see  
the gap. If that fund was increased there could be  
the opportunity to spread that money around a  
little farther. An increase of 20 million dollars



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

161

to the CIGs will offer much needed resources to  
support and enhance their valuable work throughout  
the city as they provide lifelong educational... and  
other opportunities for all New Yorkers. I'd be  
pleased to be of assistance and answer any  
questions. I finished. That's amazing.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Perfect, Anne,  
just perfect.

ANNE DENNIN: Never done it before.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well I just  
want to say... needless to say I am a big supporter  
of the campaign but it's great to see everyone  
working together in the united front. In fact, this  
panel with two members of the CIG community and two  
members of the... the brother cultural community and  
certainly Sheila being in the CDF panel process and  
a recipient. It's... it's... it's our time and I think  
we have to see something really good and meaningful  
and big happen this year for all of you. And Anne  
I... I am... I like that you made a lot of the points  
that I asked the commissioner about. And so I think  
we're all speaking with one voice. And I think when  
we do that and we... and we advocate forcefully we  
have a... a good shot at succeeding. So you have all

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

162

of my support and I thank all of you for everything  
that you do for the city of New York. Thank you so  
much. And we have a panel from the New York Public  
Library. Now I have six names from the New York  
Public Library. And we'll see how we can bring the  
panel together. Jane Addison from the Mosholu  
Branch. I want to say that's Caroline Schill from  
the Aguilar Library, oh wait there's Caroline  
Schill, I have two of her, Caroline Schill.  
Lorraine Ruiz, Elsa Horroda, and Walter Scott. If  
the New York Public Library folks... and Commissioner  
Finkelpearl did not get enough of the testimony  
before. He's just hanging out. I love it. So we'll  
start wherever you want to start and go down the...  
the line. Yes, you want to make sure you have a  
proper big chair. Yes. Why not? Then we'll just go  
down the line. Or not...

WALTER SCOTT: Okay. Thank you to  
Speaker...

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I... yes let's do  
that.

WALTER SCOTT: Okay thank you Mr.  
Speaker. My name is Walter Scott and I am the  
Senior Librarian at the Faith Chester Library. I'm

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

163

one of the librarians that was hired in the  
increased revenues. I thought that you would... [off  
mic] like to know what you're getting for your  
money. Since I've been at Faith Chester we've been  
able to increase adult programming. We do a variety  
of different programs, teen, young programs. [on  
mic] think it's on. We have a very successful  
genealogy program. People seem to love that. We  
also have programs geared towards seniors on this...  
this Friday I'm doing a program called how to  
become a memory master. So we've been trying to  
engage populations that in the past were not  
neglected but maybe underserved. At the same time  
that I was hired children's librarian Ariana  
Gonzalez [sp?] was also hired and she has been  
amazingly... amazingly involved in bringing our  
children back into the library for story times,  
school visits. So we're... I'm extremely grateful for  
all your work in getting the funding increased and  
restored. As somebody who's lived in this city all  
my life I know what a big fight that was and will  
continue to be. And I'm here today to thank you for  
that and say how grateful I am and to earn my  
orange shirt. Thank you.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

164

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much. We're grateful to you and I think you earn  
your orange shirt every day. You go to work and  
help the people of the city of New York so thank  
you very much.

WALTER SCOTT: Thank you.

CAROLYN: Good afternoon. My name is  
Carolyn Shill. I'm from the New York Public  
Library. I'm the branch manager at the Aguilar  
Library in East Harlem. And I'm joined today by  
Valerie Garcia. She is our children's librarian at  
the branch and she has been the sole children's  
librarian there for 13 years. I'm here today to  
just speak specifically about early literacy and  
its critical role within our community. For years  
Valarie was the sole children's librarian at the  
branch and the library was struggling to meet the  
needs of the community. Valerie worked relentlessly  
to... to connect the children with the materials,  
resources, and education that they need to succeed.  
She designed and developed programs to support the  
schools and to inspire students to learn. Despite  
its small staff size Aguilar Library has one of the  
highest numbers of school partnerships and programs

1 throughout the city. And yet it simply wasn't  
2 enough. We were missing a critical demographic and  
3 a key component to ensuring the education success  
4 of the children within the community. There was a  
5 gap between what we knew the community needed and  
6 what we were able to provide. We weren't reaching  
7 the youngest children who needed it most. Science  
8 tells us that by age two we can already predict  
9 third grade reading scores. Many of the problems  
10 that we see in elementary and middle schools, high  
11 schools, they have their roots in infancy, the part  
12 of the brain that controls language and  
13 communication has its largest growth spurt during a  
14 child's first four years. Brain architecture is  
15 built from the bottom up. Like a house, it needs a  
16 strong foundation. Research has shown that asking  
17 elementary and high school students to fix problems  
18 that are rooted in infancy is not the most  
19 effective use of resources. We need to address the  
20 problem at its root. We need to ensure that our  
21 city's children are entering schools with the  
22 skills they need to succeed. And a library's early  
23 literacy initiative addresses this need head on.  
24 Because of increased city funding we were able to  
25

hire another children's library to be our early literacy specialist and our branch to be a family literacy site. A large component of early literacy and building strong brain architecture in babies is ensuring that parents are empowered to be their child's first teacher. If you want your child to be a good reader when do you start putting that effort in? And the answer is; at birth. And I don't know if you've... if you've ever tried to read a book to a newborn baby but if you don't know what you're doing or why it can feel like a ridiculous activity. And like reading a book to a baby there are a lot of many simple things that parents can be doing with their children to build healthy brains. And so our early literacy programs teach parents not just what they need to be doing but how to do it and why. We offer early literacy workshops and enhanced story time. During our enhanced story times we not only engage directly with the children but we use the program as an opportunity to demonstrate and explain to caregivers different tips and activities that they can do outside the library to help their children succeed. After the story time both Liz and Valarie can be seen helping

the parents find appropriate books for their  
children. Similar to how reading a book to a baby  
can feel intimidating choosing the right book for  
your child is not always straight forward. Knowing  
that a baby benefits from sturdy books with high  
contrast books or that a beginning reader needs a  
book with a lot of white space and a certain amount  
of words are just some of the particulars that  
Valerie and Liz and all of our children's librarian  
throughout the city take into consideration when  
helping patrons find the materials that they need.  
So I know I'm out of time but I just would like to  
throw in there that another part of our early  
literacy initiative is supporting the pre-schools  
and the daycares. And within our service area alone  
there are 44 preschools and 99 licensed daycares  
that Valarie and Liz are working to connect with.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Now are... are  
you one of the new hire-ees [phonetic] as well?

CAROLINE SCHILL: I am, yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Terrific.  
Congratulations. How long are you with the NYPL?

CAROLINE SCHILL: I've been here for  
about six weeks.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

168

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Six weeks?

CAROLINE SCHILL: Six weeks.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wow. That's very impressive. And you got... you got a shoutout for being so thorough and well spoken after... after six weeks. That's amazing. Thank you. It's really good to... to have all of you here. And in fact for us to see what some of the work has produced which is amazing librarianship. So thank you very much.

CAROLINE SCHILL: Thank you.

LORRAINE RUIZ: Good afternoon Chair Van Bramer and all council members here this afternoon. My name is Lorraine Ruiz, the library manager of the Saint George Library Center at the New York Public Library. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. We appreciate the opportunity to testify regarding the impact that the fiscal year 2016 budget increase has had on our branch. The Saint George Library is one of the Staten Island's busiest branches managing over 125,000 businesses annually. Without proximity to public transportation and location on a north post of the island our library serves a broad and diverse population. The needs of our branch are as



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

169

varied as those of our patrons. At Saint George we offer early childhood literacy programming, a tech connect lab and classes, young adult programming, and ESOL to name a few. Last fiscal year we had over 31,000 program attendees which is further confirmation of the demand in our communities for comprehensive programming. As New York public library president Tony Marx highlighted with a further investment in libraries we'll continue to promote digital equity across the city. In addition to extending the hotspot program and increasing coding seats at our branches our... our daily tech classes and general availability of free Wi-Fi at all our branches is not to be undervalued. These are all powerful tools to close the digital divide. At my branch at Saint George we offer an array of tech support through our tech connect classes. Our patrons have varying levels of needs ranging from basic computer classes such as micro... Microsoft word and excel for beginners to job preparation like resume writing workshops and teaching them how to build their own websites generally for small businesses. We have even managed to continue to reinvent our programs as we see needs and demands

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

170

change within our community. For example, this past fall we offered a ten week course on coding for our young adults on Saturdays. And it was extremely well attended which we all know can be difficult when targeting young adults. We're constantly working tirelessly to enhance our classes to meet the needs of our growing community. With additional funding we would be able to expand our computer instruction classes which will give many of our patrons opportunity to attend, learn, and put into practice the knowledge they've gained during our class sessions. The expansion of programming will also assist patrons developing computer... computer skills and give them the advantage they need to advance in their existing job or obtain a job in their ever growing job market. Once again thank you for letting me testify and orange shirt, 24 years.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: 24 years?

LORRAINE RUIZ: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's amazing. Thank you so much. I appreciate all of your service and... and the fact that you came all the way from Staten Island. That's amazing.

LORRAINE RUIZ: And Jersey.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

171

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And Jersey.

LORRAINE RUIZ: And Jersey.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Amazing.

LORRAINE RUIZ: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you so  
much.

LORRAINE RUIZ: Thank you.

JANE ADDISON-AMOYAW: Good afternoon  
Chair Bramer and all the members of the council  
today. My name is Jane Addison-Amoyaw. I'm the  
Library Manager for the Muscle branch of the New  
York Public Library in the Bronx. Thank you for  
having me. I really appreciate the opportunity to  
testify regarding the emergency maintenance capital  
needs of our branch. Mosholu branch open its... open  
its doors to the public on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1954. It is  
one of the most heavily used branches in the Bronx.  
The usage of the branch by children, families,  
educators, and seniors continues to increase and at  
times... becomes very challenging. Last year alone  
over 187,000 users walked through our doors and  
attended over 1,000 programs that we offered. In  
council district 11 we have the most visits,  
program sessions, and highest program attendance.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

172

The diverse community that we serve relies on us for educational programs such as family literacy, out of school time, computer classes, and English as second language for... for speakers of other languages. Last year we were grateful to learn that the adopted budget included a huge increase for branches across the city. And we felt that we were finally being recognized for our tireless work and energy. As the communities we serve have changed we have also learn how to reinvent our programming and meet the needs of all of our New Yorkers. We have become a community hub for families, residents, and people from all over the world. When families need a safe place to send their kids after school our doors are wide open. When new parents want to learn best practices for early literacy or childhood education we provide comprehensive assistance. And when non-native English speakers need help with their language skills we enroll them in class. We are indeed the lifeblood. While we are always willing to open our doors as foot traffic increases since we can now serve more community members the need for capital maintenance has only become more crucial to our work. Many of our programs are held

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

173

1  
2 in the only community room we have which is located  
3 in the basement near the decaying ejector pump  
4 which has failed in recent years and caused major  
5 flooding. Our branch is really in need of critical  
6 upgrades. For example, if the pump fails again  
7 these programs that are extremely valuable to many  
8 residents, particularly families with children who  
9 cannot afford alternate means will be greatly  
10 disrupted. We are excited to start fresh and  
11 innovative programming for our community. But  
12 without additional capital funds we always run the  
13 risk of leaving our community without access and  
14 often times without hope. We look forward to  
15 working with the mayor and the city council to make  
16 sure our capital needs are met and we are able to  
17 continue to do the great work of serving New  
18 Yorkers. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to  
19 testify before the committee.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

21 ELSA HORRODA: Hi. Good afternoon  
22 everyone. My name is Elsa Horroda. I don't  
23 represent any organization in terms of... I'm not an  
24 employee of any of them. However, I do live in the  
25 community of Inwood up... in Manhattan west side. But

