

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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January 17, 2017  
Start: 1:17 p.m.  
Recess: 3:51 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: JAMES G. VAN BRAMER  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Elizabeth S. Crowley  
Julissa Ferreras-Copeland  
Peter A. Koo  
Stephen T Levin  
Andy L. King  
Costa G. Constantinides  
Laurie A. Cumbo  
Helen K. Rosenthal

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

Tom Finkelppearl, Commissioner  
New York City's Department of Cultural Affairs

Nadezhda Williams, Executive Director  
King Manor Museum, Jamaica, Queens

Charlotte Cohen, Executive Director  
Brooklyn Arts Council, BAC

Susan Hapgood, Executive Director International  
Studio and Curatorial Program, ISCP

Mark Rossier, Deputy Director  
New York Foundation for the Arts

Madaha Kinsey-Lamb, Executive Director  
Mind Builders Creative Arts Center

Andrea Louie, Executive Director  
Asian-American Arts Alliance

Dr. Manuel Moran  
Society of the Educational Arts, SEA

Tia Powell Harris, President & Executive Director  
Weeksville Heritage Center

Kevin Lowe, Community and Youth Programs Associate  
Asian-American Writers Workshop

Shelly Worrell, Founder  
CaribBEING

Alton  
Tropical Fit

Mike Fitelson, Executive Director  
United Palace of Cultural Arts

Patsy Chin, Artistic Director  
Youth Orchestra

Lynn Parkerson, Founding Artistic Director  
Brooklyn Ballet

Anna Becker, Executive Director  
On Stage at Kingsborough  
Kingsborough Community College  
Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn

Joyce Adewumi, President  
New York Africa Ensemble

Meg Ventrudo, Executive Director  
Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art  
Staten Island

Peter Kim, Executive Director  
Museum of Food and Drink

Benjamin Spearman, Managing Director  
Bronx Opera Company



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[sound check, background comments, pause]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: We are ready.

Good afternoon, everyone and thank you for joining us, and for all being so attentive, and being so responsive to the Sergeant-at-Arms' instructions.

This is now quieter than a library in 1950.

Libraries are much more raucous, and you guys can be as raucous as you would like as well, but today you're here actually for a history in the making at the—at the Chair—at the Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Committee.

We're doing two pretty important things here today.

One is we have an oversight hearing on the City Council's Cultural initiatives and post-budget analysis, and—and an in-depth discussion about how that funding is allocated, how we're doing so far.

But at the same time and in this hearing, we're also going to vote on several pieces of legislation. In fact, the largest and most significant package of cultural legislation ever passed in the New York City Council. We will be passing six pieces of—of legislation including landmark legislation affecting the Percent for Art Program. I have authored three of these bills, with Council Member Cumbo as the

1  
2 prime co-sponsor and she has authored three of the  
3 bills with myself as the prime co-sponsor, and—and so  
4 this a very, very exciting day for us, and just so  
5 everyone knows how we're going to be doing this, I'll  
6 say a few words and then we're going to hear from the  
7 Commissioner, and then when we have quorum, we'll  
8 interrupt the oversight hearing to actually take a  
9 vote, and then tomorrow, of course, the full City  
10 Council meets, and we'll pass these six bills into  
11 legislation. So, thank you for all--for being here,  
12 and I know after the Commissioner, we'll hear from  
13 many in the cultural community on these important  
14 issues. So, first, hopefully some folks are familiar  
15 with some of the bills that we're going to be voting  
16 on, but we're going to talk about the cultural  
17 institutions group, and increased reporting from the  
18 CIGs. We want to make sure that everyone in the City  
19 of New York knows exactly how much the Cultural Group  
20 member are doing to make sure that culture and the  
21 arts is accessible to every New Yorker, and we're  
22 going to do that. We're also going to talk about the  
23 Art Commission, and asking them to do an annual  
24 report, which I have to say is very, very popular  
25 with Council Members, and I think they do similarly

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2 good work, the Art Commission, and we want to make  
3 sure that they're reporting as every other agency  
4 does in the City of New York, and there's some  
5 important markers that—that we want to know about  
6 here in—in the City Council. We're passing a—a law  
7 to amend the Charter in relation to a Percent for  
8 Arts Advisory Panel. We are—want to talk about how  
9 we publish information on Percent for Art projects,  
10 and we're going to increase the threshold I think for  
11 the first time since it was founded in 1982. So, and  
12 then, of course, we're also going to pass a law  
13 regarding outreach and education materials for public  
14 art opportunities. Put together, this is a very,  
15 very significant and dare I say historic day for the  
16 Cultural Affairs Committee and the City Council and  
17 I'm enormously proud that we've been able to work  
18 through all six of these bill with the Administration  
19 and with our Commissioner Tom Finkelparl, and I'll  
20 just say for the record that the City is better for  
21 having the Percent for Art program. New York City is  
22 a better place because we have robust public art, and  
23 I want, and I know Council Member Cumbo agrees a city  
24 that has even more public art has even more money  
25 going to Percent for Art projects and more artists

1  
2 who are getting these significant commissions and  
3 being paid well for their work. I think we are all  
4 in-in agreement, and I see some folks nodding, but if  
5 you agree with me that the Percent for Art program is  
6 going to be expanded, public art makes us all better,  
7 and we want artists to get paid, you can do this  
8 right now. There you go. Billy Martin, knows that's  
9 true?

10 BILL MARTIN: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes. Alright,  
12 Billy Martin is going to take the roll and make sure  
13 all of this is official, and we have quorum.  
14 Obviously, we're joined by Council Member Cumbo.  
15 Council Member Crowley is chairing another committee  
16 just over that door, and she's going to join us when  
17 we get quorum. We just go a little closer with  
18 Council Member Peter Koo from Queens, who's joined  
19 us. So in addition to these six very important bills  
20 that we're going to be voting on today, we're also  
21 going to hear and discuss a very, very important  
22 topic that I think is incredibly important to so many  
23 of our cultural organizations. We, as a collective,  
24 both the Council, the Administration and the Cultural  
25 Community should take some pride in the fact that

1  
2 there have been significant increases in cultural  
3 funding over the last few years. As Chair of this  
4 Committee for the last seven years, I'm enormously  
5 proud that the City of New York has allocated over \$1  
6 billion, B with a billion in cultural capital in the  
7 seven years that I've been chair of this committee.  
8 But as we all know, and as I think some of you feel  
9 strongly, increase the—increasing the operating  
10 support for cultural organizations is just as  
11 important for some folks who are smaller groups and  
12 don't have access maybe to the cultural capital. So  
13 we're very proud of the fact in the Council alone  
14 we've either increased or created new cultural  
15 initiatives so that last year over \$25 million was  
16 allocated for culture just in City Council cultural  
17 initiatives. That's an enormous victor that covers  
18 Casa and the Cultural Immigrant initiative and so  
19 many others. At the same time we all collective push  
20 and the Mayor included in his budget another \$10  
21 million for culture, which was another success story.  
22 But the back side of that, of course, is making sure  
23 that this funding gets to where it's been allocated,  
24 and that we're—we're taking a look, and that we're—  
25 we're taking a look and—and being honest here in our

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2 forum and in our oversight capacity at whether or not  
3 we're doing this in the most efficient manner. Could  
4 we improve the speed or the manner with which we-we  
5 release this funding to the cultural groups and  
6 organizations that so desperately need these grants.  
7 I don't need to say to any of you, but in some cases  
8 \$10,000 makes an enormous difference in being able to  
9 sustain yourselves. So, and I know that we share  
10 this passion, both Commissioner Finkelppearl and  
11 myself and all of you. I know that the Department of  
12 Cultural Affairs wants to release this funding as  
13 soon as possible, but we wouldn't be doing our jobs  
14 correctly if we didn't have this hearing to really  
15 drill down deep and-and talk about how we're doing  
16 it, and whether or not we could do it better. And so  
17 that's the genesis of-of this hearing, and-and I want  
18 to say the Cultural After School Adventure Program  
19 when I became the Chair was at \$5 million. It's now  
20 at \$11.2 million. I'm enormously proud of that.  
21 With Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito we created the  
22 Cultural Immigrant Initiative, an idea that I've had  
23 for several years. That now stands at over \$5  
24 million, something we're also incredibly proud about  
25 because serving our immigrant communities is

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2 something I believe in. No matter who the president  
3 becomes on Friday, we believe in the City of New York  
4 is better because of our immigrant communities, and-  
5 and-and that-that-that infuses our cultural community  
6 as well. So we're going to make sure that we keep  
7 these wonderful programs going, increase them when we  
8 can and, of course, make sure that the Department of  
9 Cultural Affairs has all the resources it needs to be  
10 able to effectively release this funding. So, I want  
11 to thank Commissioner Finkelpearl for-for being here,  
12 for his team, my colleagues. I want to thank the  
13 Committee staff Amita Kilawan, and Aliya Ali, who's  
14 here, and Chloe Rivera, who is not here today, but  
15 also works on our team, and my staff Matthew Wallace  
16 my Chief of Staff and Andreas Vija (sp?) my Deputy  
17 Chief of Staff, who works so hard on-on so many of  
18 these initiatives. It's been a long time coming to  
19 pass these six pieces of legislation and-and I'm  
20 enormously proud of the work that we've done here,  
21 and equally proud of-of the increased workload for  
22 the Department of Cultural Affairs because they have  
23 so much more money to give out now. And-and those  
24 are very, very good things. So before we hear from  
25 the Commissioner, I'm going to ask Council Member

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2 Cumbo to say a few words on—on the package, and—and  
3 then we will hear from Commissioner Finkelparl.

4                   COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you, Chair  
5 Van Bramer. Today is certainly a historical day, and  
6 one that I'm very excited about and waited for a very  
7 long time for this. As Council Member Van Bramer has  
8 said, really is historical, one of the largest  
9 packages of legislation as it pertains to art and  
10 culture in the city of New York and I couldn't be  
11 more proud to be here today, and to be a part of  
12 this. As a lifelong lover of the arts, and as well  
13 as a founder of Brooklyn's first African Diaspora art  
14 museum, I value artistic freedom, self-expression and  
15 the vital role that it plays within our society? It  
16 is imperative now more than ever that we support our  
17 artistic community, and reinvest—and reinvest in  
18 public art in our public spaces. For the past 35  
19 years the Percent for Art program has operated  
20 successfully under the guidance of the New York City  
21 Department of Cultural Affairs, and it has  
22 flourished. As a city, we have grown up, too,  
23 sometimes for the great, while others we might a bit  
24 nostalgic about. I'm very pleased to be a Brooklyn  
25 resident, and when I go to Grand, our new plaza

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2 library and I see those beautiful majestic doors to  
3 know that that was created through the Percent for  
4 Art program is just an incredible way to show how  
5 people are attracted to public spaces because of the  
6 art. When I go to Weeksville, and I see the  
7 beautiful artwork completed by Chakaia Booker and all  
8 throughout the City of New York public art is why  
9 people come here. They are seeking new experiences.  
10 They are speaking—they're—they're looking for  
11 different experiences. They want to see cultural  
12 expression and they want to see what free of cultural  
13 expression looks like, and I can think of no program  
14 better than the Percent for Art program. Through  
15 this package of legislation that Council Member Van  
16 Bramer and I have been working for three years on  
17 together, we're going to be creating greater  
18 visibility and transparency in the Percent for Art  
19 program. We are going to make sure that our  
20 communities and our artists are better connected to  
21 the Percent for Art program, and they know how to  
22 become a part of it. They know how to explore it.  
23 They know how to navigate it, and this is such a  
24 remarkable program for the artists of the City of New  
25 York who are looking to immortalize their talent and

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2 their voice and creativity in the city of New York.  
3 This is also going to be an opportunity. Over the  
4 past 35 years the Percent for Art program's budget  
5 has not increased, and so the average project had to  
6 had a—had a threshold of about approximately  
7 \$400,000. Today, we are going to change that  
8 threshold to \$900,000. The Percent for Art program  
9 spent a little over \$1 million every year as the  
10 threshold for the amount of projects that can—were  
11 completed. We're going to move that threshold to \$4  
12 million so that artists can be adequately paid for  
13 the work that they're doing. We're also going to  
14 have an opportunity to create more projects in the  
15 city of New York to have each of the boroughs  
16 experience public art in a greater and robust way,  
17 and we are going to be a greater city because of the  
18 Percent for Art program. This is truly going to  
19 immortalize our history, our contributions, the  
20 historic nature of our time and I couldn't be more  
21 proud to be a part of this process with Council  
22 Member Jimmy Van Bramer who continues to be a  
23 champion for the arts, and if ever you had to go into  
24 battle with someone, you want Council Member Jimmy  
25 Van Bramer by your side. So thank you so much for

1  
2 your advocacy, for your friendship, and for pushing  
3 this through with me. I appreciate it very much.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very,  
6 Council Member Cumbo for your inspired leadership as  
7 well, and I think we're getting closer to a vote  
8 based on what I'm being told, but let me just  
9 paraphrase, if I might, over \$1 billion in cultural  
10 capital in the last seven years. Record City Council  
11 cultural initiatives over the last three years.

12 Record numbers there. The first increase from the  
13 Administration in over a decade, and now today the  
14 first ever increase in the Percent for Art program  
15 since it was founded in 1982. There are lots of  
16 history being made here in this committee. We are  
17 increasing the budget and funding for culture and the  
18 arts, and artists across the board. That's what this  
19 is about. That's what I am about. That's what Laurie  
20 is about. That's what this committee is about. So,  
21 indeed we are in a very, very positive moment for the  
22 arts in the city of New York. I'm thrilled to be the  
23 chair of the committee, and with all of these good  
24 folks in the room. So, with that I'll ask Tom to  
25 start his testimony on the oversight hearing that

1  
2 we're about to talk about, and, of course, we will  
3 interrupt as politely as we can as soon as we have  
4 five members ready to vote, and we are very, very  
5 into it.

6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So if I may--

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

8 But before you do that, you have--

9 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

10 Sorry.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --to swear to  
12 tell the truth, which is very important.

13 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

14 LEGAL COUNSEL: Commissioner, will you  
15 please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell  
16 the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth  
17 in your testimony before this committee, and to  
18 respond honestly to Council Member questions?