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

174

I'd just like to share with you that there's still  
a lot of New Yorkers out there still suffering and  
struggling on a daily basis. And I've been blessed  
enough to be part of the Inwood Library because in  
my community they're there for me. And for those  
that live around there as well. The library has  
become a very very important place for me  
personally because a person that had a very good  
job in... back in 2012 and had a very high position  
to have lost all that and then find yourself in a  
position that you have to find yourself looking for  
things that you need to do and even after you do  
certain things to improve yourself to maintain and  
keep up with the times it's become very difficult.  
I'm a living example of that. But by the grace of  
god I'm here and today I thank him and I give him  
all the glory that he has maintained and has kept  
me here today. But I also want to thank the library  
system because... because of them I've been able to  
utilize the system and have been able to take  
advantage of the programs and some of the things  
that they have offered. I want to thank you again  
for allowing this to happen. And I want you to also  
know that you need to keep investing money into

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

175

these places because there are still a lot of  
people that need these places. They need to go to  
those training classes to keep up with what's going  
on with the times. We have a lot of changes in our  
communities. We have a lot of changes in our time  
with the technology that is going on. And a lot of  
us don't have the money to pay for that. So the  
library's a great place that has offer that  
opportunity, like the other lady that was telling  
us from Bangladesh that she has been granted that  
opportunity and she was able to get out of that  
depression that she fell in. Well thank god for the  
almighty king up there. I... I can't say I was  
depressed but I do thank him that I have that  
resource that's right there, the Inwood Library,  
and also the Bronx Library Center has been one of  
those places that I also been able to go thanks to  
the extended hours that they have. And that's one  
of the things I'd like you to also please consider  
up town we need more hours in our library because  
sometimes you have to pick and choose whether hey  
do I have the money to go downtown to the library  
at 42<sup>nd</sup> street that's open until 11:00, I may not  
have that money to get on the train. So if it's in

1  
2 my community, if it's open and it's there for me I  
3 can use that time and I could go and do that little  
4 research and I could just go look for that extra  
5 job or use the internet that I don't really have at  
6 home. You understand? I don't even have a device to  
7 go and use it... the... the free Wi-Fi that's being  
8 offered at McDonald's or Dunkin' Donuts or even  
9 Starbucks. So again the library, it's a great place  
10 that needs to be there and continue to be open for  
11 people that are still in need of that. Thank you  
12 for your time.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
14 much. And I hope that the... I'm sure that the folks  
15 who work in the library systems take to heart the  
16 stories that you just shared and that Poppy shared  
17 earlier and... and know how important the work you  
18 all do is. So I thank you for sharing that story.  
19 It... it reminds me of why I loved working for a  
20 library for 11 years before I got elected and... and  
21 why I still fight for them. And I hope that all of  
22 the folks who work at the libraries internalize  
23 these stories as well and know that what they're  
24 doing is so so important. So thank you very much.  
25 Thank you all very very much for being here. And



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

177

now we're going to go to a cultural panel. Is  
Stephanie from the Brooklyn Children's Museum still  
here? David Freudenthal from Carnegie Hall, Lynn  
Kelly from Sung Harbor, John Calvelli from the  
Wildlife Conservation Society, and is someone from  
the Center for Arts Education here? I see... Lisa  
Rob, are you going to be doing the testimony for  
Center for Arts Education? Okay. And then I think  
we have some Brooklyn Public Library folks and  
Lauren Comito who are on the next panel just to be  
prepared. We look Brooklyn. Let me just say we love  
Brooklyn. However, you all want to go, whatever  
order you'd like. They're pointing at you Calvelli.

JOHN CALVELLI: Mr. Chairman I... I wanted  
to quote one of my favorite members of congress,  
Charlie Rangel. Everything has been said already  
but not by me. So with that in my mind I... I  
actually just wanted to come and I shared my... my  
written remarks but to say thank you to you and to  
the council because one of the things that's lost  
sometimes in these conversations is the last 20  
years of battles that we fought. You were there for  
us in... in years when we were looking at a potential  
58 percent, 66 percent cut in our funding. And

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

178

without the council there we would be in a very  
very difficult position. I serve on the board of  
NYC and company. And if you ask NYC and company 77  
percent of people that come to New York City come  
for a cultural experience. We are that cultural  
experience. If the city sees this as an economic  
benefit, then they should be supporting our  
cultural activities. If the city sees the value of  
our educational work, then they should be  
supporting cultural organizations. If the city sees  
that we are a real reason, there's such an  
incredible positive quality of life in the city of  
New York then they should be supporting culture. So  
with that I'm going to give back a minute and 56  
and say thank you for being our leader and for  
supporting the work that we're trying to do.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much John. I appreciate the historical context very  
much so. David.

DAVID FREUDENTHAL: Well the best I can  
do in following that is try to be shorter. I'm  
David Freudenthal from Carnegie Hall. I'm here on  
behalf of the 11 CIGs from Manhattan, in Manhattan.  
And I won't name them to save time. The... we are all

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

179

proud to be part of the... of the IDNYC initiative  
which has brought so many new... New Yorkers into our  
facilities and it's just been a fantastic  
partnership. I echo Mr. Calvelli's gratitude to you  
and to the council Mr. Majority Leader. Thank you  
for all you've done as a stalword [sp?] advocate  
for the... for the arts community. We are very very  
grateful. We could not do it without you. I just  
want to... the theme of my testimony which I'm not  
going to read is the partnerships that all the  
culturals have, a... it's not just the CIG or the... or  
the program or the non-CIG. We all are in this  
together doing many many kinds of things. And my...  
my written testimony reflects two projects;  
Carnegie Hall... somewhere project and... and Lincoln  
Center's borough linked program which... which are  
really about creating access between... between our  
institutions and lots of other cultural  
organizations, city agencies, human service  
agencies across the city. And with the council's  
support and the administration's support we look  
forward to doing even more of this in the year to  
come. My thanks.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

180

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much David. And as you know I am very familiar with  
those... those programs and incredibly supportive.

LISA ROBB: Thank you. Good afternoon  
Chair Van Bramer and members of the committee and  
the staff. It's very wonderful to have a chance to  
advocate today in front of you for more resources  
being directed to the budget of the department of  
cultural affairs. I'm Lisa Robb. I'm the Executive  
Director of the Center for Arts Education. We're  
celebrating our 20<sup>th</sup> birthday this year and we  
remain committed to ensuring all of New York City's  
1.1 million school children receive quality arts  
education as part of their well-rounded education.  
We're proud partners with the city council on  
several programs and grantees of DCLA in the  
Department of Education. Our work focuses in three  
areas. And I bring this up because along with being  
part of a wonderful coalition of Arts Cultural and  
Heritage non-profit organizations we're also here  
advocating for the needs of the 1.1 million school  
children and also the general public, all of whom  
benefit from these wise investments in arts culture  
and heritage activities. We support at the center

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

181

arts education and engagement programs for public  
students and their families. We support  
professional learning for school leadership,  
classroom teachers, and teaching artists. And we  
advocate as we are today for policies and  
increasing awareness and funding to support arts  
education. I'd like to start today by focusing on  
gratitude. First, I'd like to take a moment to say  
how easy it is to advocate for what we're talking  
about when we sit in this beautiful room, this is  
the second time I've had the honor of testifying.  
And if we need any other strong indication of the  
power and value of artistic practice and skill  
based learning in the arts it is all around us. As  
well we can have lots of provocative and  
interesting conversations about all that is around  
us. So art can really help us solve a lot of  
problems. So in gratitude we thank you at the city  
council for your leadership in support of arts and  
creative learning for students and the general  
public. And we thank you for your leadership on the  
creation of New York City's first cultural plan  
with a tremendous colossal opportunity this will be  
for the arts and cultural sector and residents of

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

182

New York City to help drive good governance, build stronger communities, address issues of inequity and lack of participation and strengthen already very successful programs that serve many millions. Between the libraries, the arts organizations, artists, the creative sector, the parks, the libraries, the public schools we are teaming with opportunity and practice in arts, culture, and heritage. We commend New York City's elected officials on their support for a cultural plan and bringing the sectors together along with the public when government policy and program funding positions are being planned and implemented. And reasonably if we think that we created the need without a cultural plan for more funding across many agencies and arts and culture that cultural plan will certainly drive... drive home that message to all of us. Given the area that CAE works in we want to give a double thank you for the 23 million dollars that increased funding in arts education. There have been real and demonstrative... demonstrable benefits from that and we know more money to DCLA will have us talking about lots of

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

183

big numbers and big improvements next year. Thank  
you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you for  
the double thank you. I like that.

LISA ROBB: Your welcome.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Lynn.

LYNN KELLY: Hi, good afternoon Council  
Member. I'm Lynn Kelly, Head of the Sung Harbor  
Cultural Center and Botanical Garden. But I'm here  
proudly in my role representing our home borough of  
Staten Island and our many wonderful cultural  
organizations. I also sit on the board of the New  
York City Economic Development Corporation and the  
New York City and company. So I fully understand  
and appreciate that amazing intersection of  
economic development, tourism, and culture. But  
today I want to tie that to people who are truly  
inspired by NYC culture and what that means for our  
borough of Staten Island. I have two artists in  
residence that participated in our program that are  
now employed by Snug Harbor; one as a visual arts  
director travelling from East New York every day  
and another as our marketing coordinator. They were  
inspired by New York City culture. There are

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

184

employees of the Staten Island Museum, Richmond  
Town, and some of our other organizations on Staten  
Island whose first visit to culture were at the  
Staten Island Children's Museum. They are inspired  
and working in New York City culture. In addition  
to that we have the benefit of maybe just being an  
island and always enjoying partnerships with one  
another, small organizations and large  
organizations. I personally remember feeding the  
giant scary drooling cow at the Staten Island Zoo  
and clearly I am inspired by New York City culture.  
I want to thank you...

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's quite a  
journey.

LYNN KELLY: Yes, it is. And speaking of  
journeys everyone knows that when you grow up on  
the island it is not unusual for you take it across  
the chin with jokes and puns and lord knows what  
else from having just being on Staten Island. But  
all your visits, and trips, and tweeting, and  
social media have really helped to raise our  
profile. I hear it. We get feedback. And we know  
our colleagues here and we appreciate it. And so



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

185

behalf... on behalf of the rock I want to say you've  
inspired New York City culture. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you Lynn.

And I... I'm very proud of the fact that I've gone  
out to Staten Island several times both for the  
culturals and on the library side as well as we  
went out with Council Member Rose last year during  
our library tour. And very much enjoyed the tour  
with Minority Leader Matteo a few weeks ago of that  
very zoo. And... and just because you shared your  
story, an outer borough kid, I went to the Queens  
Zoo a lot as a kid which is... which is an amazing  
place and I don't remember feeding you know  
horrible animals that were like drooling all over  
me. We love all animals, let me just say publically  
I love all animals, but... but that experience in the  
Queens museum of course which we went to on school  
trips were really foundational. And so thank you  
and I look forward to my next trip to Staten  
Island. Did I say I love Brooklyn?

STEPHANIE WITCHFORT: You did mention  
that. And so... thank you so much Chair Van Bramer.  
And thank you so much to the City Council. My name  
is Stephanie Wilchfort. I'm President and CEO of

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

186

Brooklyn Children's Museum here representing  
Brooklyn Cultural Institution. Brooklyn Children's  
Museum was founded 116 years ago in Crown Heights,  
Brooklyn. And we're a world class cultural  
institution but like many of our colleagues here  
today we are at core a community museum and a  
community cultural institution. And what does that  
really mean? That means that we have a commitment  
to access. More than 30 percent of visitors to  
Brooklyn cultural institutions, and that's over a  
million people come free of charge. Nearly 100,000  
people in Brooklyn have signed up for free  
memberships at our cultural institutions through  
IDNYC. It means that we have a commitment to  
providing cultural programs and arts programs for  
our local public schools. Brooklyn cultural  
institutions serve over 250,000 public school  
students annually and provide teacher professional  
development for 3,000 teachers annually. It means  
we have a commitment to using our local businesses.  
At Brooklyn Children's Museum for example we start  
every RFP for... with a call for Brooklyn based  
businesses and are in fact our café vendor is a  
Franklin Avenue based small business. I know a lot

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

187

of our colleagues share that commitment. It means that we are the first job for many of the young people in our communities. Each year 200 teens from Crown Heights, Bed-Stuy, Brownsville, and East Flatbush get their first job or paid internship at Brooklyn Children's Museum and thousands more are employed by other cultural institutions throughout Brooklyn. It means that we support our employees and their families by covering their health, dental, and vision at 100 percent. And at Brooklyn Children's Museum we provide 15 days of paid vacation time plus 12 days of sick leave in the first year of service. We support our employees at cultural institution and that needs to be supported. But most of all it means that we're a place where all of the city's people can come together for shared experiences. At a time of rapid change Brooklyn Children's Museum is where Crown Heights families find common purpose and see themselves as part of a shared citizenship. Community cultural institutions throughout the city of New York is where this is happening every single day. I'm here today representing my beloved borough of Brooklyn, New York City's most populous borough

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

188

and home to 175 arts and cultural organizations  
employing 10,000 people...

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Now you don't  
have to rub it in... most populous borough.

STEPHANIE WITCHFORT: Yeah most populous  
borough. ...and surveying over three million visitors  
annually to cultural institutions. But I'm also  
here representing the hundreds of CIG and program  
groups with budgets of less than five million  
dollars. Those of us who are small in budget but  
great in impact like BCM and some of our partners  
and neighbors such as Weeksville Society, Cumbe  
Center for African and Diaspora Dance, Haiti  
Cultural Exchange, Museum of Chinese and America,  
and Groundswell. Those of us who serve the outer  
boroughs and historically marginalize communities,  
those of us who have boards that represent our  
communities, not just our funders, those of us who  
do not receive big corporate sponsorships, we need  
greater public support to continue serving our  
communities. We hope that the city is committed to  
cultural equity in order to commit further to  
cultural equity the funding pie must grow. Thank  
you so much for allowing me to speak today. And

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

189

thank you so much for considering this request for  
support.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you for  
so passionately representing all of Brooklyn. And  
even though it's reportedly larger than Queens I  
still love it. And... and I want to say... and I... I  
think I've said this to you since our very first  
meeting and... and... and I have to say that's not  
unlike my first meeting with Lynn Kelly. You have  
such energy and passion and it's... it's really  
really so meaningful for someone who meets with  
lots of folks all the time to meet with folks who  
are so passionate about their work and their  
institutions. And that has an effect on me. So I  
love it and keep going and... and doing what you're  
doing. So thank you all for launching this  
amazingly organized and thoughtful campaign that I  
want to assure you everyone in the council and on  
the other side is talking about as well. Thank you  
very much. And because Brooklyn has so many people  
living in it we're going to go to the Brooklyn  
Public Library with Nicole Bryan, Jamie Kulakowski,  
Mark Daly, and Lauren Comito who is representing  
Urban Librarians Unite and though she works for the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

190

Queens Library I believe she's a Brooklynite so  
it's all good. And then we're going to have a  
cultural panel right after that with Lisa  
Declarico, Heather Woodfield, Jenny Loudise  
[phonetic], and David Johnston if they're all still  
here. And we'll add Jennifer Wright Cook to that...  
that five member panel as well. And this is the  
last library panel so make it really good.

NICOLE BRIAN MORRIS: I would like to  
thank the finance and cultural affairs, the  
council, and the library committees for allowing me  
to testify today. My name is Nicole Bryan and I'm  
one of the newly hired librarians at the New Lots  
branch of the Brooklyn Public Library thanks to the  
increase that BPL received in last year's city  
budget. I have been at this fine institution for  
the past seven months. In my current role as a  
senior children's librarian I work on a variety of  
projects at my branch. My primary responsibility is  
to coordinate and implement library services for  
children, preschool through sixth grade. In this  
position I have dedicated time, work, and effort to  
support these children. I develop and facilitate  
all arts and crafts programs, lead story times, and

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

191

visit classes at schools. And I also conduct  
outreach in the local community. Additionally, I am  
responsible for supervising children's areas by  
helping provide a quiet, safe, productive, and  
attractive environment by working... by working  
directly with the children and their caregivers.  
Also, I am the liaison for the New Lots branch by  
providing deposit collections and resources to the  
local shelters in the community. I'm excited that  
there has been an increase in the library hours.  
Because a new budget has allowed the services and  
the support of the staff to increase. The  
additional day not only gives the local community a  
sense of security in having a safe place to visit  
for their families but more patrons than ever are  
now active participants in our programs. Again  
thank you for the opportunity to testify and I  
encourage this committee to continue to invest in  
the development of funding for the public  
libraries. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much. You have a very thorough job description. You  
do a lot of things so thank you very much for all  
of that.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

192

MARK DALY: Hi, good afternoon. Thank  
you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Mark  
Daly. I am a resident of Brooklyn and a librarian  
at the Brooklyn Public Library. This week marks my  
one year anniversary working for the library. For  
the last six months thanks to the historic increase  
in funding I've been working at the Paerdegat  
Library which serves the neighborhoods of Flatlands  
and Canarsie. As you may know many of the residents  
there are immigrants from Haiti or elsewhere in the  
Caribbean. I am always excited when a visitor to  
the library tells me that they are a new arrival to  
the country because the Brooklyn Public Library has  
so much to offer them. Depending on the questions  
they ask me at the reference desk I may say  
something like oh, did you know the library offers  
classes to help you learn English, or I might say  
did you know the library has a workshop to help you  
apply for citizenship, or maybe if you need help  
writing a resume we have a workshop for that too.  
Sometimes after I have reeled off a long list of  
services the person will ask me shyly how much,  
what's the fee. I can see the anxiety behind the  
question in their eyes. What they're really asking



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

193

me is, can I afford this. At times like these it is  
one of the greatest pleasures in my professional  
life to be able to say it's free, no charge. I can  
get you a library card right now. Come, let's get  
started. Now I know the library services do come at  
a cost, a significant cost, and each year the city  
must decide where the money will come from and how  
it will be spent. So whether we are a council  
member in city hall or an immigrant in Canarsie we  
face the same question; how much, can we afford  
this. When I consider the many ways the library  
helps Brooklynites improve their lives; helps them  
look for work, learn the language, become a  
citizen, the question I ask is not can we afford to  
keep doing this but can we afford not to. Thank  
you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

JAMIE KULAKOWSKI: I'd like to thank the  
Cultural Affairs and the Libraries Committee, the  
members of the council for letting me testify  
before you today on behalf of the Brooklyn Public  
Library. My name is Jamie Kulakowski. I'm resident  
of Queens but I'm a new hire at BPL. I work at the  
Mill Basin Branch as an adult librarian. Before

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

194

that I was the head librarian at a small university  
library in Virginia as well as part of their public  
library system. But here I am in New York City  
which is the greatest city in the world. It's one  
of the richest cities in the country. And still our  
libraries are continually underfunded. And I,  
myself, owe a great debt to the advocates who came  
before me because without them I wouldn't have the  
position that I have today. And because I have this  
position in our branch, our patrons, and seeing an  
increase in programming for all ages. They've seen  
more personalized services. They've gotten more one  
on one attention. And speaking just for myself I've  
recently implemented an altered books workshop  
where we create these beautiful works of art out of  
little more than just discarded books. And our  
patrons travel the width of Brooklyn just to attend  
my one program. So instead of being overwhelmed and  
overworked with proper funding librarians can focus  
on innovation, on meeting more than just the very  
basic community needs. Community libraries are the  
pulse of their communities. And as such we should  
be and are at the forefront in granting access to  
cutting edge technologies. Every branch should be

1  
2 able to give patrons unrestricted access to the  
3 things that will help them become the great  
4 thinkers and doers of tomorrow such as 3-D  
5 printing, maker spaces, STEM programing, fine arts  
6 programming, early literacy programming. Librarians  
7 do so much and with proper funding we can just do  
8 so much more. I ask that the city consider  
9 increasing the library's budgets so that we can  
10 continue to help our patrons by giving them the  
11 tools that they need to feel empowered. Because  
12 when you invest in libraries you invest in people  
13 like me and people like us you invest in our  
14 communities at large and in our collective futures.  
15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
17 much. So a librarian who lives in Queens but works  
18 at the Brooklyn Public Library to a librarian who  
19 lives in Brooklyn that works for the Queens  
20 library.

21 LAUREN COMITO: Yes, hi. So I'm Lauren  
22 Comito. I'm chairman of the board of Urban  
23 Librarians Unite. And I'd like to say thank you so  
24 much for the opportunity to testify today. But I'd  
25 also like to thank you for all of the city

council's help in securing the additional 43  
million dollars that was restored last year. It's  
been a really long time since 2008. As I said  
earlier today my daughter's seven and I had just  
had her when I got my first layoff notice in 2008.  
But we're starting to get back. And last Saturday I  
was able to pick up a microphone and congratulate  
about 60 of the city's newest librarians at a party  
and incredibly competitive trivia competition. Yay!  
They're all fantastic, new, energetic, and they're  
looking for opportunities to make their libraries  
more amazing than they already are. The new funding  
allotted last fiscal year has given them the chance  
to start their librarian careers in one of the best  
cities for libraries in the country. I mean we have  
like 210 buildings to pick from. It's amazing. So  
what does this mean for the librarian profession in  
the city. It means we have fresh blood and new  
perspectives. It means we have people who are  
recent products of graduate schools of library  
science who are hopping in and you know keeping us  
fresh. I know I sit up a little straighter when the  
new kids are around because I don't want them to  
think I'm like lazy. And they give us some more

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

197

energy and they're giving us more capacity for programs that we didn't have before. It means that we have more time to spend helping people look for work and helping a kid find just the right book. And it means that we have more... more staff to hold story time and workshops and altered book workshops and give the library... the library... the city the library services it really deserves. But still funding for New York City's is... New York City libraries is below... 22 million dollars below 2008 levels and demand for services and programs keeps growing. Investing in libraries will provide an immediate injection of professionals around the front lines in communities throughout New York city and who have not felt the economic gains of the past several years. So we say onward. Let's keep the gains we've had in staff and hours and let's push forward for new capital over the gains we've made so that we can refresh and rebuild the library infrastructure we have embedded in the city. Let's commit to continuing six day service. And let's keep going for more. We can let the staff loose with time, resources, and capacity and see what

happens. I think it will be absolutely amazing.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much to the whole panel. And are the... I know Lauren before this, but are all of you new hires or... The three of you are new hires? So you participated in that... that trivial pursuit game situation? Yeah. Who won?

LAUREN COMITO: Oh god, who did win?

MARK DALY: Brooklyn and Queens tied for first.

LAUREN COMITO: Right.

MARK DALY: Queens won by half a point in the playoff round.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That is the right answer.

[laughter]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So thank you all very very much. And it'll be a fight all the way through the end of June but I know we'll all be working together to make sure it happens. So thank you all so very much. And we have a cultural panel coming up. And I see some other folks have joined us so I'm not sure... is Jenny Lewieda [sp?] still

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

199

here? They have someone testifying on behalf of... of  
Jenny, Lisa Declarico, Jennifer Wright-Cook. Oh  
there's Heather, Heather's here. Is Catherine Green  
here? Catherine why don't you join this panel. And  
David Johnston... so we have six chairs up there so  
we'll do six at a time. We have four more panels  
after this one. Catherine why don't you start us  
off. The...