19 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I do. Okay and  
20 then just before I begin my testimony, I just want to  
21 congratulate everybody on this set of legislation.  
22 It really is exciting. I think you guys know that  
23 I'm particularly excited about the Percent for Art  
24 legislation. I ran that program, and I do want to  
25 say I-I figured a connection, that our current

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2 Percent for Art Director went to high school in  
3 Flushing, was nurtured at Nokata (sp?) as a young  
4 curator and lives in your district. So we have a  
5 connection with Kendall Hami (sic) who is going to  
6 enact all the great stuff that you guys are—are now  
7 enabling. [coughs] So with that, I'll—I'll begin my  
8 testimony, and I think everybody has copies. Good  
9 afternoon, Chair Van Bramer and members of the  
10 Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and  
11 International Intergroup Relations. I am Tom  
12 Finkelparl, Commissioner of New York City's  
13 Department of Cultural Affairs. I'm here to testify  
14 in regards to today's topic, Cultural Immigrant  
15 Initiative and Post-Budget Analysis. Thank you for  
16 the opportunity to speak about these important  
17 topics. I'm joined today by many members of the  
18 staff of the Department of Cultural Affairs. This  
19 year's Expense Budget of \$181.3 million is the  
20 highest in total dollars in the agency—in the  
21 agency's history. It is accompanied by more than  
22 \$150 million in new funding for cultural capital  
23 projects. This scale of funding over \$330 million in  
24 one year wouldn't be possible without the support and  
25 collaboration of everyone on this committee and your

1  
2 colleagues on the Council. We thank you for that.  
3 As you know, \$10 million was added in negotiation  
4 between the Administration and the City Council to  
5 the agency's Expense Budget at adoption. There was a  
6 substantial increase--as the Council Members have  
7 mentioned--in funding from City Council initiatives.  
8 For instance the Cultural After School Adventures  
9 program, was increased by \$3 million. SU-CASA  
10 Creative Aging program was doubled to more two  
11 million making it the largest such program in the  
12 United States, and the Cultural Immigrant Initiative  
13 was increased by \$1.8 million, a major expansion of  
14 this source of support for immigrant communities  
15 across the City. All of this together represents the  
16 largest increase in the city's cultural funding in  
17 years, and we are grateful for that. The \$10 million  
18 Expense Budget increase was divided equally between  
19 the Cultural Institution Group and the Program  
20 Groups. This increase--increased the City funding for  
21 nearly 1,000 organizations in all five boroughs. For  
22 both the CIG and the program groups, we distributed  
23 the increases, and we provided small organizations  
24 with a higher percentage increase from the larger  
25 groups. Thus, DCLA's funding has already been put to

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2 work in the cultural sector supporting hundreds of  
3 organizations in all five boroughs. The Cultural  
4 Seeker-Institutions Group compromises organizations  
5 of all sizes and discipline on City-owned property.  
6 These groups provide publicly accessible cultural  
7 programming in exchange for operating energy-  
8 operating in energy subsidies. Therein your funding  
9 has been provided on a timeline similar to the past.  
10 The largest CIGs got a 6% increase while the smaller  
11 and mid-size groups got a 12% increase this year.  
12 This translates into substantial increases in funding  
13 for these community anchors. For instance, the  
14 Staten Island Museum saw an increase of more than  
15 \$87,000 and Queens Botanical Garden received upon-  
16 just over \$99,000. The CUNY Cultural Corps [coughs]  
17 With \$500,000 of the new funding added at adoption,  
18 DCRA and CUNY announced this new partnership in  
19 September. By the end of that month, there were than  
20 70 CUNY students placed and dozens of cultural  
21 institutions group members in a variety of roles.  
22 This program gives these cultural organizations  
23 access to new growth of talent. It exposes this  
24 diverse group of young people to the variety of  
25 career paths in arts, history, and science

1 organizations as well as artistries (sic) in gardens.  
2  
3 Importantly, these young people are being paid for  
4 their work. The goal is to build a new pipeline for-  
5 from underserved New Yorkers into the cultural  
6 sector. Thanks to support from the Rockefeller  
7 Foundation we're getting to roll out the CUNY  
8 Cultural Corps to program side starting in the  
9 summer.

10           The Cultural Development Fund: Nine  
11 hundred and thirty-eight organizations around the  
12 city receive allocations totaling \$36.5 million  
13 through our competitive panel review process. This  
14 figure also includes \$4.5 million in member items,  
15 council member items, member items from the City  
16 Council, and \$1.3 million in re-grant funds provided  
17 to the local arts councils in each borough. The  
18 groups have all received award letters, 855 initial  
19 payments, or 91% of the organizations are out the  
20 door to the cultural organizations across the city as  
21 of last Friday. Many grants are pending Comptroller  
22 review, which is Comptroller review, which is  
23 required as city grants exceeding \$100,000, or  
24 compliance with other city requirements such as proof  
25 of insurance. This progress is on par with previous

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2 years. We are able to provide at least 18% increase-  
3 increase for groups on the lowest budgetary category.  
4 That's groups with budgets under \$250,000. These  
5 size organizations received an increase of around 8%  
6 and the largest groups we fund through the CDF  
7 received about a 6% increase. So for smaller groups  
8 like the Chinese Theater Works based in Jackson  
9 Heights [coughs] their award went from \$20,000 to  
10 \$24,060 as a result of these additional funds. For a  
11 somewhat larger group like New York Transit Museum,  
12 their award increased to \$138,620 representing an  
13 \$8,120 increase over their \$125,000 CDF award as well  
14 --[background comments] --as well the \$5,500 member  
15 item.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Can you share-  
17 could you pause for one second. We have quorum. We  
18 are going to take the vote because Council Member  
19 Crowley is chairing another committee across the  
20 hall, and so we have a quorum and we can commence  
21 with the voting. Billy Martin.

22 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk.  
23 Roll call vote Committee on Cultural Affairs. The  
24 items are coupled. Chair Van Bramer.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I vote aye, and  
3 encourage all of my colleagues to vote on this  
4 historic package of cultural legislation.

5 CLERK: Crowley.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: I vote aye.

7 CLERK: Koo.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: I vote aye.

9 CLERK: Levin.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: A big  
11 congratulations to Chair Van Bramer on this package  
12 of bills. I vote aye on all.

13 CLERK: Cumbo.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I proudly vote and  
15 I'd like to thank Amita Kilawan. I also want to  
16 thank Monica Alban (sp?) on my staff, and I want to  
17 thank Terza Nasser for all of their hard work and  
18 dedication in making today possible. I vote aye.

19 CLERK: By a vote of 5 in the  
20 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions all  
21 items have been adopted by the committee.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
23 much. Obviously, we'll keep the vote open while we  
24 have the hearing, but for those of you who are—are  
25 new to this, you just witnessed history. We just

1  
2 voted out the largest cultural package in the history  
3 of the City Council, and it moves to a vote tomorrow  
4 before the Full New York City Council. So with that,  
5 a brief but very exciting interruption [laughter].  
6 Tom, we will go back to your testimony.

7                   COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I actually  
8 have a response. So congratulations to you guys and—  
9 and to the city. Okay, I'll start at the—the  
10 Cultural Development Fund. Nine hundred and thirty-  
11 eight organizations are on city received allocations  
12 of \$36.5 million through—well, actually, let me go  
13 down to where I was. So for small groups like the  
14 Chinese Theater Works based in Jackson Heights their  
15 award went from \$20,000 to \$24,000 et cetera. Right,  
16 and we have Transit Museum. Their award increased to  
17 \$138,620 representing \$8,120 increase over the  
18 \$125,000 CDF award as well as \$5,500 member item.  
19 Okay.

20                   Borough Arts Councils: As mentioned, we  
21 increased the five arts councils re-grant funding by  
22 \$400,000 allowing for a bump of 40% or more over the  
23 Fiscal 2016 amount across the board. As you know,  
24 the Arts Council's re-grant support [coughs] really  
25 makes a difference for small organizations and

1 individuals across the five boroughs. The Councils  
2 were able to increase both the number of awards and  
3 the average size of the award, a broader and deeper  
4 impact for our creative community. While we created  
5 the program in 1982, the last time we were able to  
6 increase those funds was in 2008, the year we  
7 implemented a complete overhaul of the programs  
8 budget. Supporting these five borough programs with  
9 additional funds was a key priority for us because  
10 it's an important means for the agency to reach even  
11 deeper into neighborhoods and support emerging  
12 organizations that might be too new or too small for  
13 CDF support. It's also one of the few ways in which  
14 we were able to provide support for individual artists  
15 outside of Percent for Art actually.

17 Coalition of Theaters of Color:

18 \$1,965,800 were allocated to 43 organizations through  
19 the Coalition of Theaters of Color funding stream.  
20 We have made 22 payments to these groups. The  
21 remainder either await comptroller review, again for  
22 grants over \$100,000 or more or compliance with other  
23 city requirements.

24 Cultural After School Adventures Program.

25 For years, CASA has supported cultural programming

1 for school kids in every community in New York City.  
2  
3 To date for 2017, nearly \$11 million has been  
4 allocated to 149 organizations. The list was  
5 substantially complete in late December. All  
6 designated groups have been notified of the  
7 allocations, and school designations, and we have  
8 begun to issue payments.

9 SU-CASA: Thanks to the Council's  
10 commitment to this program, SU-CASA can officially be  
11 called the largest creative aging program in the  
12 United States. Out of just over \$2 million in FY-17  
13 funding, \$510,000 has been allocated to the five  
14 local art councils. Those councils convene panels in  
15 all five boroughs to match artists with 51 senior  
16 centers, one in each Council District. These 51  
17 programs began on January 1<sup>st</sup>. The other pro or SU-  
18 CASA money will go to cultural organizations to  
19 manage residencies in senior centers. 117  
20 organizations submitted applications for DCLA for 20-  
21 for Fiscal Year 2017 participation. Applications  
22 reviewed-were reviewed by DFTA, DCLA, City Council,  
23 and the New York Academy of Medicine's, age friendly  
24 NYC program. We then compiled information on 102  
25 senior centers into CASA designation pack-designation

1  
2 packages for each City Council Member to use in  
3 matching organizations with senior centers. All  
4 designations herein described are expected in  
5 tomorrow's transparency resolution with programs  
6 beginning in our remaining senior centers on February  
7 1<sup>st</sup>.

8                   Energy Coalition: The \$10 million  
9 expense increase allows us to designate \$1 million to  
10 organizations that operate in city-owned facilities  
11 under the agency's jurisdiction that are not members  
12 of the Cultural Institution Group. These groups  
13 range from Clemente Soto Velez Center in the Lower  
14 East Side to Weeksville Heritage Center in Crown  
15 Heights. Both of them are here today. DCLA staff  
16 has been working with other city offices to get this  
17 mechanism for payment. We expect these groups to  
18 receive awards letters that are for initial payments  
19 in coming weeks. As you can see, the majority of  
20 DCLA's funding is either out the door or well on its  
21 way. There are many positive stories of lots of  
22 groups receiving significantly more funding from the  
23 city than ever before. In this regard, the timing of  
24 this funding is on track with previous years. There  
25 are two funding initiatives that have experienced

1  
2 delays and these programs are: Art is the Catalyst  
3 for Change; Anti-Gun Violence Initiative, which seeks  
4 to increase cultural opportunities, community  
5 connections and gun violence awareness for  
6 neighborhoods deeply impacted by gun violence. All  
7 designations are expected in tomorrow's Transparency  
8 Resolution with the complete list designated-  
9 designated organizations in hand we can begin to  
10 process these awards immediately. We are prepared to  
11 get the award letter and payments out the door in the  
12 next several weeks as groups return the necessary  
13 compliance materials.

14           The Cultural Immigrant Initiative: A  
15 welcome source as deployed for cultural groups  
16 serving immigrant communities across the city. We  
17 are awaiting designations for these funds and as soon  
18 as we have substantial completion on this list, we  
19 can start moving these awards forward. We are  
20 committed to getting money from these funding  
21 initiatives out the door with help of the City  
22 Council. We then want to work with you on ways to  
23 streamline the process for next year so we can get  
24 this critical funding to our cultural community with  
25 the maximum efficiency. There are several ideas

1  
2 about how to get substantial completion on each of  
3 these initiatives sooner next year, and here are  
4 three ideas completely subject to discussion with the  
5 Council:

6           Communications: In collaboration with  
7 City Council Finance we are willing to take as active  
8 a role as the Council deems appropriate in contacting  
9 individual council members to seek their  
10 designations. The second idea is a cultural fair for  
11 cultural groups and Council staff. This is to be an  
12 open house where eligible cultural groups present  
13 their programs. This is modeled on the annual Art  
14 and Cultural Education Services or ACES there. In  
15 that program any ordination-organization with a  
16 contract for direct student services and professional  
17 development for DOE is eligible to host a table.  
18 I've been to this event, and it's a great match  
19 making opportunity. If we do this with the Council  
20 and the initiatives this would be a chance for the  
21 groups to promote their services to Council Members  
22 and give Council Members and their staffs another way  
23 to learn about the full spectrum of cultural  
24 offerings they can support with their designations.

And Notifications of Initiative Funding:

We are willing and prepared to include a progress tracker on the DCLA website letting groups know the progress of each initiative as it stands as we progress and starting in the fall. On a final note, despite the delays we can still make every one of these designations work for the people of New York this fiscal year. Right now, it's January. There's still the winter, spring and into the summer to execute the programs. I'm personally committed to working to get the remaining funding out the door and making the programs a success. We thank you for your commitment to working with us to connect all New Yorkers with transformative cultural experiences. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, Commissioner. I want to recognize that we've been joined by Council Member Julissa-Ferreras Copeland, and call on Bill Martin to ask the Council Member to Vote.

CLERK: Continuation of roll call, Committee on Cultural Affairs, Council Member Ferreras-Copeland.

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2

COUNCIL MEMBER JULISSA FERRERAS-COPELAND:

3

Thank you, Chair. I vote aye.

4

CLERK: The vote now stands a 6.