CATHERINE GREEN: Thank you very much.  
Greetings Chairman Van Bramer and the members of  
the committee. My name is Catherine Green. I am the  
Executive Director and Founder of Arts East New  
York. We build... [clears throat] sorry. We serve the  
East New York community by building a cultural  
infrastructure in the East New York section of  
Brooklyn by providing access to affordability and  
high quality programing or our residents. We found  
that this is only possible by addressing social and  
economic challenges that our constituents face in  
the everyday life... in their everyday lives.  
Therefore, we utilize the arts as a nucleus that  
affects the various issues that hinder the growth  
of our beloved neighborhood. We focus on three key  
areas; economic development, health, environmental

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

200

sustainability, and community life and safety. I'm  
here today to join my colleagues within the  
cultural community to ask for the... a funding  
increase of 40 million dollars to... to the  
department of cultural affairs to be equally  
divided within... between the CIGs and CDF for grant  
making purposes. The new funds would help provide  
DCLA with fiscal capacity to increase funding for  
currently funded institutions and organizations  
including underfunded groups, the five borough arts  
councils which administer re-grants programs would  
serve individual artists and individual  
organizations and a wider and more diverse array of  
new grantees. These funds will also allow Arts East  
New York to expand our program model thus providing  
access and opportunities to more community members.  
Our current programming allows us to reach a  
variety of residents in several ways. Our summer  
outdoor performance event series provides access to  
free cultural performances such as Chinese Ribbon  
Dancing, Japanese Cycle Drumming, to South African  
Choir Ensembles, and dozens more of various  
cultural performances all for free and in the  
neighborhood of East New York. Artistic



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

201

performances that families would otherwise have to  
travel outside of the neighborhood and pay high  
fees in order to expose their children to these  
events are staged outside at our very own East New  
York farmers market where after the show the  
residents have the opportunity to shop with local  
gardeners. This not only helps families assist in  
the healthy eating practices but also circulates  
the local dollar by shopping with local farmers.  
Our... New Lots vendor market and Artist Incubators  
partnership with New York City Economic Development  
Corporation and Small Business Services provides  
opportunities to local entrepreneurs and artists  
alike with affordable storefront of affordable  
storefront in retail spaces that are made from  
recycled shipping containers. This project was an  
incredible... incredible economic development  
launching pad for East New York residents and  
serves... also serves as a cultural hub for residents  
to engage at one another in a neighborhood of space  
that just has not been provided before. We also  
hire locally and our tours are led by community  
youth bringing tourism dollars into the  
neighborhood that we love so dearly. Lastly our

1 education... educational component also provides  
2 education for community schools after school we  
3 host Saturday and summer programs... With proposed  
4 funding... with this increase in funding we look to  
5 increase these methods that can double the impact  
6 that we're making in the East New York Brooklyn  
7 Community, a place once identified with poverty,  
8 crime, deprivation, and resource... and deprivation.  
9 We can look to turn that... that... that identity into  
10 an oasis of opportunity for existing community  
11 members. I think you all today for this opportunity  
12 to speak and I appreciate all my colleagues and I'm  
13 looking forward to them creating a greater impact  
14 as well. Thank you very much.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
17 much Catherine. We're big fans of your work.  
18 Heather.

19 HEATHER LEVINE: Hello, I'm Heather  
20 Woodfield; Executive Director of One Percent for  
21 Culture and I'm practicing artist in New York City.  
22 I want to thank the council for the opportunity to  
23 testify on behalf of One Percent for Culture and  
24 our over 550 coalition partners which include  
25 cultural organizations, small businesses, and civic

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

203

and social service organizations throughout the  
five boroughs and in all 51 city council districts.  
I'm here today to join with members of the cultural  
community to ask for a funding increase of 40  
million dollar to the Department of Cultural  
Affairs to be divided equally between the Cultural  
Institutions Group and the Cultural Development  
Fund for Grant Making. I want to share with you a  
few reasons why we are inspired by New York City  
culture. We are inspired by NYC culture because  
it's accessible. There are over 15 hundred  
nonprofit cultural organizations in our city which  
attract over 148 million visitors each year. 79  
percent of whom attend for free and they offer over  
337,000 programs with a median admission price of  
\$7.50. Increased investments in arts and culture  
would increase access allowing even more city  
residents from diverse communities to experience,  
participate in, and create arts and culture. We are  
inspired by NYC culture because it provides  
lifelong educational opportunities. In 2005 there  
were over 56,000 partnerships between schools and  
cultural organizations covering 87 percent of New  
York City schools. Increased funding would help to

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

204

expand arts and cultural educational opportunities  
for New Yorkers of all ages. We are inspired by NYC  
culture because it creates jobs. Cultural  
organizations employ over 116,000 individuals  
including over 52,000 artists and provide workforce  
development opportunities offering over 88,000  
internships and volunteer opportunities. Increased  
funding would help to grow employment and workforce  
development. We are inspired by NYC culture so we  
urge you to increase funding for DCA by 40 million  
dollars to be divided evenly between the CIGs and  
CDF. Thank you for your time today and for your  
steadfast support of the non-profit cultural  
community. We look forward to continued  
collaboration between city government, cultural  
organizations and artists in order to better serve  
all New Yorkers.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much Heather. Lisa Declarico, first ever testimony  
at City Hall. Whoa!

LISA ROBB: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: The entire 40  
million rests on the next three minutes.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

205

LISA ROBB: Yes... [cross-talk] it. Thank  
you Councilman for the opportunity to speak today.  
I'm here to share my personal experience. I am  
currently a resident, an artist, and a business  
owner in an amazing neighborhood in Long Island  
City, Queens. I am a native New Yorker. I grew up  
in Staten Island in the 1980s in a neighborhood  
that had pretty limited access to arts and culture.  
And I had to travel far to experience that. And  
importantly to understand that there were other  
ways to live. And that there are other career  
opportunities that could be pursued even by a kid  
from a blue collar neighborhood in the suburbs like  
me. And I did that. I... I was able to pay for my own  
college education by attending a state university  
of New York in Manhattan and... and waited a lot of  
tables also. I... I earned degrees in art and in  
restoration. And I currently run a furniture and  
object conservation studio in Long Island City. I  
also cofounded a local restaurant with my partner  
and I'm an active artist. I... I... you know I actively  
make and show my own artwork. Through the last 20  
years I've lived in a lot of different  
neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Queens and I have

learned how important... how essential a vibrant art community is, not just for my own happiness but for my ability to pursue my career and my creative endeavors. I sacrificed space and a lot of comfort for the tremendous privilege of walking to world-class institutions like sculpture space, Chocolate Factory, PS1... Museum right in my neighborhood. And also very importantly where I have access to artists, to a concentration of artists' studios and independent creative businesses. Long Island City is a really excellent example of a neighborhood where the arts community leads. And it encourages its residents to be engaged and active citizens. And we are. We volunteer. We found art festivals. We found CSAs. We develop non-profits. We petition. We protest. We know our neighbors. We know our community board. And we know our elected officials. And we contribute our time and talents back into our city. Increased funding makes it possible for more New York neighborhoods to develop this kind of culture. And I believe that it is this culture that keeps New York City vibrant, diverse, innovative, and relevant to the future. Thank you.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

207

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That was perfect. And you... you came in on time. And thank you. And I just want to say I've obviously known you for a few years, very active in... in my district but I feel like I learned a lot about you in the last three minutes. And I'm really grateful that you... that you shared that and that you're here today. So thank you very much Lisa.

LISA ROBB: Thank you. I'm grateful for the opportunity Chair.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Next?

ANN MARIE LONSDALE: Hi, good afternoon. My name is Ann Marie Lonsdale. I'm the Director of Programs for the Alliance of Resident Theatres New York; the leading service and advocacy organization representing 370 non-profit theatre companies and professional affiliates in New York City. I want to thank Chairperson Van Bramer and the Committee on Cultural Affairs for allowing me to testify today. Art New York supports the NYC Inspires campaign and respectfully ask the city council for a 40-million-dollar increase in funding to the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs expense budget in fiscal year '17. Under the leadership of

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

208

Commissioner Finkelpearl the DCLA has embarked on several ambitious initiatives that have enabled the agency to identify dozens of community based artist driven organizations that are eligible for DCLA funding and the agency will need additional funding to support this broader cultural ecosystem which will be made up of both current grantees and first time awardees. At Art New York we think a lot about this ecosystem because more than 75 percent of our membership consists of small organizations with annual operating budgets below 500,000 dollars. These companies represent the most culturally diverse section of our membership. Though their budgets are small their ambitions are not. These companies are creating boundary-breaking work that impacts the face of the American theatre and serves hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers annually in all five boroughs. Though... though their operating budgets are modest these companies artists are using theatre to heal the wounds of refugees from Syria to empower young women and girls through writing and storytelling workshops, to expand the cannon of Latino theatre, to tell the stories of immigrants in Jackson Heights, to bring



professional theatre to Staten Island, to foster  
connections between young people and their elders  
to invite international artists to New York City to  
create dialogue, to increase visibility for Asian  
American playwrights and performers. These are but  
a few examples of the incredible work that is  
undertaken every day by New York City's nonprofit  
theatres. Our member companies are deeply grounded  
in their communities; a characteristic that not  
only helps them survive but thrive. These companies  
provide jobs and benefits to artists and arts  
administrators, education and services to their  
communities and astoundingly creative boundary  
pushing and exciting theatre to the residents of  
this city. But at Art New York we continue to ask  
ourselves how long these artist-led companies can  
survive without additional support to create  
programming and pay living wages to their artists.  
Our members face financial challenges like the  
rising cost of rehearsal and theatre space with  
ongoing resourcefulness and creativity but filling  
these budget gaps by raising ticket prices will  
alienate the very audiences they seek to serve. Art  
New York is grateful to the city council, the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

210

Manhattan Borough President, and the administration  
for their supportive Art organization, particularly  
our new theatre construction project on West 53<sup>rd</sup>  
Street and the city's support of so many of our  
member companies. We look forward to our ongoing  
work with the city to ensure that the non-profit  
theatre community continues to inspire future  
generation. And that's why we're here today to  
strongly voice our wholehearted support for a 40-  
million-dollar increase to the DCLA budget. Thank  
you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much. Jennifer.

JENNIFER WRIGHT-COOK Thank you. Thank  
you Chair Van Bramer and the Cultural Affairs  
Committee for the opportunity to testify. My name  
is Jennifer Wright-Cook. I'm the Executive Director  
of the FIELD, the FIELD is a 30-year-old art  
service organization dedicated to helping 11  
hundred New York performing and media artist  
companies and artists in all five boroughs thrive.  
The vast majority of our members are  
unincorporated. They're also the movers and shakers  
in the... artist that make this city thrive. And the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

211

vast majority of them do not receive any funding  
from DCLA but receive it rather through our  
programs and services and to through the borough  
arts councils. The support we receive from the DCLA  
is vital to our mission delivery. So thank you so  
much. I'm here today to join with other members of  
the cultural committee to as Sheila, to demand a  
funding increase of 40 million dollars to the... the  
DCLA's budget evenly split between the CIGs and the  
CDF. If you believe that every New Yorker deserves  
access to the arts you must say yes to 40 million  
dollar increase. If you believe that going to a  
museum, a dance concert, a play, or a concert  
should be affordable to all New Yorkers then you  
must say yes to 40. If you believe that being an  
artist in New York should not be limited to those  
who can afford to be an artist then you must say  
yes to 40. If you believe that job opportunities in  
the arts should be available to all New Yorkers  
then invest in our very own diversity pipeline  
project, our field leadership fund and say yes to  
40. If you believe in the arts then you must invest  
in the artistic process, not just the product, say  
yes to 40 and invest in experimentation, risk,

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

212

failure, and growth. If you believe in the arts and  
invest in the artists say yes to 40 and increase  
the borough arts council re-grants to individual  
artists and small companies, particularly the Bronx  
and Staten Island. If you believe that cultural  
diversity and equity are vital to New York's health  
and vibrancy, then you must say yes to 40. Let's  
put our money where our mouths are. The work of  
inclusion diversity and equity needs funding to be  
successful. Say yes to 40. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much and... and this is a serious question. Why  
specifically the Bronx and Staten Island?

JENNIFER WRIGHT-COOK The data I have  
from... from Bronx in particular from last year they  
had 300 funding requests totaling nearly one  
million dollars and they only had 144,000 from DCA  
for 56 recipients. That's just not enough to keep  
artists living and working the city. I don't have  
similar numbers for Staten Island but I can imagine  
it's as dismal.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay. I was  
just wondering if you... if you analyzed all five  
right and... and then came to that.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

213

JENNIFER WRIGHT-COOK Yeah, thanks.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: But I

appreciate it and your... your packet is the largest  
of anyone who's testified and very interesting  
stuff. And... and I appreciate you being here as  
always. Michael.

DAVID JOHNSON: I have been doing this  
for a number of years and I always end up following  
Jennifer Wright-Cook.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Is that so?

DAVID JOHNSON: It is. It's... this is  
like the third year in a row I believe. I'd like to  
thank Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer and the  
Cultural Affairs Committee for the opportunity to  
testify today. My name is David Johnson and I'm the  
Executive Director of Exploring the Metropolis  
since 1982, exploring the metropolis has focused on  
solving the workspace needs of New York City's  
performing artists. Currently we administer the ETM  
Con-Edison Composers Residency in its eight year.  
And the choreographer and composer residency in  
partnership with the Jamaica Center for Arts and  
Learning now in its second year. Since 2009 ETM has  
supported more than 45 composers, choreographers,

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

214

and performing artists providing them with more  
than 375,000 dollars' worth of no cost rehearsal  
space and cash support. In addition, ETM is  
provided more than 70,000 dollars worths... worth of  
support to NYC's nonprofit cultural and community  
centers to maximize their space usage and  
supportive more than 53 public programs for New  
York City Audiences. We are proud to partner with  
members of the city's cultural institutions group,  
Flushing Town Hall, the Jamaica Center for Arts and  
Learning, and the Queens Museum. I am here today to  
join with other member of the cultural community to  
ask, demand, a funding increase of 40 million  
dollars to the Department of Cultural Affairs to be  
equally divided between the CIGs and the cultural  
development fund. An increase in DCA funding would  
allow us to expand opportunities for artists and  
audiences in the communities we're serving like  
Flushing, Downtown Brooklyn, Jamaica, and upper  
Manhattan. It would allow us to expand into other  
communities like the Rockaways where we are  
planning a partnership with the Rockaway Waterfront  
Alliance for a composer's residency in their newly  
renovated space. Cultural organizations and artists

are essential to our economy. And they contribute to the city's cultural vibrancy which serves all our citizens. It is vital that the city continue to support the full scope of nonprofit culture. We ask for a 40 million dollar increase in funding to the Department of Cultural Affairs and thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much. And you and I met for the first time a decade or so ago at the Queens library so I apologize for calling you Michael because it's... there's like a sea of names going on in my head right now but obviously I know you and your work long before I became a council member when you were in my office at the Queens library all those years ago. So thank you to the entire panel for your work, for your time and you know we're going to do everything we can to get the 40. Because I believe all those things that you said Jennifer. Thank you very much.

JENNIFER WRIGHT-COOK I know you do.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Now I... I know we have some young people here right, from Ballet Tech. So this panel is excused if you'd like to... But we have some special young people who are here.

So Joe Gregori and then we have Julianne  
Gwenfentora which I know I can say that name well,  
and then Noah I want to say De Necochea, is that  
pretty good Noah? Awesome. Beautiful names and we  
will hear from Ballet Tech.

JOE GREGORI: Thank you Chairman Van  
Bramer. And thank you to the council for allowing  
us to testify today. I'm Joe Gregori and I am the  
Administrative Director at Ballet Tech. Ballet Tech  
is a tuition free dance school that auditions  
public elementary school students in all five  
boroughs. Each year we go into about 200 public  
elementary schools across the city and audition  
approximately 30,000 kids looking for those who  
demonstrate the greatest potential to excel as  
dancers. Those who excel in the auditions are  
offered placement in our entirely tuition free,  
pre-professional classical dance program. And  
because of our extensive audition process we find  
children with tremendous dancing potential. And  
many of those students wouldn't have otherwise had  
known that they had potential to be dancers or  
certainly have had access to the kinds of training  
that they receive at Ballet Tech. Dance training is



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

217

rigorous. Our advanced students take upwards of 12  
dance classes a week in addition to having some  
wonderful performance opportunities. Their  
experience at Ballet Tech certainly prepares them  
should they pursue a career as a dancer. But it  
also gives them tools for success in any field.  
They develop self-discipline, creativity, and  
confidence. And they say don't share a stage with  
kids but I brought two of our students with us.  
Maybe Noah you'd like to go ahead and introduce  
yourself first.

NOAH DE NECOCHEA: Hi, my name Noah De  
Necochea. I'm in fifth grade and I'm 10 years old.  
I love Ballet Tech. And it all started when I was  
in third grade and I had an audition and I got  
chosen. And every year... and every week I have a  
class and I've been getting better and better and  
better and I love it. And now I'm here and I've  
been doing it for two and a half years. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much Noah.

JULIENE: Hi, my name is Julienne  
Gwenfentora. I'm 13 years old and I'm in eighth  
grade. And like Noah back in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Ballet Tech

1  
2 came to my public school in Queens and they  
3 auditioned us and now I continue my dance training  
4 at Ballet Tech. And in the past five years we've  
5 been learning many skills not only in dance but  
6 also in life. We've been learning how to solve  
7 problems and definitely disciplined. But also dance  
8 is very important to me not because it's so like  
9 strict and so perfect but we all have our own  
10 reasons why we like to dance and we all have our  
11 own way of dancing which is very unique to each  
12 person. Also we have performing opportunities at  
13 the end of the year and that's a really exciting  
14 experience. And yeah I love to dance.

15               JOE GREGORI: So again thank you for  
16 having us. We're very proud to be here today to  
17 join with our colleagues in the cultural community  
18 to ask for a funding increase of 40 million dollars  
19 to the Department of Cultural Affairs. Thank you.

20               CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
21 much. And what schools did... were you in when Ballet  
22 Tech came to audition you?

23               NOAH DE NECOCHEA: Before I was in  
24 Amistad, PS311 [sp?].  
25

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

219

JULIENNE GWENFENTORA: And I was in a  
public school in Queens, PS212.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: 212 is Jackson  
Heights right?

JULIENNE GWENFENTORA: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Where was  
Noah's school, what neighborhood?

NOAH DE NECOCHEA: Manhattan.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Manhattan, okay  
that's wonderful. Well thank you so much. And I  
thought you were going to dance but we would...

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes. No no no,  
we'll... we'll have to invite them back for a formal  
program but it's great to have you here and... and  
great to have Julianne and Noah here as well. Thank  
you so much.

JULIENE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And we have  
three more panels. If Robert Federico from  
Repertorio Español is still here, Wendy Rose from  
the Apollo, Shannon McFee from Tishma, Karen  
Meyerhoff from Wave Hill, if Niles French from the  
Staten Island Historical Society/Historic Richmond

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

220

Town is here, and Guy Yedwab from the League of  
Independent Theatre if he's still here. Want to  
thank everyone for hanging in and sticking with us.  
Whoever wants to... you've got the mic, you're there  
why don't... [cross-talk]

WENDY NIEKERK: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...you go first  
and then we'll go down the line.

WENDY NIEKERK: Hello, my name is Wendy  
Niekerk-Rose and I'm the Director of Institutional  
Relations and Campaign at the Apollo Theatre in  
Harlem. I want to express my thanks to Majority  
Leader Van Bramer and to the city council for your  
commitment ensuring that our great city continues  
to be the cultural capital of the world and for  
your work ensuring that all New Yorkers regardless  
of race, class, immigration status have access to  
world-class arts and cultural institutions. Thank  
you for this opportunity to present testimony  
regarding the importance of the arts and the need  
for increased arts funding throughout the  
Department of Cultural Affairs. I'm here today to  
join with other members of the cultural community  
to support the inspired by New York City campaign

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

221

and to ask for a funding increase of 40 million to  
the Department of Cultural Affairs expense budget  
in fiscal year 2017. The Apollo Theatre is an  
iconic performing arts organization located on the  
bustling 125<sup>th</sup> Street corridor in Harlem. We're  
know for our legacy as a touchstone for the African  
American Community and for the global African  
Diaspora. The theatre has played an invaluable role  
shaping American music and culture and launching  
the careers of legendary artists like Ella  
Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, and James Brown. Over  
the past five years the theatre has grown  
significantly increasing our operating budget by  
nearly 40 percent and doubling our education  
committee and performance arts programming. We  
currently receive funding from DCLA which is  
critical to supporting our current programming. We  
have a pending request for increased funding that  
would provide key support for our growing year  
around season of performing arts education and  
community program. More than 60 percent of our  
nearly 14 million dollar operating budget comes  
from fundraising. And we cannot provide these  
programs without the financial contributions of our

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

222

supporters which importantly include DCLA. Today  
thanks in part to the city's support the Apollo  
engages in the annual audience of more than 200,000  
New Yorkers and tourists with more than 110  
performances on our two stages encompassing dance,  
music, theatre, and comedy as well as meaningful  
education and community program. I'm pleased to  
highlight some of our programing that I hope will  
help to demonstrate the importance of the city's  
support for our work. In addition to our popular  
weekly amateur night competition we have a monthly  
music café and comedy club. We have signature  
presentations like Urban Mayfield and the New  
Orleans Jazz Orchestra. We have new partnerships  
with classical theatre of Harlem around a holiday  
musical; The First Noel which premiered on a multi-  
week run on our sound stage this past December and  
will expand that run in the coming year. And we're  
presenting our first opera; Charlie Parker's  
YARDBIRD, April 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of this year in  
partnership with Opera Philadelphia. Additionally,  
we have bi-annual global festivals like our Women  
of the World Festival which highlights arts and  
activism and the Breaking Convention Festival of

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

223

international hip-hop dance theatre which welcomes  
dancers from across the city and around the world.  
The Apollo season offers an exciting array of world  
class performing arts programming. And we're  
committed to ensuring that everyone has access. Our  
top ticket price this season is 125 dollars. And  
most performance tickets range from 10 to 45  
dollars a ticket. We have three community programs  
like our uptown hall and livewire discussions in  
the annual open house weekend in tribute to Doctor  
Martin Luther King Junior. We also have free and  
low cost education community programs that engage  
more than 18,000 New York City public school  
children each year and year-round free and  
discounted ticket program. Our rich legacy is a  
gathering place for the African American Community  
and a place of opportunity for artists of all races  
and cultures has created a vibrant and diverse  
institution. The majority of our audiences and  
virtually all of our education and community  
programs participants identify as African American,  
Latino, Asian, or multi-race. We're especially  
committed to showcasing diverse artists and to  
amplifying the voices of artists from the global

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

224

African Diaspora. We're a culture and economic anchor of Harlem and 125<sup>th</sup> Street. We partner with a variety of cultural organizations across the city such as Ballet Hispanico, Classical Theatre of Harlem, and the World Music Institute to showcase diverse artistic perspectives and help nurture smaller organizations. If the Apollo receives increased funding from the DCLA we would be able to sustain and grow our artistic education and community programming ensuring that all New Yorkers can continue to access, benefit from, and participate in the transformative power of the art. Every New Yorker should be able to experience the unique<sup>3</sup> cultural offerings of our city. Please consider supporting this proposed funding increase of 40 million to the DCLA so that they can support the important work of cultural organizations like the Apollo and others you've heard from today. Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much.