5

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very

6

much. So, thank you, Commissioner, for your

7

testimony, and—and I wanted to ask you a—a few

8

things. So we acknowledge that there were some

9

delays or have been some delays in getting some of

10

this funding out, and—and I wanted to talk a little

11

bit about that. You mentioned the term substantial

12

completion a few times in your testimony and—and that

13

would be an internal target I think for when you can

14

release the money because here is the whole crux of

15

the matter, and the—the—the crux of the hearing.

16

There are a lot of designations. Because the Council

17

has so—so fought for increase these designations,

18

there are more and more all the time. That's a good

19

problem to have, but it seems to me that the

20

Department of Cultural Affairs is not letting any of

21

these grants go forward or be paid out until this

22

substantial completion is met, and—and I guess I'm—

23

I'm curious as to what that number is, how you come

24

up with it, and is it even necessary because it seems

25

to me like if—if several hundred allocations have

1  
2 been made, and—and transparency resolutions have been  
3 passed, why sort of hold up everybody from getting  
4 their funding when—when they so desperately need it.  
5 So there are a few questions--

6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
7 yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --that are very  
9 important in there about this substantial completion  
10 piece.

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay. So,  
12 the—what we have asked for is we want the entire list  
13 with everybody's designation is 100% complete, but  
14 realize that that really isn't achievable. So in  
15 other words, even in the case for example right here  
16 now at the Cultural—the CASA program, there's still  
17 \$120,000 of designations that haven't gone out, but  
18 that's a very small number compared to the, you know,  
19 total \$11 million of CASA funding. So, in a case  
20 like that we're saying, you know, just one or two  
21 percent of people, and we're not going to, you know,  
22 hold up the program for a very tiny amount of--

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]  
24 Then—then let me just—drill down deeper there. So—so  
25 CASA you decided--

1

2

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

3

Yes.

4

5

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --it's an \$11.2  
million Council initiative. There's only \$120,000

6

left, which is a very small percentage. So again,

7

your--your number for substantial completion is 99%--

8

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

9

98% is what we've always set that. So, in the past--

10

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

11

You've got to reach 98% before you release any money.

12

Is that what you're saying?

13

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: That, so yes,

14

but what we're saying is what we want is the entire

15

list. We want to just here's the entire list, and I

16

can explain why we want that.

17

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And is total--

18

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

19

So we're saying if--

20

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

21

Just hold it for one second, and Council Member

22

Rosenthal has joined us. You know, we're voting on a

23

very important Cultural piece. So I'll let Council

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Member Rosenthal vote before we continue with the

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question.

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CLERK: Council Member Rosenthal.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Aye.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much. We've only got a couple more members to go so with only a couple more.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Great. Sir, I'm happy to be interrupted.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay. So, with--within each individual council so for that again, we got the number. There's a couple left over. Just a small number. At press go, all those people have been informed. The money is going to fill up. In the case for example with large numbers of designations that haven't been made, if you have one CASA designation versus two, versus three, versus four, there are all kinds of different oversight that gets triggered by that. So, for example, if you have more than \$10,000 in cumulative member funding, you have to say--you have to prove that you've been to MOCS. So one of your leaders has to have been to a MOCS Capacity Building Training Program. You have to prove that. If you get over \$25,000, you have to register for payment on the City's Electronic

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Transfer. If you go to \$50,000, you have to prove insurance. If you go over \$100,000 with five designations, you have to--there's MOCS' that is triggered. So all of these different oversight, you now, there's a good reason for that. You know, I mean there's--we actually think this is public money that there's a good reason for oversight. It's not like a regular grant. It's taxpayer money. So it's important--

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

yes.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --to have insurance.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

Yes.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: It's important for-- So that's the reason that we want to have say within each initiative we want the complete list. We want the--okay, you are Corona Youth Orchestra. You've got five designations for--I wish they did have five--for CASA. That triggers Comptroller review. You can't say well, they got four and then we added one, and we go to the Comptroller and say actually we've already paid out \$80,000 and now we're

1  
2 now reviewing it with the Comptroller. So there's a  
3 bunch of reasons that where we want to get to  
4 substantial completion, which we've always been able  
5 to get to. We haven't been able to get to  
6 substantial completion, which means just about  
7 everyone with 98 with 99% for each Council  
8 initiative. It's total. In other words, we're not  
9 waiting for every Council initiative to be finished.  
10 Within each Council initiative we need to get to that  
11 point. Now we press go on the funding, and at which  
12 point it's relatively quick.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, but if we—  
14 if-if-it that's the case, then aren't—aren't you  
15 actually making the case for 100% completion of every  
16 single initiative before you give out one dollar?

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: No, no, it's  
18 per—it's per initiative.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right.

20 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So in other  
21 words, you could, you know—and we have done this—as  
22 each initiative has been completed, we've pressed go  
23 on that initiative, and all these reviews are per  
24 initiative, not cumulative like—So for, you know, for  
25 example for CDF, where these grants started to go

1  
2 out, right, in the fall before—and for many of the  
3 same groups.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right, now CDF,  
5 you said it was roughly the same period, but—but--

6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
7 Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --was there a  
9 delay as well in the City--

10 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
11 No, and the City was okay. It was a couple of weeks  
12 delay at the beginning of the fiscal year. Because  
13 of the extra money at adoption, we had to figure out  
14 how to give that money out, and we've then made this  
15 formula where the smaller groups got the bigger  
16 increase. But really that was just a couple of  
17 weeks, and that the CDFS money just rolled out as it  
18 has in previous years. You know, each one of these  
19 grants is a sort-is work, and the count is 800—what  
20 was my testimony? You know, 800, well over 800 of  
21 those grants have gone out already. So we've got 855  
22 of those grants went out.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right.  
24  
25

1  
2 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, no, we're  
3 on track with CDFS, We have been in-in previous,  
4 and-and, yeah.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So we-we talked  
6 about this, and-and you know that-that myself and I  
7 don't think I'm the only one has been approached by  
8 some of our-our cultural organizations who have said  
9 that they have not received their funding. In some  
10 cases not received any of their funding. There are--  
11 there are many cultural organizations that receive  
12 all of these, right--

13 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
14 Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --if they're so  
16 lucky, they're getting CDF, they're getting CASA,  
17 they're getting Cultural Immigrants, they're getting  
18 SU-CASA, and in some, you know, pretty recently have--  
19 have certainly spoken to me, and I think some as well  
20 to Council Member Cumbo, they haven't received that.

21 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Right.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Some are forced  
23 to take out bridge loans to make a payment. That's  
24 unacceptable I think to-to all of us, and I think  
25 the-the question is look, we at the Council believe

1  
2 more strongly than anybody, and we have Contracts and  
3 Finance here in the sanctity of this money and making  
4 sure that every public dollar is—is safeguarded, but  
5 then there's also sort of a—a—a bureaucracy I think  
6 and if you're a cultural organization and you're  
7 struggling to pay the rent, sometimes it's hard to  
8 understand. And CDF is one where it doesn't—you  
9 don't require any designation. I think that's done  
10 as a kind of a due process.

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Right.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I'm just  
13 trying to get to, you know, how do we—how do we fix  
14 something and how do we make it better so the groups  
15 aren't waiting and—and—and maybe you can get to  
16 substantial completion sooner or have a lower  
17 threshold and—and—and somehow work this through with  
18 the Controller's Office even. So that that groups  
19 aren't waiting several—several months for their  
20 funding.

21 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So the  
22 Controller has up to a month. So from the time—so-so  
23 let's, you know, so a group has submitted their  
24 paperwork, and we submit that the Comptroller. They  
25 have up to a month to approve the grant or

1  
2 disapprove. But it often takes a little bit less  
3 than that like three weeks. So that is part of it.  
4 There are all these different parts of the process.  
5 I will say that the—the majority of the money really  
6 the vast majority of the money that we've sent is on  
7 schedule as it has been in previous years. I was  
8 inquired by another Council Member about six groups  
9 in her district, and actually some of them had gotten  
10 the money, and others there's insurance review. And  
11 it's like we can't release the money until they've  
12 cleared up the insurance problems. And so it—it is—  
13 that's the way it is, and that—those insurance  
14 requirements are there for good reason. We don't  
15 want the City to get sued for, you know, they have to  
16 have general liability. So, you know, with of them I  
17 have to say, I—I—because it's city money, I agree  
18 with a lot these regulations. The money is flowing  
19 out in large numbers, and then we do have to really  
20 buckle down and try to figure out to get to  
21 substantial completion sooner on some of the  
22 initiatives, and I—I—my heart is with these groups.  
23 I—I know a lot of the groups, and I—of course I feel  
24 terrible that—if the money hasn't gone out.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So let just ask  
3 a few questions and then I'm going to--

4 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
5 Yep.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --refer it to my  
7 colleagues that have a lot of questions. But, so  
8 we've increased the cultural initiatives across the  
9 board--

10 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --exponentially  
12 in some cases. Have you increased your staff--

13 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
14 Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --to deal with  
16 the--the--the workload? You yourself--

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
18 yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --referenced the  
20 work involved in all of this, and--and--and if not, why  
21 not because either you--you don't believe you need  
22 more staff or the existing staff you have are doing a  
23 lot more work.

24 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: No, no, so if--  
25 if--the staff isn't the problem. We have increased.

1 There are a couple of extra lines were given to us.

2 We have the capacity to—to move the grants. So as

3 soon as we—by the way, I have in front of me the

4 initiatives went from \$5.8 million in '14 to \$10.3

5 million in '15 to \$15— Anyway it went from it from

6 \$5 to \$10 to \$15 to \$20 essentially.

7  
8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing] I

9 think that's amazing--

10 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --in four

11 years.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --situations

13 right there.

14 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

15 It's fantastic and I'm--

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

17 Yeah.

18 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --I'm excited.

19 That's incredible this—I wonder how many cities in

20 America have a cultural budget as big as the Council

21 Initiatives, Council Initiatives. I think it's quite

22 low. It's not a staffing problem. We have the staff

23 to do it. We need to get to substantial completion

24 sooner on these things, and—and I'm willing to—you

25 know we—we have a good relationship with Counsel of

1  
2 Finance. We're—we're talking to them a couple of  
3 times a week I believe, my staff said. It's not—  
4 we're in—we're in good communication getting to the  
5 point of pressing go. So we have to able to do it.  
6 So that's what we want to absolutely make sure we do  
7 next year. With everything this year, you know, the  
8 problems I hope we'll be—we're able to press go after  
9 the Transparency Resolution for the Gun Violence  
10 tomorrow, and then the other one if we can get that  
11 done, and the next Transparency Resolution is in  
12 February.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, I know a  
14 lot is going to get done tomorrow, but let me just  
15 drill down just a little bit--

16 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
17 Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --more on that  
19 question. Right, and—and look, I have great respect  
20 for you and—and I'm sure a terrific manager and  
21 supervisor of your team over there at the current  
22 Cultural Affairs. But by my count we're approaching,  
23 you know, 600 CASA grants alone, right, 561, hundreds  
24 of cultural innovation initiative grants. Obviously  
25 CDF--

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2

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

3

Uh-huh.

4

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --is-is-is

5

fairly consistent with some, give or take SU-CASA.

6

All of these folks have individual-individual program

7

officers, correct--

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COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Uh-huh.

9

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and--and so how

10

can you not--if you've--if we've doubled or tripled,

11

quadrupled the number of--of initiatives and the

12

amount of funding, how does the exact same number of

13

staff--now you mentioned you've hired some additional

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staff, but I--I've seen some of those--those lines,

15

too, and I'm not sure all of them were for this

16

particular purpose. So--so, does not quadrupling the--

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the number of grants and the number of--in the amount

18

of funding require some additional staffing--

19

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

20

So yes.

21

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --in this

22

particular area?

23

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes, yes.

24

Now, so the--there were two additional lines

25

additional lines added at the agency, and they were

1 specifically added because of the extra—I don't want  
2 to say burden or opportunity--

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

5 Yes, yes.

6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --let's say of  
7 these—of the Council initiatives. So again, if you  
8 look at when we've been able to press go on all these  
9 initiatives, and the time from pressing go to getting  
10 the award letters out to—getting the awards, that—  
11 that's not the problem. It's getting to the moment  
12 of pressing go. Really, I don't think of this—there  
13 aren't big delays at our agency, and I'm very proud  
14 of that that—that when we are to get it rolling, it  
15 will very quickly. It's getting it rolling that has  
16 been the—the okay fire. (sic)

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I have a lot  
18 more on this, but I want to turn to my colleagues  
19 [coughing] for a—a few questions. They all have  
20 questions, not surprisingly, and I think Council  
21 Member Rosenthal may come back for her round of  
22 questions as well. But Council Member Koo is first.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [coughs] Thanks to  
24 our Chair Van Bramer and thank you, Commissioner, for  
25 coming here to give us your testimony, and I want to

1  
2 thank all of you for your leadership and advocacy  
3 from helping cultural and arts—culture and arts in  
4 New York City. Yeah, because we all know culture and  
5 arts are really important and they are with us so in  
6 spirit with the city, you know. So, you—  
7 traditionally we pay a lot of attention to the  
8 culture and arts in the city being shared in  
9 Manhattan, you know, and it's true that they have a  
10 lot of activities there. Everyday, the Music Center,  
11 Carnegie Hall or all those who is there, they all  
12 provide for a lot of things. But in the outer  
13 boroughs like—like Queens, we—we don't have that,  
14 that many cultural activities, but since you've  
15 become Commissioner, it has improved a lot now, and  
16 especially with the—the new Cultural Initiative, we  
17 have seen a lot of small groups to do performances,  
18 and I want to thank you for that, and I also want to  
19 thank the Chair for that. But the—the question is a  
20 lot of small groups they have difficulty. Like, you—  
21 filling out the application.

22 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Even though some---  
24 some groups they apply for one year to this year.  
25 Next year they give up because they don't have the—

1  
2 the manpower and the know-how to fill out the  
3 application.

4 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Uh-huh.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: And it's a very  
6 complicated application for the first time, and so my  
7 question is--to you is there agency of anybody--ore  
8 anyone helping them to--to fill out this application  
9 especially for first time applicants, you know?