GUY YEDWAB: Thank you to the chairman and to the committee for the opportunity to testify



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

225

1 today. My name Guy Yedwab. I'm the Managing  
2 Director for the League of Independent Theatre. The  
3 theatre is an all-volunteer 501C6 political  
4 advocacy organization and we're testifying today on  
5 behalf of the city's 50,000 independent theatre  
6 artists, 86 percent of whom vote. I'm here today to  
7 join with the other members of the cultural  
8 community to ask for a funding increase of 40  
9 million dollars to the DCLA to be equally divided  
10 between the Cultural Institutions Group and the  
11 Cultural Development Fund for grant making. Our  
12 membership includes individual theatre makers and  
13 performance venues from across all five boroughs  
14 who self-produce work outside of established  
15 institutions in venues 99 seats or less. I ran into  
16 one of our members this weekend. I asked him what  
17 he's working on. He mentioned that while he's  
18 working on his current show company members were  
19 also working on theatre workshops with local  
20 Brooklyn students. The company was also partnering  
21 with a restaurant mid-town, the Shakespeare to... to  
22 stage shows on the weekend to help attract patrons.  
23 This is just one theatre company, five people all  
24 volunteer, sharing the talents of their professions  
25

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

226

with students and local businesses while also  
working on their day jobs. There are at least 500  
of these theatre companies throughout each of the  
five boroughs attracting visitors, steering  
audience members towards local businesses,  
delivering workshops, and partnering with community  
organizations. And these theatre companies are just  
a small slice of a larger cultural community; the  
dance companies, painters, musicians, and more who  
are all doing the same. These theatre companies do  
community work and artistic programming on  
extremely thin budgets particularly as the cost of  
space goes up year over year. As you yourself  
pointed out as... if the budget stays the same we  
can't be content to keep that same level of  
funding. Because as cost goes up in effect the  
budgets are going down. Since 2008 we're aware of  
73 performance venues that have gone under each  
impacting thousands of artists and tens of  
thousands of audience members who come through the  
doors each year, each with its own unique community  
programming. We're at least... we're aware of at  
least two theatre venues that are likely to lose  
their space in the next six months similar to the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

227

Spiral Studio Theatre which lost its space last  
year after years of serving both audiences and  
artists ages 50 and older. That's why I'm here  
today with our colleagues in the cultural community  
to ask for that funding increase of 40 million  
dollars to help sustain these and a thousand other  
programs in the city. Thank you for the opportunity  
to testify today.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much. And I assume the... 86 percent of... of your  
members vote is from a survey of yours that you  
did?

GUY YEDWAB: [off mic] That is correct.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

NILES FRENCH: Alright. Good afternoon.  
Thank you the chairman and the council. I'm Niles  
French from Historic... [sneezing in background]  
Richmond town. God bless you. Ten years ago Historic  
Richmond town was thought of as a quiet stuffy  
museum that offered limited programming. Sadly,  
that reputation was deserved. The organization  
overwhelms by the sheer number of its assets, over  
100 acres, four sites, over 30 original historic  
structures, and hundreds of thousands of artifacts

1 dating back to the 16 hundred, had difficulty  
2 staying focused on the public it as supposed to  
3 support. New leadership at the board and staff  
4 level brought a lot of change. Resources were  
5 adjusted and we found new programs to imagine.  
6 Today Historic Richmond Town has almost tripled its  
7 attendance, hosts popular events, and attracted  
8 thousands of partnering middle and high schools and  
9 increased diversity each year. Families from every  
10 background celebrate that mission with us. Through  
11 this time we've developed the A plus model, culture  
12 that is affordable, accessible, and for all. When  
13 our... allocation shrank in 2008 our programs did not  
14 shrink with it. We dug in our heels, we determined  
15 that we needed to be a thriving community center.  
16 But this came with a price. As the largest and  
17 oldest cultural institution on Staten Island we  
18 have aging boilers, elevators and multi-story  
19 buildings, dozen of... dozens of landmark structures,  
20 and quite frankly the list goes on. And with  
21 increased popularity is more wear and tear. To  
22 combat these deficits, we had to take drastic  
23 steps. We have reduced our staff by 20 percent,  
24 seven percent, our expenses by 31 and froze  
25

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

229

salaries for five years. We also expanded our grants outreach by five times, boosted our earned income by 300 percent, increased school visitation from all five boroughs by 30 percent, and raised board expectations on the giving level. We are working hard but it's not enough. Very soon our reserves will run out as we fund from them. In FY 2008 we received a total city operation allocation of almost 900,000. This year our total was close to 800,000. Today we receive 13 percent less than in 2008. Since a significant portion of our allocation is used for pension, health, special programs, and energy leaves very little money left to shepherd American history. We're not complaining. We understand there's other priorities but quite frankly culture might be the last thing in New York that's been restored. On a fantastic... fantastic note this year Minority Leader Steve Matteo recognized the funding challenges and invited Majority Leader and Committee Chair Van Bramer to visit our museum along with the Staten Island Zoo. In a bi-partisan tour they experienced a positive effect on our programming in the community and the negative results of funding cuts. They tasted

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

230

pancakes cooked in a 200-year-old open hearth, and  
fed disgusting animals with 18-inch-long tongues.  
They did not feed the pancakes to the animals  
however we might need them for our starving artists  
if they keep going that way. Council Member Van  
Bramer and Matteo saw what can be done with right  
size funding. They understand the importance of  
funding culture. They know that cities of promise  
and hope rest on solid cultural foundations. They  
realize that our culturals do more than teach  
children, care for seniors, and serve the  
underserved that many realize and we often do at  
little or no cost. We educate and inspire. As a  
member of the CIG we support Chairman Van Bramer's  
efforts to increase the cultural funding by 40  
million dollars and an increase of the DCA's budget  
which would bring positive change and make a very  
small dent in the overall budget. A 40-million-  
dollar increase is less than one tenth of one  
percent of the city's overall budget. Under the new  
IDNYC our institution has embraced tens of  
thousands of IDNYC holders as complimentary members  
of our organizations. These new friends have added  
vitality to our museums. How much longer do we do

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

231

1  
2 them for them than the city at... without additional  
3 funding. The return on this investment would be  
4 powerful. Please support our cultural institutions  
5 and let's work together as the city of promise and  
6 hope. And as a side note me myself personally have  
7 been at Historic Richmond Town for a while... long  
8 time now. But I worked at the Staten Island Zoo and  
9 I went to preschool at Staten Island Museum on the  
10 grounds of Snug Harbor and the great Elizabeth  
11 Egbert was my teacher. So we all know that New York  
12 City's inspires in speaking with a lot of the folks  
13 here on the library and even in other institutions  
14 we've all came through our CIGs and cultural  
15 institutions. So we ask and thank you for fighting  
16 for us.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
18 much. Although I thought the pancakes were off the  
19 record. I just... [cross-talk]

20 [laughter]

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I'm sorry we'll  
22 have to... [cross-talk]

23 NILES FRENCH: That's alright.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...that's okay  
25 with... it was a great visit. Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

232

KAREN MEYERHOFF: Good afternoon

Committee Chair Van Bramer and committee members.

Thank you for your work on our behalf and for

allowing me to speak today. My name is Karen

Meyerhoff and I'm the new Executive Director at

Wave Hill. For those of you who don't know Wave

Hill it's a public garden and cultural center in

the Bronx. I joined Wave Hill in June of last year.

Prior to that I spent 30 years working for some of

New York City's premier cultural institutions

including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the

Museum of Modern Art, and most recently the

Guggenheim Museum. I'm proud to join my fellow CIGs

and program groups and honored to respond to the

growing need for cultural programming in a borough

traditionally underrepresented in New York City's

art scene. Wave Hill is proud to further the Bronx

as a cultural destination as well as contribute to

the citywide effort to promote arts and culture in

particular through the Inspired by New York City

culture campaign which Thelma Golden mentioned

earlier. Wave Hill joins other CIGs to support and

respectfully request an increase of 40 million

dollars for citywide arts and culture in this



1 budget cycle. Wave Hill serves 155,000 annual  
2 visitors through the presentation of programs in  
3 horticulture, education, and the arts all of which  
4 draw on our unique historic site, cultivated  
5 gardens, and natural woodlands. I'm also pleased to  
6 share that we have extended 5,000 IDNYC memberships  
7 across all five boroughs more than doubling our  
8 membership base. And we are already seeing  
9 participation in cultural programs by this group.  
10 Today I'd like to focus on visual arts at Wave Hill  
11 because I think it exemplifies how the CIGs serve  
12 New York City artists as well as the cultural seen  
13 generally. Our impact on the community as a visual  
14 arts presenter and incubator for the development of  
15 emerging and mid-career artists provides a dual  
16 benefit by fostering New York City's creative  
17 talent and by exposing the public to the arts  
18 through accessible artist workshops, open studios,  
19 tourism talks led by exhibiting artists that  
20 encourage the exploration of their subject matter  
21 and their creative process. A few examples of how  
22 we accomplished this include the winter workspace,  
23 the sunroom project space, and the Edward and Sally  
24 Van Lier Visual Artist Fellowships. Winter  
25

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

234

workspace transforms our formal exhibition gallery space into functional artist studios for three months providing 10 artists with free daily use studio space to develop new work through direct engagement with our gardens and grounds and support from our curators. The sun room project commissions five New York City area artists to create new work and exhibits that work for six weeks. And the Van Lier Fellowship Program provides two artists from culturally diverse backgrounds with studio space, career development support, as well as a solo exhibition. All of the diverse emerging and mid-career artists participating in Wave Hill's visual arts initiatives benefit both personally and professionally. They receive stipends, expert mentorship, and professional guidance propelling future success. For example, Cameron Rowland a former Sunroom artist is featured on this month's cover of Art Forum Magazine and was recently included in MOMA's PS1's greater New York exhibition. We partner with other CIGs and program groups and the selection of these programs as they regularly sit on our artist selection juries. Most recently this included El Museo Del Barrio and

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

235

Quince Talo Golopagos [phonetic]. We also regularly partner with the Bronx Museum of Art and the Bronx Artist Alliance for exhibition programs. This is an exciting time for Wave Hill. We recently embarked on a strategic review process that will result in plans focusing on how to best serve the public and how to expand our programming beyond our grounds. Increased funding is a critical component of those plans. So I thank you for supporting wave hill and New York City culture generally and urge you to support the 40-million-dollar increase.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much. I was at Wave Hill a few years ago for... for a tour and I'm sure that Council Member Cohen would love to have us return so...

KAREN MEYERHOFF: There may be plans to do that next month actually.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes...

KAREN MEYERHOFF: In the works.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes. Terrific.

KAREN MEYERHOFF: We'll look forward to it.

SHANNON MCFEE: Thank you so much for the opportunity to be here today. And you know

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

236

thank you to all of my colleagues for giving such  
inspiring speeches. This is my first testimony and  
I find it very exciting. But I am here today to  
advocate on the 100... the hundreds of artists that  
my organization serves. I'm Shannon McFee, and I'm  
the Development Director at Shushama [sp?] which is  
a 21-year-old arts organization that gives  
affordable space to artists to live, work, and  
present. And as I look back on our two decades of  
work within the New York Community we've seen the  
landscape of the city completely change  
artistically. Artists have been displaced, found  
new neighborhoods to call home, cultural  
organizations have had to shift the focus of their  
funding and some have fled to more affordable  
locals. And rents have as we've mentioned continued  
to rise and make this city a challenging place to  
create in. And there's no denying that New York has  
become increasingly unaffordable which makes it  
hard for artists to fulfill a professional career.  
This is where our organization comes in. And through  
our partnerships with property owners and with  
funding through the city we are able to provide  
space for artists to live, work and present. Our

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

237

workspace program is the largest affordable studio  
program in the city seeing 144 artists in our  
studios each year. Our presentation program curated  
96 exhibitions, 45 performances this past year at  
no cost to the artists. Our professional  
development workshops, visiting curator  
opportunities all give artists the chance to  
succeed. And this is all through funding from DCA  
and other city council members. In addition to our  
core programs and seeking to help artists find  
affordable space we recently launched the Bronx  
Artist Housing Initiative which gives artists  
access to affordable space to live in the Bronx in  
exchange for providing community programming for  
youth and seniors in the Bronx community. We also...  
to meet this need of providing affordable space for  
artists launched and accessing the real estate for  
the arts initiative in which we seek out spaces  
actively with land owners and real estate partners  
helping them activate their vacant properties and  
transforming them... transforming them into studio  
and presentation spaces, forging these new  
partnerships, securing additional spaces has helped  
us expand our programs and will give us more of a

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

238

1  
2 programmatic reach and I think also we can say that  
3 these partnerships will serve as an economic driver  
4 for land owners, local businesses, and cultural  
5 organizations. We know that any space big or small  
6 can dramatically change the life of our artists.  
7 And every empty space is an opportunity. So I  
8 stand/sit here with my colleagues today and call  
9 for the 40-million-dollar increase to the budget  
10 for the DCLA. These increases help all of us stay  
11 in the city and keep the arts affordable. And I'd  
12 also like to add along with the budget increase and  
13 money is of course always great I encourage  
14 everyone in this room to look for areas of  
15 inclusion in our programming and our mission and  
16 intersectionality so we can all better serve this  
17 city. Thank you so much for your time.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
19 much. Shushama does great work and tell Anita we  
20 said hello.

21 SHANNON MCFEE: Will do.

22 ROBERT FEDERICO: Hello councilman.

23 Robert Federico from Repitory Español which the New  
24 York Times has called a cultural treasure of New  
25 York City. Thanks to the DCA we do over 300

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

239

performances a year for 36,000 people. Of those 100  
are for students. And we have 16,000 students that  
come to Repitory every year. Now the DC area also  
helps us go into residencies in schools where we  
work with students primarily in schools with high  
Latino enrollment and they're students that are...  
students which students with interrupted formal  
education and English language learners. We perform  
there and try to create with them plays of their  
own making, of the... based on their history. We also  
thanks to the discretionary funding and to the  
cultural immigrant initiative funding we go into  
council peoples districts to perform in the  
districts. Tomorrow actually we're in Far Rockaway.  
And with this DCA funding we can do what we're  
doing but we can't expand unless there's more  
funding. The funding that is asked for is barely  
replacing the funding that we've lost from private  
banking institutions. Few years ago we got from  
Goldman Sachs, Chase City Bank. Now none of those  
are giving to the small arts funding. So the 40  
million increase is an investment in the city in  
terms of a better workforce and more tourism. So we

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

240

thank you very much for asking us to talk today.

And we think it's very important this increase.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much. Just curious how much do you get from the  
Cultural Immigrant Initiative or how many..

ROBERT FEDERICO: The cultural we got  
from six different council people to do  
performances we did at Harlem Stage, tomorrow Far  
Rockaway in Garodnick district and several other  
districts throughout the city.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's  
terrific. Makes me even prouder that I brought that  
to the speaker.

ROBERT FEDERICO: Yeah wonderful.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Very proud of  
that. Thank you very much. And.. and I want to thank  
everyone on the panel. I know it's been a long day  
but I want you to know that I listened to every bit  
of testimony. It's my job and my obligation and my  
promise to you all. So thank you for being here,  
thank you for parting... being part of this very  
impressive coalition for 40 which is very very deep  
and broad and.. and I feel very good about it. So  
thank you very much.



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

241

ROBERT FEDERICO: Oh thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And we have two more panels. Andrea Louie who was being so quiet in the back there I did not know you were here Andrea but I thank you for sticking it out. Did Bryan Morris... Bryan Morris still here? Brian Morris? Thank you. Alec Duffy, is Alec Duffy still here? Heather Levine, is Heather Levine... Wow I just have to say this is very impressive, every single person has stayed. Now of course now as I say that is David Ing [sp?] still here? I knew that, I knew that... as soon as I said that. Oh, Mark Grocia [sp?], oh sorry about... Mark is also here. We have one last panel, a few library folks and Daniel Winicort [sp?], is Danielle Winiker still here, Daniel? Doesn't say libraries or cultural but... libraries? Okay, so then we will... will end... keep our libraries... and Briana Landow [sp?]? Oh she... Right, okay, alright so we'll have one last library panel. Andrea why don't you start us off.

ANDREA LOUIE: Right. Thank you... thank you for staying with us. We don't take that for granted either. So... so Council Member Van Bramer, members of the committee, please accept my deepest

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

242

appreciation to give testimony today regarding the  
FY 17 budget for the New York City Department of  
Cultural Affairs. My name is Andrea Louie and I'm  
the Executive Director of the Asian American Arts  
Alliance. We're a proud branch-ee of DCLA and for  
34 years have supported individual artists in small  
arts groups across the five boroughs of New York. I  
join my non-profit arts colleagues today to ask for  
a funding increase of 40 million to the DCLA and to  
the be equally divided between the cultural  
institutions group and the cultural... the cultural  
development fund. The increase would allow more New  
Yorkers from each of the council's districts to be  
better served by arts and cultural activities thus  
transforming lives and increasing the diversity of  
all the stories that deserve to be told, heard, and  
honored in our communities. The Center for an Urban  
Future's 2015 report Creative New York found that  
the city is home to 8.6 percent of all creative  
jobs in the nation and that the creative sector has  
the biggest share of the nation... of the country's  
jobs here exceeding even real estate and finance.  
Asian Americans make up more than 15 percent of the  
city's population and is the fastest growing racial

and ethnic group. However, Asian American artists remain underrepresented across nearly all disciplines. For example, recent studies show that only two percent of all roles were cast by Asian Americans in non-profit and Broadway Theatres. The alliances programs help to create concrete pathways to access to cultural decision makers like artistic directors, curators, and editors. We also can be an important dialogue around race, identity, and art making. For example, together with our partners including the Theatre Communications Group, the Asian American Performers Action Coalition, and the Alliance for Inclusion for the Arts the Asian American Arts Alliance will be co-convening a critical conversation at Fordham University on May 2<sup>nd</sup> which we would love for you to attend. This even beyond orientalism will address the ongoing prevalence of yellow face and brown face or white actors portraying characters of Asian descent and seek to increase the representation of Asian Americans in the theatre industry. We are also in strategic conversations to launch a nationwide initiative about this work. In the days following Hashtag Oscar So White and the performance of

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

244

Hamilton at the White House this work has never  
been more important. But there's still so much more  
to do. I urge New York City Council to increase  
expense funding for FY '17 to the DCLA by 40  
million so that organizations like the alliance can  
continue and expand our work. The diverse cultural  
workforce that lives and works in New York City is  
what makes us an international city; exciting,  
vibrant, and robust. I look forward to working with  
all of you to make New York a more just and more  
equitable city. Thanks for your time and attention.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
Andrea. Thank you for all your work.

ALEC DUFFY: Good afternoon. My name is  
Alec Duffy and I'm the Artistic Director of the  
performance venue JACK in Clinton Hill Brooklyn.  
And last time I was here I... I read through a list  
of 25 small performance venues that had closed over  
the past five years and ended with a call for a  
marshal plan for the arts. So I'm glad to see that  
you've taken my suggestion. Thank you very much for  
that.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: It was just  
because of that.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

245

ALEC DUFFY: Exactly. Exactly. Democracy  
at work. So I... I'm here actually today to tell a... a  
story. One afternoon two weeks ago I was at Jack  
and as our teen theatre program was rehearsing. And  
all of a sudden one of the teens... a 19 year old  
girl named Dezzy collapsed on the floor. And  
Samara, the head of our... our theatre program rushed  
to her side. We called 9-1-1. Paramedics arrived  
shortly thereafter and not getting any response  
from Dezzy they took her away in an ambulance with  
Samara joining them. I spoke with Samara later that  
day on the phone who said that Dezzy was out of the  
hospital and resting in Samara's apartment.  
Apparently Dezzy hadn't eaten in two days because  
she didn't have any food having recently lost her  
job and living in a single parent home with a  
mother that was an addict unable to provide for the  
family. Dezzy was now being fed and taken good care  
of by Samara. A week later I came into Jack and the  
teens again were rehearsing and there was Dezzy  
greeting me with a smile. And it was at that moment  
that it struck me how much this theatre company  
meant to Dezzy and other youth participants in the  
program, it was their family. With all the other

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

246

troubles in their lives at home, at school, at  
work, it's where they knew they could succeed and  
it's where they knew they would find support. The  
arts for them was their one true hope. On the other  
end of things this past week I visited the Grace  
Agard senior center down the street from Jack where  
we have an artist in residency courtesy of the city  
council's Su Casa program in a small arts and  
crafts rooms composer and performer Carmen Maya  
Johnson was leading 20 elders in singing southern  
root songs, songs that these elders, many of whom  
grew up in the south, say that they remember their  
own grandparents singing to them. To see these  
elders activated by the arts, moved by the history  
of the music and how it was threaded through their  
ancestry, and excited for the public performance at  
the end of May makes it clear to me how much good  
the arts can do for the young, for the old, and for  
all in between. With the... all the trials of  
everyday life in a crowded city the arts are what  
make our city livable. I encourage you to strongly  
consider providing more of these opportunities to  
New Yorkers by increasing the funding for the arts

in the city. Thank you very much for this  
opportunity to talk.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. And  
all of the testimony is making me feel very good  
about the work the city council is doing that you  
would receive a Su Casa grant is terrific. Which  
council member... that is terrific. See I'm glad  
we're putting all this money into the arts... city  
council now we need to really amp that up and have  
both sides of city hall do that. But it's... it's  
great to hear those stories. Thank you so much. And  
the Staten Island Zoo.

BRIAN MORRIS: Yes, yes. I don't know if  
I can follow those two wonderful stories. I could  
just tell you about animals. My name is Bryan  
Morris. I'm the Vice President for Marketing and  
Development at the Staten Island Zoo. At the outset  
we expressed our extreme gratitude to the council's  
cultural affairs chair, Mr. Van Bramer, the  
committees members, and the council itself for its  
continued support of cultural organizations  
including my own, the Staten Island Zoo, which is  
part of the splendid diversity of arts and cultural  
organizations in the city. It's a privilege to be

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

248

able to address the council at this important  
budget hearing, especially in support of the  
historic effort aimed at providing an additional 40  
million dollars to sustain arts and culture in the  
city. I think we can agree that cultural  
illuminates the population's inner lives, it  
enriches its emotional world, accept as well that  
arts and culture is an economic engine with a  
measurable impact on our economy. Our arts and  
cultural institutions are strategic resources and  
yes the zoos too are strategic, cultural, and  
educational resources. Staten Island Zoo is 80  
years old this year and it continues its  
substantial growth curve with more than 12 hundred  
animals now in our collection, about 185,000 annual  
visitors, a diverse visitorship which includes all  
boroughs and some nearby counties to Staten Island.  
We do approximately 24,000 school children who  
participate in school related educational  
activities, both public and private. We've added  
new attractions, a specious Amur Leopard habitat,  
that's the world's rarest big cat, conservation  
carousel, 25 artfully sculpted animals, and a  
sprawling Sahara, an exhibit where extinct in the



wild animals actually roam. Substantial yes but we do it with an operating budget provided by the city which began to decline in fiscal year '08 and it's remained stagnant. In the past discretionary additions originating with the Staten Island Delegation in the council, members Debbie Rose, Steve Matteo, Vincent Ignizio, and now Joe Borelli, as well as supplemental applications that came from DCA. They've been helpful and much appreciated. The operating budget for the zoo in fiscal year '16 is projected to be approximately 3.437 million dollars and the city provides about one-third of that budget. To maintain itself the city has to raise the additional 67 percent. We assemble membership dues and donations and corporations and foundations other government grants. But just by itself the program income from admissions and education programs, special events by themselves exceed the city's contribution to our annual expenses. I will continue reading but you do have the statement.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I've actually already read through the rest of the testimony including the lovely paragraph about me towards the end.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

250

BRIAN MORRIS: Right.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So we can skip  
that.

BRIAN MORRIS: We didn't say anything  
about pancakes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: What's that.

BRIAN MORRIS: No pancakes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: No... no but I... I  
appreciate that you're here and... and that you  
appreciated the visit to the zoo and I very much  
loved it and I'm glad that you're here. So thank  
you so much.

BRIAN MORRIS: Yes, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: HAI.