10 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So the--so  
11 first I'd like to say that--that I'm aware of what  
12 you're talking about, and that's one of the reasons  
13 that we put a lot of extra money into the Borough Art  
14 Councils because their thresholds are lower. I was--  
15 when I became Commissioner, one of the first  
16 questions that was asked to me, you know, what would  
17 you want to do, and I said I said I believe in the  
18 great organizations all over the city, the big ones,  
19 but I said there's there a lot of Sri Lankans in  
20 Staten Island. I believe they have a dance group,  
21 and I'll bet you it's important to the community, and  
22 so that actually--well, it turned out to be true. The  
23 Sri Lankan dance group from Staten Island contacted  
24 me. I've actually met with them a couple of times.  
25 That group wasn't even incorporated as a 501(c)(3).

1  
2 So it couldn't get money from us, but did get money  
3 from the Staten Island Arts Council. So the arts  
4 councils having more money is a--is an avenue. You  
5 have to have been doing business for a number of  
6 years to work with us, and you have to be a  
7 501(c)(3), et cetera. So getting money to the  
8 borough Arts Council is--and increasing not by 40%  
9 this year way to get more into the smaller non-  
10 profits in--in the boroughs. I will also say that we  
11 have recently in our Commissioner's Unit added more  
12 language capacity. So we now have Mandarin and  
13 Cantonese speaking staff members. We have an Arabic  
14 staff members--Arabic speaking staff member. We have  
15 a lot of languages now in the agency. We had a--a  
16 wonderful cultural plan meeting at the Hall of  
17 Science in Queens recently, and as Councilwoman  
18 Ferreras-Copeland will attest, we actually I think  
19 had four Spanish speaking tables at that, and we were  
20 able to accommodate. So I think that--that some of  
21 the access points are getting better. I think that  
22 there is still a lot of work to do.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So have you like  
24 done any of the works--works--workshops to help people  
25 to how to fill out this application?

1  
2           COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes, we do  
3 workshops. We did them in each borough. That's  
4 something that happens—Lynn, what's the date.

5           LYNN: [off mic] There's a second one  
6 today and there's 10 more. (sic)

7           COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: We have this,  
8 you know, if you didn't hear. The second one of  
9 those workshops is today. We have 10 more coming up.

10          COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Oh.

11          COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So we do that  
12 every year around this time because we're getting  
13 ready to go into the season of application. Yes.

14          COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Okay. Thank you,  
15 Commissioner, and thank you for your leadership.  
16 Yeah.

17          COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Thank you.

18          CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
19 much, Council Member Koo. Council Member Rosenthal.

20          COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Hey, there.

21          COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Hi.

22          COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Nice to see  
23 you, Commissioner. Thanks for all your work, and  
24 your leadership. My ears happened to ring when you  
25 talked about contracts. As Chair of the Contracts

1  
2 Committee, I've been working on this stuff for the  
3 Human Services sector primarily for the last three  
4 years to figure out how to expedite a contract  
5 through the city process.

6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: It was just  
8 so--there was such a disconnect hearing you because  
9 everyone is always saying oh, I wish we could go  
10 through DCLA. That goes so much faster, and so--

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
12 Thank you. I mean, so not to say anything about any  
13 other agency, we really do pride ourselves--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL:--[interposing]  
15 Yes.

16 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --on--and the  
17 thing is that--that, you know, and there are plenty of  
18 people here I don't know, but the thing is that we  
19 have a good connection. So there's plenty of folks  
20 who are--are grantees that we really know quite well.  
21 We know the organizations for year, and if I don't  
22 know people, the staff often does. So there's a  
23 connection that I feel good about, and we want to  
24 keep it that way. We really do.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: And I can tell  
3 by the way you're talking about it you're having sort  
4 of the same hiccup that happens on the social  
5 services side where a small group that maybe doesn't  
6 have its 501(c)(3), but there's a real cultural  
7 competence there. You know, you want to give—the  
8 City wants to give funding, but we're held up, and,  
9 you know, the rule that you have to get funding at  
10 least for two years to get over a certain amount of  
11 money.

12 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
13 Uh-huh.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So I mean  
15 what—I've never looked at your contracting program,  
16 and perhaps you already do this, but on the human  
17 services side we set up—the Mayor has set up a new  
18 system that is working amazingly well called the  
19 Accelerator.

20 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Uh-huh.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Accelerator.  
22 Whose

23 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
24 So here's the things that--  
25

1

2

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: --to

3

Accelerate. Yeah.

4

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I have heard

5

about that, and I've talked to OMB about that. We

6

have contracts, we accept grants, and there's a big

7

difference when you're contracting a grant.

8

Contracts are much more burdensome and complicated to

9

enter into. If we entered into that kind of

10

contracts you're talking about then that would be a

11

good idea as long as we can keep them grants it's a-

12

it's much better. Believe me all the groups in this

13

room would rather have a grant than a contract. So

14

there's certain kinds of--even things like just

15

intellectual property questions that come up in

16

relationship to contracts. When it comes to the arts

17

you don't want it. It's a different thing, yes.

18

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So, as I say,

19

I've never looked at culturals. Obviously, you know

20

all this stuff and I don't--

21

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

22

Right, Councilman, yes.

23

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: --but I would

24

urge you to--and I'd be happy to, you know, help pull

25

1  
2 this together. It's actually not OMB. It's--the  
3 Accelerator is now housed in MOCS--

4 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Uh-huh.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: --and there's  
6 a guy who runs it, but they over the last two years  
7 this was something that started under the Bloomberg  
8 Administration for a tiny faction, but they have been  
9 very nimble with the coding so that it can do many  
10 more things, and applies many more types of contract.  
11 And it just sounds to me like [siren] in the same way  
12 that DYCD has especially now under this  
13 administration that--and this Council, who wants to  
14 help so much with youth, you know, their--their  
15 ability to process the contracts or whatever they do  
16 has deteriorated because there are just so many.

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So there are  
19 lots of reasons why this hiccup could be happening,  
20 and I really think there are experts in the  
21 Administration who can help with it.

22 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I'd be happy  
24 to meet with you obviously, but--

25 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, no, I--

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2

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yes.

3

4

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --I'll take  
you up on that offer. I think the thing is that we  
again, I know, I'd like to keep repeating. I think  
95% of what we're doing is--is with much bigger  
research.

7

8

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]  
That's down (sic) 5%.

9

10

11

12

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COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [laughs] It's  
happening very efficiently, but look we--we got a--we  
absolutely came her with some ideas how to make it  
better--

14

15

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]  
Great.

16

17

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --and if--if  
there are ways to--to do it, we want to do it so--

18

19

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Great. I--I  
feel like it's growing pains, nothing more.

20

21

22

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Uh-huh.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So, thank you  
very much.

23

24

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Thanks.

Thanks a lot.

25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you. The  
3 first question it's to basically follow up on Council  
4 Member Van Bramer because I know we've spoken about  
5 this a lot. My question is with the CASA program,  
6 why is it that the Cultural Immigration Initiative  
7 can't run concurrent with the CASA Program so that  
8 you're seeking the same designations at the same  
9 time, and are we basically holding the--the Cultural  
10 Immigration fund simply because--I don't want to out  
11 them in that way. A few Council Members have just  
12 put off sending in who their designations are, and  
13 that's holding up the whole program--

14 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: --give me their  
16 names and [laughter] just give them.

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
18 I will not give you their names.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I'll go get them.

20 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I would, you  
21 know, you should talk to Council Finance and get that  
22 information if you want to, but the--the answer is  
23 just a lot of outstanding designations. \$580,000 of  
24 designations under me. So, yeah, that is we--because  
25 of the things I said before about oversight and about

1  
2 the different triggering of different insurance or  
3 reviews or comptroller review, we made a substantial  
4 completion of that particular initiative, and again,  
5 we're not going to say because one council member  
6 also made designation. It's not like that.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: It's not like  
8 that?

9 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: No, it's like  
10 and again, in the case of--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing]  
12 Whereas there's some of that?

13 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: In the case of  
14 CASA right now, citywide there's six designations  
15 that haven't been made out of hundreds, and you say  
16 okay fine. No problem. That's an \$11 million  
17 program, 120,000. It's like 1%. It hasn't--and so  
18 we're fine. We're not being a sticker down to the  
19 last, but substantial completion is what we're asking  
20 for.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Why are people  
22 more qualified in the CASA program than in the  
23 Cultural Immigrant Fund, because to me it seems like  
24 once you went to your system of DCLA, you pretty much  
25

1  
2 across the board for year after year have to have the  
3 same paperwork in place so--

4 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
5 Yeah, that's what--the problem is not the groups. The  
6 problem is that they--the group, the designations  
7 haven't been completed. And I--I mean I have a theory  
8 about that, which is that the--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing]  
10 Pleas.

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --within the  
12 cultural immigration--Immigrant Initiative, there's a  
13 threshold of a million dollars for this--the size of  
14 the organization. So the smaller organizations under  
15 million dollars, that could be that Council Members  
16 are used to giving to larger groups, and don't have  
17 the connections. I'm not sure why the designations  
18 haven't been made, but that's one possibility, but  
19 if--the--the design of the program is to--to profit or  
20 to profit--to activate the smaller cultural  
21 organizations on behalf of the immigrant communities.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I almost  
23 understand--

24 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay.  
25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: --but I'm still  
3 unclear as to whether it is that a number of Council  
4 Members just simply haven't made their designation.  
5 That's one option or two, the other option is that  
6 organizations that are Cultural Immigration Fund have  
7 not gotten all of their appropriate paperwork  
8 together--

9 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
10 Yes, and for--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: --and it seems that  
12 both of them are not right.

13 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: No. the form  
14 risk is that.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: If they don't have  
16 their paperwork.

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: No, no, no,  
18 if--meaning that their--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] That  
20 their members have not made their designation?

21 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: We haven't  
22 gotten to the paperwork problem or issue because we  
23 haven't pressed go on the funding because we don't--  
24 because the number of--

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] What  
3 happens differently with CASA why members are pushed  
4 to the mat to say give me your designations? Whereas  
5 in the Cultural Immigration Fund they're not pressed  
6 to the mat to say give me your designation?

7 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I-I'm sorry.  
8 I can't answer that because we're not the-I don't  
9 know if that is the case, but I mean I'm-we're not  
10 the people. We're waiting for the Council to make  
11 the designations. We're not the people communicating  
12 with the Council Members pushing for this or that.  
13 So I don't-I don't know the answer to that question.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [siren] When did  
15 the CASA grant get released to the groups?

16 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So the CASA  
17 became com-substantially complete with the mid-  
18 December Transparency Resolution.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Right.

20 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Right. So  
21 then--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: After that.

23 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: After that, we  
24 sent all the award letters, and-and we have now begun  
25

1  
2 to issue. So in that month, we sent out all the  
3 award letters, and we're not making the payments.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Let me just add  
5 this.

6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Right. Okay.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Let me add this to  
8 this from wondering about the profit, and we've  
9 spoken about this, but just on the record. It's  
10 extraordinarily difficult to run a not-for-profit  
11 organization when the fiscal year begins July 1<sup>st</sup> and  
12 then come January maybe February, you're getting the  
13 funding. So from—it puts organizations in such a  
14 dangerous place because for many of the organizations  
15 they have to front the money out of funding that if  
16 in the best case scenario they have in reserve, and  
17 most don't have that level of reserve. If they're  
18 not utilizing their reserve, then they're dipping  
19 into other grant funding that wasn't designated for  
20 that particular purpose. So now they're spending  
21 money from some other organization to provide funding  
22 for this, and then they're paying artists and other  
23 people out of funding that they don't have, and they  
24 have no understanding of when this funding is going  
25 to come available, and most groups don't have the

1  
2 wherewithal to even know where to begin to get a  
3 bridge loan, right?

4 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So it puts them in  
6 this place that's very dangerous for the  
7 organizations, and for me I know that there's just  
8 this small percentage, but like Council Member  
9 Rosenthal said, that small percentage seems to be any  
10 group I know that runs into on the street.

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, I—look,  
12 I absolutely agree with what you just said.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] But  
14 my grant (sic) had a question, too.

15 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Oh, okay,  
16 okay.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: What is the goal  
18 for the upcoming fiscal year because for me CASA  
19 should be awarded July 1<sup>st</sup>. So that way  
20 organizations July and August could begin to plan  
21 with the school they're going to work with.

22 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Right.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: They're getting to  
24 the classroom. They're able to figure out their  
25 program because if the group gets the funding in

1  
2 October, the whole program is dead because now  
3 they're going to enter into the school. The kids  
4 have already picked their program. The parents have  
5 their routine, and then they can't get into—they're  
6 not going to just say oh, there's a great art program  
7 when they're already in soccer.

8 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So it's--

10 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
11 So I have a—in front of me prepared by my staff, you  
12 know, the ideal timeline--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay.

14 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --for these,  
15 and absolutely. Look, if we could get to the point  
16 where designations are listed at adoption, that would  
17 be our dream. If that were the case, you know, I  
18 mean I can show you these timelines but, of course,  
19 that would be our dream as well [coughs] to have all  
20 the designations made at adoption. If that can't  
21 happen, you know, how can we at least accelerated it  
22 into earlier in the fiscal year for the upcoming  
23 year. [siren] I think that we're 100% in agreement  
24 with that. There's no question. So, you know, at  
25 the time of adoption this year, and we're—we're in-

1  
2 there were 56% of the overall allocations were--had  
3 not been made at adoption, and last year similar. So--  
4 so again, at adoption or--or soon thereafter it needs  
5 to be goal for next year. This year we have to just  
6 work as hard as we can to get the money out as  
7 quickly as possible.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I'll turn it back  
9 over to Chair Van Bramer. I have a doctor's  
10 appointment so I'll be leaving, but thank you so  
11 much.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. So,  
13 I want to push back a little bit more on the  
14 Department of Cultural Affairs right. Certainly, we  
15 all some work to do here, but--but substantial  
16 completion, which this year you sort of pegged at 98  
17 or--or 99% roughly. Is that a new number? Has it  
18 always been 98%?

19 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Oh, no, it's  
20 always been that. So what--what we've said again,  
21 we've asked for--

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And where is  
23 that recorded? Is that--is that like written down  
24 somewhere?

1  
2                   COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: As a-I don't  
3 know. I have to check and see if there is, but what  
4 I'm saying is that the-the request is through  
5 designation, and-and in previous years the  
6 designation, full designation, and again when I say  
7 substantial completion, we're really looking for that  
8 full 100%. If there's a couple of percentage out.  
9 That's always been the case is we've waited until  
10 there is that full, but it has the lag time to get to  
11 that. It hasn't happened until this year.