HEATHER LEVINE: HAI. Good afternoon and  
thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is  
Heather Levine. I'm the... the Director of Marketing  
and Outreach. I'm speaking today on behalf of  
Alexandra Dyer, our Executive Director and the  
entire staff of Healing Arts Initiative, more  
commonly known as HAI. Thank you to Chairperson  
Jimmy Van Bramer who's also our council member and  
the rest of the committee for the opportunity to  
testify today. Healing Arts Initiative found that

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

251

its Hospital Audiences Inc. inspires healing,  
growth, and learning through engagement in the arts  
for the culturally underserved. HAI touches the  
lives of more than 350,000 people throughout the  
five boroughs whose access to the arts have been  
limited by health, age, or income. Since 1969 HAI  
has been at the forefront in removing barriers to  
arts and culture offering an array of arts  
education wellness programs. For over 47 years our  
cultural programs have provided a wonderfully  
unique opportunity for isolated individuals to come  
together and enjoy the best of NYC arts and  
culture, more simply HAI transforms lives through  
the arts. I am here today with the rest of the  
members of the cultural community to advocate for a  
funding increase of 40 million dollars to the  
parks... Department of Cultural Affairs. HAI has been  
fortunate enough to receive substantial multi-year  
funding from DCLA for the following programs. Our  
on-site performance program which makes high  
quality artistic performances available to NYC's  
marginalized audiences, approximately 100  
professional performances are presented each month  
at a variety of facilities including nursing homes

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

252

and health centers. Our community performing arts series which presents an array of high quality music and dance performances to audiences throughout the five boroughs. These events reach scores of constituencies who cannot generally access traditional cultural offerings and allow thousands of individuals who enjoy arts and culture in their own neighborhoods. Our summer program arranges access for thousands of disabled and elderly New Yorkers so that they are able to attend outdoor concerts, theatre, dance, and arts festivals, and other cultural events throughout the summer. The uneven terrain and crowds at these events can prove challenging. However, HAI has partnered with the New York Phil Harmonic and the public theatre to provide reserved seating for park concerts at the Delacorte Theatre. Describe is our program in which live audio describes Broadway and off Broadway shows making these performances accessible for blind and visually impaired theatre goers. Finally, we have our youth and leadership program which uses proved theatre techniques to engage and empower youth in an after school performance project designed to provide a safe

space for adolescents age 13 to 18 to address important personal, social, and health issues. The ability to facilitate these programs and more importantly to propel our mission in providing access to the arts is dependent on funding from the Department of Cultural Affairs. Our constituents from the frail elderly to the visually impaired to the public school student depend on HAI to provide quality cultural experiences which are not typically provided for or available to them in these marginalized communities. We know the efficacy and healing bond which the arts provide which is why it is imperative that the city continues its investment in arts and culture. And I ask again for the 40-million-dollar increase in funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much. And you know I... I think your organization is terrific and... But I don't know if you know exactly why because I have a... a neighbor who...

HEATHER LEVINE: Monty.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

HEATHER LEVINE: Yeah.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

254

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You know the  
story...

HEATHER LEVINE: Big fans of Monty,  
yeah.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's awesome.  
And when I saw that Monty... and saw his art that he  
created and I have his... his... his like portfolio I  
guess.

HEATHER LEVINE: Oh his book.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah.

HEATHER LEVINE: And we make... all of the  
participants are able to make books... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah.

HEATHER LEVINE: ...and then we sell them  
and they get the proceeds.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I have his book  
and it... it touched me very much so thank you.

HEATHER LEVINE: Thank you.

MARK ROSSIER: Good afternoon. I'm Mark  
Rossier from the New York Foundation for the Arts.  
Thank you Chairman Van Bramer and the committee for  
holding these hearings and giving us all the chance  
to speak about the Department of Cultural Affairs,  
an organization that improved the lives of New

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

255

Yorkers 40 million fold. NYFA is one of the few organizations in the country to support artists in all disciplines of the literary, media, performing, and visual arts. We provide cash grants of 7,000 dollars to roughly 95 artists annually, entrepreneurial training to 16 hundred more, fiscal sponsorship to 800 artists and organizations including the Netflix documentary Making a Murderer, and online resources that were accessed by over 1.2 million users each year. All of this work is supported by our grant from DCLA. I'm here today to ask the council for a 40-million-dollar increase in funding to the Department of Cultural Affairs knowing the incredible variety of organizations DCLA supports these additional funds will undoubtedly be used in 40 million different ways. For example, increasing funding to NYFA would allow us to grow our program begun with the support of Council Member Levin and the culture... and the cultural immigrant funds which provides artists with one on one consultations with professionals in their field in both mandarin and Spanish. We are hoping to this program in more languages and provide other programming in languages other than

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

256

English. We also have a new business incubator to provide critical resources such as pay consultants, professional training, mentoring, and cash grants to arts related businesses or those launched by artists with additional support this program can also grow. But I'm not here to speak only of NYFA. Additional support will allow DCLA to increase support for probably 40 million other programs which will reach people in every borough, programs which will enrich the lives of students and seniors which will allow artists in all disciplines to make work and audiences throughout the city to see it. These funds will also allow the agencies to support new organizations, many of which are small community based and provide programming to underserved populations. The arts are the lifeblood of the city and the Department of Cultural Affairs is the lifeblood of the cultural community. While an increase of 40 million dollars toward the budget might sound like a victory for cultural organizations it is really a victory for the citizens of New York who'll have a myriad of opportunities to experience the richest, most important, and most diverse cultural community in



COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

257

the world. Thank you for this opportunity and all  
you've personally done if your... if our passion  
inspires you your passion and commitment inspires  
us.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well thank you  
very much. And... and you getting a... a cultural  
immigrant initiative grant you know politics is not  
always the easiest profession to be in but there  
are days where you actually feel good about what  
you're doing. And to hear all of the folks who are...  
are receiving some of this funding that we've  
created in the last two years is really really  
terrific and obviously if we're able to do 40  
million dollars 40 million more good stories come  
out of it so...

MARK ROSSIER: And we just did the first  
program with the cultural immigrant fund on Monday  
and it was completely full and people were asking  
if we were going to do more of it so...

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Awesome. That's  
great. Thank you so much all of you for being here  
and... and for the work that you do. We have one last  
panel; Michael White, Yuki I want to say Inew [sp?]  
I hope I'm getting that right, and Daniel Winiker

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

258

[sp?] to close us out and talk libraries. Now that  
I... I can read it I see It's Yuki Endo [sp?] so  
thank you very much. And why don't we start with  
Daniel and then we'll go to Michael.

DANIEL WINIKER: Good afternoon. My name  
is Daniel Winiker. I'm a retired librarian. I'm  
here today to make two requests regarding oversight  
of the increased funding for all three New York  
City public library systems. The first request is  
in regard to capital funding. New York City has  
underfunded the capital needs of its libraries for  
many years. One solution to the crumbling  
infrastructure problem is to sell of existing  
library buildings and use the proceeds to fund  
capital expenses of other branches. This solution  
has so far been used by NYPL and BPL. NYPL sold off  
its Darnell Library 10 years ago. The latest  
information available is that it... it's much much  
smaller replacement will open in the fall of 2016.  
What happened to the proceeds of that sale? Did it  
help alleviate the capital funding problems of  
NYPL? If so why is there still a crisis? Similarly,  
BPL has just sold off its Brooklyn Heights Library.  
Again this will be replaced by a much much smaller

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

259

library. While some of the proceeds go for capital expenses at the central library at Grand Army Plaza or will all of it go to repairing the infrastructure of... at BPL branches that need it the most. QBPL's Elmhurst library was demolished in the fall of 2011. Its replacement has still not opened. My first request then is that the city council not allow any more branch libraries in any of the three systems to be sold or demolished. My second request is that funding be increased for print materials. Anyone who has visited the three New York public library systems in the last five years have seen how print materials have been drastically reduced and that new purchases are a small fraction of what they were. We have not reached a point where eBooks have replaced most print materials. We should not allow maker spaces, entrepreneur spaces, job information programs, and passport offices to be used as an excuse to eliminate print collections. The city council and the New York City Controllers Office need to monitor the use of the increased funding that is being given to the three public library systems in New York City. Thank you for your consideration.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

260

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much Daniel. Yuki and then Michael.

YUKI: ...Jackson Height... and... United... on  
New York City... public libraries, libraries... New  
York Public Library... out to... not... public libraries  
in... which are... business library to... this busy  
library... library is very... across... for this...  
library... people... for need to return books but they  
won't be able to because only place... New York  
Public Library... open on Sundays... library... libraries  
in the... and people... not go all the way just to  
return library materials... books... date. I am  
grateful of Queens... of Queens Public Library is  
open six days a week and... Brooklyn Public Library...  
Queens libraries are wonderful and... and I... Jackson  
Height Library to have it Sunday hours because only  
branch that's open on Sunday is... library... and  
Flushing. ...Brooklyn Public Library runs our... our  
library is... is a... one of the... It doesn't make any  
sense. No... busy... Brooklyn Public Library needs a  
six-day service on busy libraries like the Brooklyn  
Heights library. Let's get our Brooklyn Heights  
Library... best because... building in... because...  
because there would be no business center or the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

261

children's... Brooklyn Public Library... libraries are  
close at the 1:00 p.m. due to a broken air  
conditioner which happens at the... Brooklyn Heights...  
library and the New York... library. One time when I  
went by the... library I... I thought the book drop was  
going to be open but the book... was... the library  
part and... for... for a Brooklyn Public Library... a  
drop off open 24-hour like a Queens Public Library.  
Libraries are important for the children, a  
teenager, and adult. ...the public library... Libraries  
provide education for free with... visit. New York...  
is a... on issues including the libraries... We need  
our library for... New York Public Library... business  
library for... In... for 25 or 50 cent... for printing  
for computer use. ...the... library has a... of a  
computer... and... has a... a... in our New York City...  
important... for education... after school program...

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much Yuki. You've testified many times before our  
committee and I'm very impressed with how many  
libraries you visit all over the city and Long  
Island. And I'm pleased to hear you say such nice  
things about the Queens Library which is terrific.  
I'm glad it's serving you well. Michael.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

262

MICHAEL WHITE: Yes... Michael White,  
Citizens Defending Libraries. We are entering our  
fourth year testifying so I think we sort of know  
how this goes. Citizens Defending Libraries says  
that the libraries should be funded at a level  
sufficient so that the underfunding of libraries is  
not used as an excuse to sell off libraries like  
the Brooklyn Heights Library, with Sibil [sp?] with  
a consequent shrinkage of mid-Manhattan. Our math  
is simple and straightforward. It doesn't involve  
starting from a baseline of zero or a baseline of  
50 percent. It involves where we need to be. And  
the fact that we suffered tremendous public losses  
if we sell these libraries. Unfortunately, you  
respectfully disagree that we need to get to that  
level. This is the room where we have heard for  
instance Brad Lander say we're not going to get  
there in the near term, honestly this decade,  
basically the de Blasio administration. This is the  
room where we've heard David Greenfield say the  
reality is that our public libraries are  
underfunded and we can't expect money to fall from  
the sky for the needed repairs. Yet when it came to  
selling off libraries there was plenty of money for

the central library plan. Hundreds of millions of dollars for the central library plan that was selling and shrinking libraries. And as Jim Dwyer points out in eight years we spent 620 million dollars on just three sports arenas and this amount was 1.37 times the amount spent on libraries serving seven times as many users. What's new this year, what's new before us right now is that we have the revelations that the Brooklyn Heights library is being sold to an inferior bidder, the low bidder with an inferior bid in many ways. We have the revelations about the Brooklyn Public Library sitting around on unspent capital funds, basically hiding or sequestering the money. We also know that in the case of the Brooklyn Heights Library our development Deputy Mayor was assisting in the raiding of Department of Education funds. It's not just plundering libraries but raiding Department of Education funds in amounts which have never been specified. So you know the... just the other day, yesterday there's a very complicated rezoning plan that people are trying to figure out. It's very difficult to analyze but people are saying what is the real set of priorities and

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

264

tensions behind the mayor. Well I think what we're  
doing with the libraries; selling them off, serves  
as a window onto what the priorities of this... the  
mayor and the city council approving those plans  
would be.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well thank you  
Michael. As you know we don't agree on... on  
everything but I think I certainly want to see  
libraries funded and we are continuing to fight  
that fight and we will do that right through June  
as we did last year. We've seen some... some very  
impressive gains but we're not there. And we have a  
lot... much more to do that we need to do to make  
sure our libraries get what they deserve. So in  
that we certainly can agree. And I do appreciate  
your passion for libraries and being here again  
and... and now after six hours of testimony we are  
about to conclude. So thank you once again to this  
panel and this six-hour hearing of the libraries  
and cultural affairs committee is over.

[gavel]



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 April 21, 2016