12                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: But did you up  
13 the substantial completion, and did you communicate  
14 that to the Council? So you sent the 98 like we will  
15 not release this discretionary funding until you  
16 reach 98% completion. Did you write that to the  
17 Council?

18                   COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I-I don't  
19 know. I'm not sure if we wrote that, but I'm saying  
20 that the tradition has been always when you're  
21 finished with the designations, give us the list,  
22 we'll release the money. So the-the question we've  
23 never been asked to release the money prior to having  
24 almost the entire list. That substantial  
25 compensation, yes.

1

2

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Almost.

3

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

4

5

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So you have  
released?

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COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, just  
like this year. Like I'm saying. In other words, if  
there's a couple of stragglers here and there, it's  
okay. Fine we'll go out and do it. But the idea has  
always been the same, which is when we get the list,  
we'll release the money because of all the stuff that  
I just read before.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Hm. So, I mean  
I just—look, the—the Council is—is the one  
responsible for—for allocating the money. We are the  
ones who put the money in the budget. We are the  
ones who like want cultural groups to get this  
funding. The vast majority of submissions are put  
in—in a timely manner, and I just don't the  
Department of Cultural Affairs to sit back and say no  
we're not going to give that a dime until you get  
100% of these submissions in. I actually think  
that's sort of cruel to the cultural organizations  
and to—to a lot of these districts. So, that's why I  
wanted to have this hearing because I do sense that

1  
2 pushback and sort of that institutional like no we're  
3 not going to do it until we get 100% and that's our  
4 final like decision. And-and-and, you know, I-I  
5 think that the-- Look, there needs to be more  
6 communication on both sides, but I-but I do think  
7 there is a sense on our side, right that the  
8 Department of Cultural Affairs sort of ups the ante  
9 this year, changed a little bit in terms of what  
10 substantial completion meant, and then didn't notify  
11 the Council appropriately that-that we're not doing  
12 anything here until you get to at least 98%. As long  
13 as there's that sense on our side that that wasn't  
14 effectively and officially communicate in that way,  
15 we have a problem, and-and-and the folks behind you  
16 who are going to testify, right, are the ones, you  
17 know, who-who have-who have struggled. I still  
18 maintain that-that the-the CDF money should also  
19 still move faster, and that-that has nothing to do  
20 with the City Council. That's strictly within your  
21 house, and-and could be moved faster, and should be  
22 moved faster-and-and, you know, and I just-and I  
23 think you started the testimony in that way, and  
24 obviously as we've-we've evolved here so has sort of  
25 the testimony a little bit. But if we-if we both and

1  
2 all resolve that this has to be done differently next  
3 year, groups have to get their funding more quickly.  
4 The communication has to be better between the agency  
5 and Finance at the City Council level, and that—and  
6 that we should—and that we shouldn't sort of withhold  
7 anything or everything, you know, based on sort of a—  
8 a preference really. Now, some about your points is  
9 really legal fiduciary aspect, but—but it can't just  
10 be a sort of bureaucratic like position. Like we  
11 adopt this position and we get to do that because  
12 we're the Department of Cultural Affairs, and—and  
13 we're not going to do this, this being released and  
14 all of this funding, which the Council has fought so  
15 hard, and puts you in a position to be able to give  
16 it out in the first place, right. You—you don't have  
17 this ability unless we allocate the funding, and—and  
18 we work so hard. So I'm not going to sit here and  
19 let the Council be the bad guy here when none of this  
20 even exists without the City Council, and—and that I  
21 have a problem with. So, I just want to say that,  
22 and I, you know, and in your testimony you pointed to  
23 some—some ideas, thank you, about what we could do  
24 going forward to speed up the process and make it  
25 work more efficiently. And—and—and, you know, we'll

1  
2 certainly all discuss those, but-but, you know, I-I  
3 would hope there's still, you know, just as there  
4 should be on-on all sides a little bit of  
5 introspection in terms of, you know, what-what are we  
6 doing wrong? What could we be doing better? What  
7 could we be doing differently? What should we be  
8 doing differently to make sure that all of these  
9 groups get this money more quickly? Yes.

10           COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, there-if  
11 you-actually, I agree with a lot of what you just  
12 said, and I do think we absolutely have to figure out  
13 how to do it better next year, but I think there are  
14 two ways of looking at exactly the same statis-facts,  
15 and one is to say we've never been asked to release  
16 the money in a rolling fashion as designations are  
17 made. So, we're-we feel like we're doing things the  
18 same way as in the past. That having been said, I-  
19 that's our basic position, but I agree with you, and  
20 that we need to look in the mirror also. We all need  
21 to figure out how to get this done quicker. We'd  
22 love figure out ways to get the CDF money out sooner  
23 as well. But I will say also that-that I was very  
24 happy for Helen Rosenthal to say that-that there is a  
25 sense, and I do feel it, that we are an agency that's

1  
2 efficient, that wants to say efficient, that keeps  
3 things moving, and has a good relationship with the  
4 groups even not perfect. Nothing is perfect. So  
5 that's our goal, and I think that's—that's everybody  
6 in this room's goal. It's your goal. It's our goal.  
7 We absolutely acknowledge that none of this money  
8 exits without you. I've said it repeatedly in here.  
9 So, I'm committed to try to make it better, and I—I  
10 think that I see nothing but good partnership from  
11 the Council on these kind of issues, and so I'm  
12 committed to working on it.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: It's good to—to  
14 hear you say all of that. I mean this is our  
15 oversight responsibility right here, and—and no  
16 better time to do it than now, and obviously everyone  
17 should know that this—this hearing came about  
18 specifically because some cultural organizations came  
19 to me and said where's our money, and—and we're  
20 struggling, and—and then that started a conversation  
21 between me and the Commissioner and produced this  
22 hearing. So, always complain to elected officials is  
23 the— He is elected.

24 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [laughs]  
25 There's more to the story.

1  
2           CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And—and look, I  
3 believe that that conversation and our conversations  
4 between the Commissioner and I and even this hearing  
5 has already propelled this faster. Has made this  
6 thing move a little bit faster, and so if nothing  
7 else, it has already been a success, and—and I think  
8 we have learned a lot form the Commissioner, and  
9 obviously now we're going to hear form a lot of other  
10 folks about their experiences, which will inform  
11 where we go in this process.

12           COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, if I could  
13 say one more thing before I leave, which is that I  
14 usually like to stick around for the hearings, and I  
15 think you know that I like to hear from the groups  
16 and I—I have stayed here. But I have another hearing  
17 tomorrow morning, and because of your legislation,  
18 the cultural plan, we're having a meeting in your  
19 district later on, that Mutuals (sic) for the Arts to  
20 talk about arts education today, and we hope to have  
21 more—another—many more meetings. So, part of it is  
22 with other legislation you passed, propels me out of  
23 this room as soon as my testimony is finished.

24           CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Once again,  
25 we're blamed for doing so much for the arts.

1  
2 [laughter] No, thank you, Tom. Thank you,  
3 Commissioner, and we will be in touch. So now we're  
4 going to hear from Charlotte Cohen from the Brooklyn  
5 Arts Council, Mark Rossier from the New York  
6 Foundation for the Arts; Nadezhda Williams from the  
7 King Manor Museum; and Susan Hapgood, ISCP.  
8 [background comments] Please approach the front. We  
9 will be putting everyone unfortunately on the two-  
10 minute clock. So if you could be as concise with  
11 your testimony as possible. Choose the most  
12 important impression points, and we have a lot of  
13 folks who have signed up to testify, and we will  
14 start right ahead, and not because I'm from Queens,  
15 but why we start with the King Manor Museum.

16                   NADEZHDA WILLIAMS: [off mic] Thank you.  
17 Thank you very much, Councilman [on mic] Van Bramer.  
18 My name is Nadezhda Williams. I'm the Executive  
19 Director King Manor Museum in Jamaica, Queens. King  
20 Manor Museum was the home Rufus King, a former-a  
21 framer of the U.S. Constitution, an early voice in  
22 the ant-slavery movement. It plays a unique role in  
23 downtown Jamaica as a historical, cultural, and  
24 educational resource. We serve a primarily minority  
25 and immigrant community, and for many of our visitors

1 King Manor is their first museum experience. In FY16  
2 we received funding through the Cultural Immigrant  
3 Initiative to put on new program the Traditions  
4 Festival, which we held on June 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of the  
5 past year. This free outdoor event brought together  
6 traditional crafts, music and food ways of early  
7 America and those of immigrant cultures in Queens.  
8 By including traditions of other cultures, we look to  
9 reflect the areas' diverse community, and provide a  
10 space to share traditions and interact. We also  
11 sought to widen King Manor's audience and nurture the  
12 perception of our museum and others as welcoming  
13 enjoyable community spaces. Over 750 people attended  
14 that weekend, that was the largest audience we've  
15 ever seen. Pictures can speak louder than words,  
16 and I've attached some photos to my testimony that  
17 you're receiving, and I hope you can see that we had  
18 a wonderful time that weekend. Besides compensation  
19 for the artisans participating in the festival,  
20 initiative funds are used to rent tents. This might  
21 sound like something small, but for us it was very  
22 important. On that sunny, hot June weekend they were  
23 definitely needed. And the tents also helped draw  
24 visitors by signifying from afar that something was  
25

1  
2 going on at the museum. Typically, we relay on our  
3 brochures and social media along with some free  
4 listings to publicize events. With the Initiative  
5 funding, though, we were able to place actual color  
6 advertisements in local press both in print and on  
7 websites allowing us to reach a much wider audience.  
8 Traditions Festival was one of King Manor's most  
9 successful events both in size of audience and the  
10 quality of programming. It is something our small  
11 institution could not have done without funding from  
12 the Cultural Immigrant Initiative. [bell] On behalf  
13 of our Board, staff, volunteers and audience, I thank  
14 you for the wonderful June weekend, which we very  
15 much hope to do again in May if we find out how much  
16 money we have. [laughter]

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. As  
18 someone who dreamed up the Cultural Immigrant  
19 Initiative several years ago, and with the support of  
20 the Speaker was able to finally make it happen, I-I  
21 loved your testimony and the photos, and it was great  
22 deal to actually see it implemented. So, thank you.  
23 Who wants to go next?

24 CHARLOTTE COHEN: Thank you. I'm  
25 Charlotte Cohen, Executive Director of the Brooklyn

1  
2 Arts Council. I'm very glad to have the opportunity  
3 to speak before you to day, and congratulate the  
4 Council and DCA on their legislation you just passed.  
5 I'm the former Director of the Percent for Art  
6 program, and I couldn't be prouder and happier.  
7 Thank you so much. On behalf of all five of the arts  
8 councils, thank you for the increased funding that  
9 came to all our re-grant programs through your  
10 increase to DCA's budget this past year. At BAC we  
11 know the immediate impact of the additional \$105,000  
12 we were awarded because it has directly supported our  
13 mission to fund artists and arts organizations at  
14 higher levels in direct response to their stated  
15 needs to us. We're going deeper by increasing  
16 capacity overall to artists and community based  
17 groups, and for further individual impact by making  
18 fewer awards at larger amounts. As a result, we have  
19 an increase in awards this year to last by 70% with  
20 an average grant size being increased by \$1,072, and  
21 an increase in grantees who are fully funded by 10%,  
22 which is pretty extraordinary, and there's some  
23 statistics in what I handed out. We once again  
24 welcome the opportunity to provide rich, diverse and  
25 inspiring arts programming to schools throughout

1  
2 Brooklyn. Thank you so much for increasing funding  
3 to the CASA program. It means we're bringing the  
4 arts to more and more children in need, and it  
5 reaches their families and siblings as I've seen on  
6 my visits to the schools. I'm actually on my way  
7 back to the BAC office for the kickoff or our SU CASA  
8 program with the artists and senior citizen  
9 representatives, which is really exciting, and as you  
10 know, we have 16 residencies at BAC, one for each of  
11 the Council Districts in Brooklyn. That's reduction  
12 for us from last year, and I want to advocate for  
13 increasing the number of residencies to the Arts  
14 Councils. BAC has the capacity to do so much more,  
15 and we have such good relationships with the senior  
16 centers, and are in such a good rhythm with the  
17 artist selection process [bell] that we're able to  
18 get the program up and running speedily. I just want  
19 to thank you again, and say that we also received two  
20 Catalyst for Change Schools. We're very happy about  
21 that. My one request overall is as wonderful as it  
22 is to work with DCA, and they are the fastest  
23 contracting or grant making agency we work with, we  
24 do—would want to see these payments for these  
25 initiatives move more quickly into the pipeline. We

1  
2 have 32 CASA schools designated, which is awesome.  
3 We started our internal CASA planning in late  
4 September, but because we didn't have a contact until  
5 late December, we couldn't actually hold planning  
6 meetings with artists until last week. So we're  
7 moving into late January before we could even start  
8 the program, just as Laurie was—was just saying. And  
9 I urge you to increase the baseline amount as you  
10 have to DCA and to keep it up at that threshold if  
11 not higher. We thank you for everything you do to  
12 strengthen the arts in New York City. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. You  
14 got a lot in there, and first of all as someone who  
15 served as the President of the Queens Council on the  
16 Arts before I got elected, I am very, very partial to  
17 the Arts Councils and—and so very thrilled that  
18 you're getting as—as many of these grants. Clearly,  
19 Brooklyn loves you. I'm sure Steven Levin agrees,  
20 and—and you're doing some great work. So—so thank  
21 you and—and I do appreciate also the—the stories of—  
22 of how some of the delays are affecting the  
23 organizations. So I'm always happy to—to hear all  
24 the great stories, and—and—and it makes me feel very  
25 good, as the Chair of Cultural Affairs, but I just as

1  
2 eagerly want to hear some of the challenges that  
3 folks are—are facing as well. That was the purpose  
4 of the hearing, but 32 CASAs that's amazing. Good  
5 for you. Who wants to go next? Always a gentleman,  
6 Mark.

7           SUSAN HAPGOOD: Good afternoon Chairman  
8 Jimmy Van Bramer and respected members of the City  
9 Council's Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries  
10 and International Intergroup Relations. I am Susan  
11 Hapgood. I'm Executive Director of the International  
12 Studio and Curatorial Program, more commonly known as  
13 ISCP. I'm going to skip right through this to cut it  
14 down to try to stay within two minutes.

15           CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good way.

16           SUSAN HAPGOOD: First a brief  
17 introduction to who we are. ISCP is the most  
18 comprehensive program of its kind in New York City,  
19 and in the United States, and we are the fourth  
20 largest international visual arts residency program  
21 in the world. The larger ones are based in  
22 Amsterdam, Beijing and London. ISCP supports the  
23 creative advancement of extremely talented  
24 contemporary visual artists and curators who come to  
25 us from all over the globe, and to originate from New

1  
2 York City, too. We enrich the neighborhood of East  
3 Williamsburg with high quality art. Jumping along.  
4 Our public programming includes lectures, art  
5 exhibitions and off-site public projects, all of  
6 which have been supported by Cultural Immigrant  
7 Initiative funding. We've been building strong  
8 connections to foreign cultures that are reflected in  
9 New York City for 22 years. To be specific, to date  
10 the Cultural Immigrant Initiative funds have directly  
11 supported three New York based immigrant artist  
12 residencies in our ground floor program. Three off-  
13 site collaborative art projects with immigrant  
14 artists in Williamsburg, and extensive public  
15 programming to engage city audiences in all of this.  
16 Your funding has also supported three exhibitions,  
17 organized in collaboration with El Museo de Los  
18 Sures. Those are the art projects that I just  
19 mentioned, which is a project of Southside United  
20 HCFC. The current exhibition is an interactive  
21 project of Mexican-American artists Fran Illich,  
22 which invites visitors to engage in alternatives to  
23 capitalist forms of exchanged based in Aztec culture.  
24 In terms of numbers, we estimate that our overall  
25 programs reach 10,000 physical visitors per year. We

1 live stream many of our public events, and we are  
2 attracting growing press attention for exhibitions  
3 and programs. In fact, the Los Sures project  
4 currently on view attracted a two-minute segment on  
5 Fox 5 Evening News recently. For this testimony, I  
6 was also asked to reflect on how the initiative might  
7 be improved. [bell] Almost done. In agreement with  
8 my colleagues here testifying, I urge you to allocate  
9 more funding to this extraordinary endeavor, and  
10 secondly, it would be helpful if contracts could be  
11 issued in a more expedient manner to allow us the  
12 assurance of committed funds. I do hope you will  
13 continue and strengthen this stream of support.  
14 Diverse immigrant communities are crucial to the  
15 brilliant multi-faceted character of New York City,  
16 one of the greatest cultural capitals of the world.  
17 We live in a time when national funding for the arts  
18 could soon be challenged, when the tax deductible  
19 status of individual charitable donations to non-  
20 profits is being questioned, and when the climate for  
21 immigrants to the U.S. is becoming frosty at best.  
22 This initiative could not be more relevant to  
23 sustaining the vitality and excellence of life for  
24 all of New York City's inhabitants, not to mention  
25

1  
2 bolstering and upholding our civil society. Thank  
3 you for the opportunity to testify today.

4           CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. I-I  
5 agree with everything and I want to congratulate  
6 everyone because, you know, this an initiative that's  
7 gone from zero to \$5.2 million, and-and almost  
8 doubled every year. You're still asking for money,  
9 which is exactly what you're supposed to be done, and  
10 before I got elected, I was an advocate just like  
11 everybody here. So I appreciate that, and I really  
12 do appreciate the-all the information on how you're  
13 using the money, and all the different programs that  
14 are happening as a result of this. It makes me even  
15 more proud that I-I fought for it. So thank you.

16           MARK ROSSIER: Thank you Council Member  
17 Van Bramer for holding the hearing, and creating this  
18 program, and thank you for the amazing legislation  
19 that you all just passed. Congratulations. I must  
20 say I love the Cultural Immigrant Initiative. It has  
21 had a significant impact on the New York Foundation  
22 for the Arts and we are most grateful. For the last  
23 ten years, NYFA has had an immigrant artist program,  
24 which provides mentoring, professional development  
25 assistance and the Con-Edison Newsletter to more than

1  
2 6,000 artists annually from all disciplines. The  
3 program is growing so rapidly that it has been hard  
4 for us to keep up, and expand the services we provide  
5 especially in one critical way. But support from the  
6 Cultural [coughs] Immigrant Initiative through  
7 Council Member Levin, who unfortunately just left,  
8 allowed us to create a pilot program to take our work  
9 with immigrant artists to the next logical step and  
10 again offering services in languages other than  
11 English. We have now provided our Doctor's Hours  
12 Individual Consultation program to 79 artists in  
13 French, Italian, Mandarin, Russian and Spanish with  
14 more to come. The sessions are free to artists, and  
15 the response has been tremendous. To cite just three  
16 comments, and first: The work you are doing is  
17 invaluable to the artistic community, and knowing  
18 that this Doctor's Hours program is free and so  
19 easily accessible is an exceptional characteristic of  
20 the new-of New York City. Thank you.

21           The next one is: Thank you for creating  
22 these opportunities. They are really of great value,  
23 and we often find that these-these programs match  
24 people in their-in ways we never knew.

1  
2           So one woman said, Thank you so much for  
3 letting me know about Svetlana Doctor's House. We  
4 really had so much in common. It was so amazing to  
5 meet such an amazing artist from back home. She is  
6 from Sarajevo. That is where my mom is from, and  
7 where I spent every Christmas as a kid. Svetlana is  
8 truly exceptional—has a truly exceptional mind, and I'm  
9 really thankful I had the opportunity to sit down  
10 with her.

11           In addition to helping these artists, the  
12 program has allowed us to deepen our relationships  
13 with other organizations throughout the city who work  
14 with the immigrant community as our outreach  
15 partners, and we are continuing to explore other ways  
16 we can work together. [bell] The support from the  
17 Initiative has also helped us to attract other  
18 funding, and this—we have received foundation support  
19 to provide more programming in Spanish, and we are  
20 looking to see how we can expand this work and what  
21 other services we can effectively offer in other  
22 languages. The support of the Cultural Immigrant  
23 Initiative has been catalogued for NYFA, and I hope  
24 the program continues to be supported at the highest  
25

1  
2 level. Its impact is immediate, profound and of  
3 critical importance. Thank you.

4           CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, very  
5 much. It's certainly very good to hear that it's  
6 being leveraged to attract even additional funding,  
7 and—and I hope—I hope that's reflective of other—  
8 other places as well. And as the person who dreamed  
9 this one up, and fought for its creation, and has  
10 fought for the last three years to see it increased  
11 substantially, again with great support of the  
12 Speaker. You certainly have my commitment that I'm  
13 going to try again this year to increase the Cultural  
14 Immigrant Initiative when we get to June, and we're  
15 in there in the budget negotiating team fighting it  
16 out. We got it on the bill to do it again. So, with  
17 that, thank you and—and certainly take under  
18 advisement the need to figure out how we're going to  
19 move this funding more quickly going forward. So  
20 with that, thank you to this panel. Our next panel  
21 is Dr. Manuel Moran still here? I know I saw him  
22 earlier from Tetraseo (sp?). Andrea Louie from the  
23 Asian-American Arts Alliance; Tia Powell and I'm not  
24 getting the last name. Is Tia Powell still here?  
25 Yep, and I'm not reading it well, but Weeksville

1  
2 Heritage Center. We know each other, but for some  
3 reason that last name is not reading well, and then  
4 we have two folks from Mind Builders. Are—are both  
5 testifying or is one testifying? Is Mind Builders  
6 still here? [background comments] Okay. Why don't  
7 you come forward. Madaha Kinsey-Lamb (sp?).  
8 Alright, and I see Walter Chubb is also, but we'll  
9 have one of you testify if that's alright?  
10 [background comments] Okay. Madaha is that—do you  
11 want to testify or--? Okay, great.

12 MADAHA KINSEY-LAMB: Right here?

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

14 MADAHA KINSEY-LAMB: Thank you. We  
15 quickly edited down.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: We didn't plan  
17 it this way, but this a diverse cultural panel right  
18 here. I'm very proud of that. So, who wants to go  
19 first? Left to right. Just the way I like to do.

20 MADAHA KINSEY-LAMB: Alright. Thank you.  
21 Thank you again for the foresight and perseverance  
22 involved in creating this special Cultural Immigrant  
23 Initiative, and for helping to make the spark and  
24 transformation of our former municipal building  
25 possible so that hundreds more are now being served

1  
2 through programs like this. So this city's support  
3 and Cultural Affairs and all of you Council Members  
4 have been really instrumental. Our audiences and  
5 students represent every zip code in the Bronx.  
6 They're coming mainly for working-class immigrant  
7 neighborhoods. As a partner with the Smithsonian as  
8 well, our New York research partner we build pride  
9 and foster awareness of the predominantly African  
10 descent, Caribbean and Latino based cultural  
11 traditions and expressions that are in the community  
12 and the borough that contribute to the vibrancy of  
13 this city. Mind Builders currently conducts 194  
14 classes each week with more than 600 children, teens  
15 and adults enrolled in classes for ages 3 to senior  
16 citizens taught by professional teaching artists of  
17 music, voice, dance, drama, community folk culture  
18 research, documentation and presentations. Through  
19 Folklore program, traditional artists and culture is  
20 discovered by teen-agers within their families by  
21 field work, and recording in artists' studios, on  
22 walks through local neighborhoods, and research  
23 throughout the borough. Through your support in  
24 FY16, we were able to produce two additional  
25 community presentations, using PS41's auditorium, our

1  
2 own studio, café and additional family event. We  
3 were able to reach more than 300 additional audience  
4 members and exhibit attendees. Introduce and  
5 respectfully compensate seven additional master  
6 artists, conduct interactive audience participation,  
7 mini performances, interactive public conversation  
8 with artists from immigrant backgrounds. The  
9 memories and family traditions shared extended from  
10 Puerto Rico to Nigeria to Jamaica [bell] and Senegal  
11 and those audience members who shared with us. The  
12 impact strengthens the sense of community, dispels  
13 biases and identifies commonalities. We're hoping  
14 this money can come through by February. So I very-  
15 we very much appreciate the conversation that came  
16 before this so that the work can begin, and there  
17 will be the funds there to compensate. Thank you so  
18 much.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and-  
20 and you alluded to what I said at the end, which was  
21 by having this hearing, right, we kind of elevated  
22 the discussion and we-we've- Some sunlight on things  
23 sometimes is a good thing, and-and-and so I-I-I feel  
24 confident that-that everyone involved has now  
25 refocused on-on moving this money even more quickly.

1  
2 So we will continue to work at it. Andrea, do you  
3 want to go next.

4                   ANDREA LOUIE: Thank you, Council Member  
5 Van Bramer and members of the committee. Please  
6 accept my deepest appreciation to give testimony to—  
7 testimony today—today regarding the Cultural  
8 Immigrant Initiative. As you know, I'm Andrea Louie  
9 and I'm the Executive Director of the Asian-American  
10 Arts Alliance. For 35 years the Alliance has  
11 supported individual artists and small arts groups  
12 across the five boroughs of New York. Our  
13 constituents represent ethnicities from the Pacific  
14 Islands through the Middle East including North  
15 Africa. More than 40% are foreign born. With the  
16 generous support of Council Member Peter Koo, the  
17 Alliance has been a proud designated grantee of the  
18 Cultural Immigrant Initiative for all three years.  
19 This year, we're partnering with the Asian-American  
20 Federation and the Queens Library System to conduct a  
21 community convening in Queens to help inform the New  
22 York city Cultural Plan focusing on the specific  
23 needs of women and girls. All three of these are  
24 specific programs that serve the Asian-American  
25 immigrant community in New York, and we would not

1  
2 have been able to conduct them without the support of  
3 the Initiative. We are deeply grateful for the  
4 leadership of you and Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito  
5 for sustaining and increasing the funding for this  
6 initiative in such a robust way. Some real  
7 advantages of this initiative are that Council  
8 Members may designate organizations across the city  
9 not just the ones in their districts, and that the  
10 organizations themselves may be smaller to midsize  
11 groups. I now would like to take an opportunity this  
12 afternoon to make three suggestions that the Alliance  
13 believes would strengthen the impact—the impact of  
14 the Cultural Immigrant Initiative. Actually, most of  
15 this stuff was already spoken about, but number one,  
16 increase transparency. In our experience the  
17 Cultural Immigrant Initiative is not a widely  
18 publicized opportunity, but one that primarily only  
19 non-profit organizations already engage with Council  
20 Member's staff know about. We encourage staff  
21 members of the City Council as well as New York  
22 City's Department of Cultural Affairs to disseminate  
23 information about the opportunity widely and publicly  
24 well in advance of the deadlines. Information  
25 sessions could be held with a clear timeline of dates

1  
2 as all of this is currently unknown from year to  
3 year. The most ideal solution perhaps would be for  
4 the Cultural Immigrant Initiative to not be a City  
5 Council initiative, but perhaps be a grant program  
6 that is administered through DCLA, borough arts  
7 councils or art service organizations. Having an  
8 open application process with a peer review panel  
9 would be the most transparent option. [bell] The  
10 other two are just lower the barriers to access, and  
11 also to expedite the contracting disbursement  
12 process, which we already discussed. So thank you so  
13 much, and we look forward to working with all of you  
14 to make this a more just and equitable city for New  
15 Yorkers including new Americans.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
17 much, and I-I am reading the parts that you-you  
18 didn't get to read. Always good and challenging to  
19 recommendations, but also I believe in honesty and  
20 transparency, and I think taking this away from the  
21 Council Members probably is going to be a little bit  
22 less popular with the Council Members, and just--

23 ANDREA LOUIE: Probably so.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And just being  
25 honest with you, Andrea, but-but I think within the

1  
2 framework of it being Council Member allocated, and  
3 chosen, we can still improve the process, and—and in  
4 making it more widely available and—and make sure  
5 folks know about it.

6           ANDREA LOUIE: I think that's exactly  
7 right. That's the goal there.

8           CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah. So—so  
9 thank you, and definitely the other two pieces we  
10 agree with. Dr. Moran.

11           DR. MANUEL MORAN: [off mic] Good  
12 afternoon.

13           CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Buenos.

14           DR. MANUEL MORAN: Buenos Tardes. Good  
15 afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity. Cultural  
16 is—is an agent that promotes change, promotes  
17 understand, empowerment, knowledge as well as serves  
18 as entertainment. However, perhaps more importantly  
19 in our case validates and celebrates cultural  
20 expressions, traditions and language all of which  
21 contributes to raising self-esteem. This translation  
22 to a stronger and unified community is something  
23 essential for the betterment of our city. The  
24 Cultural Immigrant Initiative across this nation by  
25 providing some cultural funding so we can expand

1  
2 programming and directly impact these communities  
3 that often are forgotten. The Society of the  
4 Educational Arts better known SEA, or throughout SEA  
5 does exactly that. For over 30 years our principal  
6 objective has been to provide immigrant and minority  
7 communities access to the arts. In fact, our  
8 company's name derived—is derived from exactly that.  
9 SEA is a Spanish verb that means to be. Our mission  
10 is to strength self-esteem as well as strengthen  
11 cultural identity by culturalizing enough of all  
12 communities we serve. I want to acknowledge and  
13 thank you for caring about our immigrant communities,  
14 and for understanding that culture is as essential as  
15 many other service—as any other service. The funding  
16 that you have provided SEA has helped us bring  
17 cultural relevant programs to senior centers through  
18 libraries to community centers, and parks. No other  
19 such funding exists especially to directly serve this  
20 community—communities. One of our partnering Council  
21 Members once said how can SEA—how could SEA do so  
22 much with limited funds? For the past two years, as  
23 part of this initiative we have been able to provide  
24 performances and our workshops to senior community  
25 centers, to two libraries, to outdoor—outdoor park—

1  
2 two outdoor park performances per district. In  
3 addition, we have distributed hundreds of free  
4 tickets within the districts so we can come—so they  
5 can come to the that place, and attend our festivals  
6 like North-East, the Puerto Rico Fest, and to attend  
7 (sic) the Summer Festival and to some of our  
8 performances. With further funding, we will be able  
9 to continue reaching these communities. [bell] We  
10 respectively—respectfully urge you to consider  
11 maintaining and even expanding this initiative, and  
12 there's a little more, but I don't have time, and I  
13 will say that we are part of that 5% that have not  
14 received the funding yet. So thank you for watch you  
15 said before.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, and  
17 first of all, let me just say I love the partnership  
18 with libraries. Earlier, I mentioned that I was the  
19 President of the Queens Council on the Arts before I  
20 got elected, but I was also a staff member of Queens  
21 Library for 11 years before I got elected. So I love  
22 that connection, and using our public libraries. It  
23 is brilliant. Also I was thrilled to learn about  
24 Puta Bell Play (sic) and the legend that she is over  
25 the last couple of years. I think Melissa actually

1  
2 and she moved to that story, and I look every year at  
3 the list of all of the organizations that get all of  
4 the--the--the City Council initiative grants, and I  
5 love seeing it, but--but congratulations. You all  
6 have a lot of support in the New York City Council--

7 DR. MANUEL MORAN: [interposing] Thank  
8 you.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and--and we're  
10 keeping the number at--where it is is--is the baseline  
11 for me. We're not going backwards. I mean obviously  
12 I'm going to push hard to go even higher with all of  
13 these initiatives, but the Cultural Immigrant  
14 Initiative is one that obviously the Speaker and I  
15 share a deep passion for.

16 DR. MANUEL MORAN: Thank you so much for  
17 that.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So for that.  
19 Now, Mr. Powell Harris. I'm getting older. So I'm  
20 not seeing as well as I used to, and that's why I  
21 couldn't read the name. I apologize.

22 TIA POWELL HARRIS: No problem. Good  
23 afternoon, Chairman Van Bramer. I'm Tia Powell  
24 Harris, President and Executive Director of  
25 Weeksville Heritage Center. Thank you for allowing

1  
2 me to testify about our successful implementation of  
3 the 2016 Cultural Immigrant Initiative Grant, our  
4 very first ever. Also, our first opportunity since  
5 my arrival to really focus on the immigrant community  
6 in Crown Heights. Funding through the Cultural  
7 Immigrant Initiative allowed Weeksville Heritage  
8 Center to commission portraitist Lelah Amatula  
9 Belland (sp?) to photograph Brooklyn residents from  
10 Crown Heights, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Flatbush  
11 representing Puerto, Haiti, El Salvador, Senegal,  
12 Nigeria and Jamaica, and mount an exhibition home,  
13 belonging, gathering diaspora in Brooklyn along with  
14 two ancillary public programs, a mini-conference and  
15 an artist talk. Additionally, our oral history  
16 specialist Amaka Okeckukwu collected oral histories  
17 from the sitters, and those were placed within the  
18 exhibition so that visitors could listen those. This  
19 was an amazing opportunity, and to steal you word  
20 from the beginning an enormous opportunity for  
21 Weeksville Heritage Center. This grant allowed us to  
22 reach a broader audience, thereby increasing our  
23 visibility and service in a truly culturally  
24 underserved community; expand our programming and  
25 attract new partners particularly from the academic

1  
2 field; expand and provide greater access to our  
3 amazing oral history collection, which was begun in  
4 1968; support local artists that give voice to the  
5 diversity of cultural experience in Brooklyn; and  
6 most importantly I believe to place unfettered focus  
7 on the cultural history and traditions of immigrant  
8 communities in Crown Heights. Thereby in some small  
9 way countering the hyperpolarized society we live by  
10 confer-by affirming their role in the shaping of our  
11 shared history. [bell] We approach-appreciate the  
12 support of the City Council, the Department of  
13 Cultural Affairs and our Councilperson Robert  
14 Cornegy, and we look forward to more opportunities to  
15 preserve, interpret and interpret the histories of  
16 the immi-immigrant communities in Crown Heights.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
18 much, and having been to Weeksville with Council  
19 Member Cornegy it's not surprising that he has chosen  
20 to support your work. It's great to hear. I just  
21 wanted to ask-so in terms of the Cultural Development  
22 Fund CASA, Cultural Immigrants, SU CASA, Anti-Gun,  
23 all the initiatives, have all of you received some of  
24 that, any of that, none of that?

1  
2 TIA POWELL HARRIS: We have received the-  
3 the Cultural Development funding.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You did?

5 TIA POWELL HARRIS: Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay.

7 DR. MANUEL MORAN: We haven't receive the  
8 allocation. We had to do a loan, a bridge loan. So  
9 we got it yesterday the loan. So we still have not  
10 received any funding from City of-and the other ones,  
11 you know, not arrived.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And-and then  
13 anyone has experience is the CDF payout later than in  
14 previous years?

15 DR. MANUEL MORAN: Yes. In our case,  
16 yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right. The same  
18 for you as well?

19 TIA POWELL HARRIS: Yes, likewise.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great. Thank  
21 you very much for your work, and your partnership and  
22 for being here. Very meaningful to me. Our next  
23 panel is Shelly Worrell. Is Sherry Worrell still  
24 with us; Kevin Lowe. Is Kevin Lowe here? Yes, I see  
25 Kevin. Mike Fitelson. Mike Fitelson. There we go,

1  
2 and Alton. Just Alton. Is Alton here? There's  
3 four, and we have a presentation. I love  
4 presentations, and we have two more panels after  
5 that, after this one. [background comments] Oops,  
6 hold one second. You have to give it to the  
7 sergeant-at-arms. No worries. [background comments]  
8 Who wants to go first? Is our PowerPoint ready yet.

9           SHELLEY WORRELL: Not yet. I have to  
10 pull it up.

11           CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So why don't—why  
12 don't you, John.

13           KEVIN LOWE: Okay. Good afternoon  
14 Chairperson Van Bramer and members of the committee.  
15 My name is Kevin Lowe and I am the Community and  
16 Youth Programs Associate at the Asian-American  
17 Writers Workshop devoted to creating, publishing,  
18 developing and disseminating our creative writing for  
19 Asian-Americans. We've dedicated—we are dedicated to  
20 the belief that Asian-American stories deserve to be  
21 told. I am here today to speak about AWW's Arts  
22 Program for Chinese speaking seniors and New York  
23 City Housing Authority residences. I'm going to skip  
24 ahead a bit. Asian Seniors are susceptible to both  
25 physical and social isolation with 55% expressing

1  
2 symptoms of loneliness and depression. Forty percent  
3 of Asians with LEP who are NYCHA residents were  
4 connected to spoken interpretation services and only  
5 18% were connected to written interpretation of  
6 housing related documents. In response to these  
7 reports AWW sought partnerships with NYCHA residences  
8 and community based organizations serving Chinese  
9 speaking seniors in an effort to bring arts education  
10 to Asian seniors in New York City, increase social  
11 engagement. Cultural Immigrant Initiative funding  
12 supports the collaboration between AWW, Hudsonville  
13 and Hudsonville Adult Services program to develop  
14 linguistically and culturally relevant arts workshops  
15 for their weekly Chinese club. By calling on the  
16 many artists in our network we have organized  
17 workshops including Asian writers and artists, fine  
18 arts, crafts and story sharing where a notable  
19 presentation was by Pulitzer Prize nominated for  
20 Allen Chin, who presented photos he took in his  
21 hometown of Toishan.(sp?) Speaking in Cantonese he  
22 discussed and his family's and experiences with the  
23 seniors many of whom were also from the area. As one  
24 can imagine, these photographs garnered emotional  
25 reactions and comments from seniors who have been

1  
2 away from Taishan for many years. Visual and fun  
3 source out, Siang (sp?) has most regularly worked  
4 with a group with a variety of craft projects. In  
5 one of her workshops she asked the seniors to draw a  
6 map of the important landmarks of their hometown and  
7 decorate it with crepe paper and water color paint.  
8 In another project, Siang when asked the seniors to  
9 draw—to draw or write their favorite recipe [bell]  
10 the seniors discussed and recorded personal recipes  
11 and gave their childhood dishes. That's the most  
12 important outcome of these activities and memories,  
13 stories and experiences that seniors are eager to  
14 share with their group. This has steered our program  
15 towards discussions, storytelling and collecting oral  
16 histories through presentations in crafts. In  
17 addition to Hudsonville, we are currently  
18 collaborating with organizations Manhattan Chinatown,  
19 Lower East Side and Sunset Park to increase the  
20 number of Asian seniors we reach. As we sustain and  
21 grow these programs, we hope to create a safe space  
22 for open discussion, help alleviate social isolation,  
23 and generate personal stories that can advocate for  
24 increased culturally and have the appropriate  
25 services, and resources to see agency nurse. Thank

1  
2 you very much for your support and for providing this  
3 forum.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and  
5 Kevin, which Council Member allocates this?

6 KEVIN LOWE: For Corey Johnson. We also  
7 have one for Margaret Chin and Council Member  
8 Menchaca.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Terrific. That's  
10 very exciting. Are we ready?

11 SHELLEY WORRELL: We are ready.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alright, let's  
13 go.

14 SHELLEY WORRELL: So my name is Shelly  
15 Worrell, the founder of CaribBEING We're a Brooklyn  
16 based non-profit organization. So this is one  
17 example of the collaboration that we did with the  
18 artist to illustrate what we call Caribbean New York.  
19 So this is the Brooklyn version, but you'll see a lot  
20 of familiar signs, and this has been my life, right?  
21 So, what we know is New York City is home to 20%--20%  
22 of New York is of Caribbean descent, and it's  
23 considered to be one of the largest and most diverse  
24 Caribbean populations in the world. In 2012,  
25 coinciding with Caribbean Crossroads of the World,

1  
2 the New York Times proclaimed New York City itself  
3 the largest—one of the largest Caribbean cities in  
4 the world. And so that's why we really exist, right?  
5 Caribbean. We wanted to create something very  
6 different beyond food, beyond that. 2017, marks a  
7 really important year because it's 50 years of  
8 Caribbean Carnival from Harlem to now Eastern  
9 Parkway. So we can see the really—the impacts that  
10 Caribbeans have made on the social, economic,  
11 political and cultural landscape. So as I mentioned,  
12 we were founded about seven years ago, and our  
13 mission is to really make the local Caribbean  
14 experience through the language of Caribbean film,  
15 art and culture. We started in 2010 with a hyper  
16 local experimental film series at the Brooklyn Public  
17 Library, the Flatbush branch. In 2011, we expanded  
18 into Art with an exhibition in film program at  
19 MoCADA, and in 2010–2012, we were invited when Tom  
20 Finkelpearl was at Queens Museum of Art to curate the  
21 largest public program during doing Caribbean  
22 Crossroads of the World. More recently we've become  
23 an award winning organization known as Everything  
24 Caribbean in 2015 as part of our Cultural Immigrant  
25 Initiative. We just—we developed a new concept

1  
2 Caripolitan where we presented a citywide program,  
3 and this--this term has now been widely adopted by  
4 academics, elected officials and we also were able to  
5 be clear during our heritage film series still  
6 pending in Brooklyn. Last year as part of our  
7 initiative, we developed a mobile art and cultural  
8 center called the Caribbean House, which is located  
9 at the Flatbush Caton Market, and we're also working  
10 on a new initiative for this year for the branding  
11 and designating a little--a little Caribbean in New  
12 York City because there is not a little Caribbean,  
13 and being that we've been around for 50 years, we  
14 think it's really important with the 50 years of  
15 Carnival (sic) to really designate this--this area.  
16 We're also working on a multi-media project that is  
17 documenting. You have that on your--your DVDs, the  
18 Caribbean Impact on New York City. My time is up so  
19 I'm not going to--to continue, but---

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [off mic] You're  
21 the only one that [on mic] You're the only one who  
22 brought a presentation so--

23 SHELLEY WORRELL: Thank you. So with the  
24 Cultural Immigrant Initiative, we were--we were able  
25 to provide free and low-cost programming for

1  
2 underserved communities. Central Brooklyn, as you  
3 know, is sort of a vacuum for arts and culture.  
4 Though we do programming beyond that region, but it's  
5 allows us to—to really have this presence hyper  
6 locally, and there are also clusters laid across  
7 cultural understanding because there's a lot of  
8 misinformation around a lot of cultural celebrations  
9 such a J'ouvert, around Carnival, and just what it  
10 means to be Caribbean. We are also to revamp our  
11 signature program to stop us from—stop (sic) this  
12 film festival into a citywide Caribbean Heritage film  
13 series. So we're partnering a lot with large  
14 cultural institutions where we can expand our reach  
15 and impact. The Brooklyn Museum is a great example  
16 of that. The City Museum in Harlem, the Queens  
17 Museum of Art, Lower-Lower East Side Tenement Museum,  
18 Brooklyn Historical Society . So we're able to take  
19 this programming and—and really provide a passport to  
20 Caribbean through some art and culture citywide.  
21 Here's a—a look of our CaribBeing House and it's—it's  
22 made its way around Brooklyn particularly. This year  
23 we're hoping to bring it to other boroughs. So  
24 again, it's housed on Flatbush Caton, and you're all

1  
2 welcome to come and join us. And this is some of  
3 the--

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That move around  
5 the City?

6 SHELLEY WORRELL: We've moved to  
7 Greenpoint. We've moved to the Biblical (sic) Museum  
8 and the to the Flatbush Junction, but we've been  
9 asked to bring it to Harlem and to--and we've actually  
10 been asked to develop one in each borough. This is  
11 some of the media impact that we've had over the last  
12 year, and you have the five-minute excerpt from our  
13 current documentary--documentary in progress called  
14 Carripolitan that you can look at it at your leisure.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's adorable.  
16 Could you have chosen a cuter girl?

17 SHELLEY WORRELL: She chose us.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [laughs] That's  
19 wonderful, and--and where do you get Cultural  
20 Immigrant Initiative?

21 SHELLEY WORRELL: We've been receiving  
22 the fund for--since its--its inception the first year  
23 from Williams and Lloyd, and since then we've been  
24 able to receive support ongoing from Council Member  
25 Williams. So District 45, and we're hoping that

1  
2 we'll have more consideration from other Council  
3 Members.

4                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I suspect you  
5 shall if you continue to produce work like that.  
6 That's amazing. Thank you.

7                   SHELLEY WORRELL: Thank you.

8                   ALTON: Good evening—good afternoon.  
9 Alton from Tropical Fit a multi-cultural arts  
10 organization also focused on Caribbean culture and  
11 immigrant culture. You have my testimony today, but  
12 I'm not going to go through it, but going to focus on  
13 two points that are very important to me. It's good  
14 that the Council is able to fund immigrant  
15 organizations, but there's a cost, there are space  
16 costs to have a proper facility in immigrant  
17 communities. Sometimes that's nowhere to be found.  
18 So I must commend you on what you're doing to giving  
19 us a space to showcase our craft. When we look at  
20 finding spaces for events, a regular theater goes  
21 about from \$2,000 to \$5,000, and that's half of the  
22 budget and the amount that will be probably allocated  
23 to us. So, in considering how much will be allocated  
24 to the groups, considering the space costs, and—and  
25 as a reason to increase the budget, the last event we

1  
2 did it at Brooklyn Music School because we have  
3 outgrown the space we were in. But I don't want the  
4 kids to just be doing it in a public school or—I  
5 wanted to get this—the feeling of being on a big  
6 stage on a main theater, and I want you guys to  
7 actually consider that. People always complain  
8 about, you know, money going out to cultural  
9 organizations and we are always the first to be cut,  
10 and one of my strongest points is that skills that we  
11 choose with Serenta (sic) we do still pan, still  
12 walking, masquerade dance and theater, and today I  
13 brought two students who are sitting in the back.  
14 One wants to be a law—a lawmaker so that's why she's  
15 there, and those students have been able to go out  
16 and make a living. Not a living, but they are able  
17 to make money off dancing on stilts or performing,  
18 you know, for an audience. So I just want to stress  
19 on those two points. Culture is an investment and  
20 space costs is crucial, and we need to find space for  
21 our culture. Not just in immigrant communities, and  
22 certain communities, but all communities.

23                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's great.  
24 Who wants to be a legislator? Awesome.  
25 Congratulations. Keep going. [bell] You don't live

1  
2 in my district, do you? You're not going to run  
3 against me, right? [laughter]

4 ALTON: Okay, I was just-

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. Ah-  
6 ha, there you go. Good answer. I'm term limited  
7 after this here anyway. So it's alright, but good  
8 luck, congratulations and-and push forward, right.  
9 That would be great, and-and what was your grant?  
10 Did you get a \$10,000 grant?

11 ALTON: This year we got \$10,000. I  
12 think we have got it from inception through Council  
13 Lady Darlene Mealy, and I think last year was \$15,000  
14 and the-the first year was \$14,000.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay, so we, you  
16 know, we've expanded the program greatly. We've also  
17 changed how you can give them out, and in what  
18 amounts you can give them out. So, so when we first  
19 started it-it was for the set amount, and-and now  
20 there's some discretion actually that they can be  
21 larger grants. If want to give them to a few  
22 organizations, but more money to those fewer  
23 organizations, Council Members have that discretion.  
24 So that's something that you can also speak to your  
25 local members about. Some prefer to give to, you

1  
2 know, give to as many groups as possible so they use  
3 the smaller amount. But-but you can also give larger  
4 amounts. So, but I certainly understand the cost  
5 issue that you're talking about.

6 ALTON: Yes, and just one last factor--

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

8 Yes.

9 ALTON: --with--for our group, our--the  
10 logistics in terms of storing the--the steel pan,  
11 storing the stilts and moving them around from event  
12 is a huge cost. So, it's a nightmare, but I love it.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, and you  
14 don't have to sell me on the value of the arts.  
15 That's something I believe in, and I think we're  
16 doing well at getting others to know that as well,  
17 right that the young people that you've brought they  
18 are stronger for it, and better for it, and--and we  
19 all are as well. It has a very principled and has an  
20 effect on young people in particular to--to be on a  
21 stage, which I commend you for wanting to be on the  
22 main stage, right, because that's a big deal, and  
23 when young people are able to experience those things  
24 it builds up self-esteem and confidence and

1  
2 fearless, right. So that's very exciting. Last,  
3 but not least on this panel.

4           MIKE FITELSON: Good afternoon. My name  
5 is Mike Fitelson. I'm the Executive Director of the  
6 United Palace of Cultural Arts, and thank you for  
7 inviting me to testify today. The United Palace of  
8 Cultural Arts is a five-year-old non-profit arts and  
9 cultural center housed at the magnificent 87-year-old  
10 United Palace in Washington Heights. UPCA's mission  
11 is to uplift, educate and unite our community and  
12 beyond through cultural arts. One way we fulfilled  
13 in 2016 was through the Origin Stories Series  
14 producing nine events for performing artists who  
15 shared their story of where they and their chosen art  
16 form come from. The series would not have happened  
17 without funding from the Cultural Immigrant  
18 Initiative. While the United Palace is known for the  
19 magnificent 3,400-seat theater, Manhattan's fourth  
20 largest, many of the Origin Stories events were held  
21 in the equally ornate, yet small foyer. It is a  
22 space that we have long wanted to animate with  
23 performances. The six Origin stories, events we  
24 staged there provided a more intimate experience for  
25 audience members befitting the nature of the program

1  
2 and fostering dialogue with the artists. Events were  
3 held on Sunday, Monday and Saturday evenings, and  
4 attendance ranged from around 50 people on a  
5 particularly frigid Monday night to about 400 people  
6 for Iirka Mateo concert in the theater. Just under  
7 2,000 people about 1,950 attended the Origin Stories  
8 Series. Artists were paid for their work. That is  
9 where about half of the \$31,000 we were awarded went  
10 to. All of the events were free to the audience  
11 except for the closing concert. A brief summary of  
12 the events we held were a tango session in the foyer,  
13 percussion with Annette Aguilar and her String Beans.  
14 Music in the Moving Image, which was a live project  
15 performance to Spanish silent cartoons. A Polynesian  
16 dance show on Earth Day, Josefina Baez and the  
17 aforementioned Irka Mateo. The success of the Origin  
18 Stories is changing how we program. First and  
19 foremost, the series allowed us—series allowed us to  
20 finally turn the Palace's Grand Foyer into an  
21 intimate performance space [bell] well suited for  
22 audiences for up to 125,000 seated and 200 standing.  
23 We primarily tap the local artists for the events  
24 providing a grand showcase to elevate their talents  
25 in a community with few performance spaces. The

1  
2 funding also allowed us to bring in international  
3 talent such as Lanuvium (sp?) and Irka Mateo, and  
4 because we spent so much time working on events in  
5 the foyer, we are now continuing the program in the  
6 foyer with some technical upgrades we did. I'd like  
7 to thank the committee and City Council Member Ydanis  
8 Rodriguez our local City Council Member for  
9 continuing to include us in this funding.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's great.

11 It looks like you got one of those larger grants.

12 MIKE FITELSON: We got one of those  
13 larger grants. It was our first one.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And--and \$31,250,  
15 which is great. So we built that flexibility into  
16 the program, and I love that you're paying your  
17 artists, and--

18 MIKE FITELSON: [interposing] You got to  
19 support the artists, right?

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and so thank  
21 you for that. That is an amazing theater. I would  
22 love to come up and see it sometime. That's  
23 gorgeous. So, thank you. You know, someone  
24 mentioned before this program is specifically geared  
25 towards smaller budget organizations something that I

1  
2 believe in, and something the Speaker believes in.  
3 There's a lot of pressure to push it higher, the  
4 thresholds. So there can be organizations of two  
5 million, three million, you know, five million, but  
6 she and I kept it to a million and below on-on  
7 purpose, and I think that fits all of these pretty  
8 darn good, right. So I guess I have a question. Do  
9 all of you get Cultural Development Fund-funding, and  
10 if so, have you received your Cultural Development  
11 fund-funding yet?

12 MIKE FITELSON: Yes.

13 SHELLEY WORRELL: Yes, we-we are  
14 recipients of that for the last several years, and we  
15 are in the receipt of the-the 80%, but what I will  
16 say is that Caribbean programs are really in the-a  
17 lot of them, and I think you'll agree with me, in the  
18 summer. So they start July 1, and us being held up  
19 until December really means either a bridge loan,  
20 which we are able to because we're-we have a very  
21 direct and cultural relationship with the New York  
22 Foundation for the Arts who actually facilitates  
23 those loans, or you just have to buy a lot of time  
24 with your program partners or the artists, which is  
25 extremely challenging and the Cultural Immigrant

1  
2 Fund, you know, being that it's almost February and  
3 the awards haven't gone out, I've had many  
4 conversations with my program officer, and it's—it's  
5 very challenging as well.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right. So you  
7 have received your CDF grant?

8 SHELLEY WORRELL: I have.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: The cash?

10 SHELLEY WORRELL: Yes, the 80%.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: By just the  
12 notification.

13 SHELLEY WORRELL: That's right.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alton.

15 ALTON: We haven't received our Cultural  
16 Immigrant—our DC early funding, but there was a delay  
17 because there was additional funding from the City  
18 Council so that was, you know, caused us to be held  
19 back. On the—on CASA we have not received it.  
20 Hopefully in the next couple of weeks we should be  
21 able to receive that funding, and move forward and  
22 definitely not for the Cultural Immigrant Initiative  
23 yet.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right.  
25

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KEVIN LOWE: We have received our funding. Some of it was actually quite late, one of which we stumbled across in a list we found online, and we had to scramble to make contact with Brooklyn to actually get it written together. Luckily we had found the payment a little bit beforehand, and so we managed to pull it together. But as someone mentioned earlier, when you're dealing with schools, you know, trying to get something started in-by December is-is really-it's practically over, right? And so, it's very difficult situation.

MIKE FITELSON: Yeah, we've received the-the 80%, the-the upfront. I would just like to add onto all of this, it's so great to hear you being interested in how quickly we get the funding. I mean being the first year recipient of the Cultural Immigrant Initiative I just thought that's the way it happened. [laughs]. You know, just wait and the money will eventually come, but the fact that you're proactively looking into how to get the money into our pockets sooner so we can program, would be fantastic.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah.

1  
2 MIKE FITELSON: We've—we've purposely  
3 programmed everything last year in the spring and  
4 summer because that's when we knew the money would be  
5 here.

6 SHELLEY WORRELL: Let me add something.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

8 SHELLEY WORRELL: WE didn't receive any  
9 discretionary funds this year, and we had a  
10 significant amount last year. So without the  
11 Cultural Immigrant fund this year, and I said this to  
12 DCA, it would have killed our organization almost in  
13 terms of financially or fiscally. When we have a lot  
14 of great equity in the field with our partners and  
15 with artists, and—and people who want to collaborate  
16 with us, but the fact that we got zero discretionary  
17 funds, this is a really important source of funding  
18 for—for our organization.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
20 much. I have to say as an elected official we do a  
21 lot things. We pass laws, we—we pass budgets, we  
22 allocate funding, but you don't always actually sort  
23 of see the tangible result of your work. This  
24 hearing having all of you testify, having you said—  
25 what you just said, it—it—it's very tangible, and so

1  
2 then when I go in there and I fight for more funding  
3 for Cultural Immigrant Initiative, and there's a  
4 million worthy things, but obviously I'm a tiger in  
5 the budget negotiating teams meetings on behalf of  
6 culture and libraries because that's my portfolio.  
7 Hearing you say that it's a very tangible result of  
8 the work that I do, and-and reminds me to go in there  
9 and fight even more next year when-when it gets  
10 harder and harder every year because people are  
11 saying well, you got a \$2 million increase last year.  
12 You got to make this every year, you know. But-but  
13 it's a good fight to wage, and-and obviously having  
14 the Speaker on-on my side is pretty-pretty darn cool.  
15 So with that, let me say thank you to this panel. We  
16 have two more panels. Hopefully, everyone is here.  
17 Thank you so much for waiting. Greg Maze, A Better  
18 Jamaica. Is Greg still with us? We love Jamaica,  
19 Queens, can I just say, but Greg may not still be  
20 with us, but still I'll go to Jamaica. Anna Becker,  
21 On Stage at Kingsborough. Thank you, Anna. Wayne  
22 Parkerson from the Brooklyn Ballet. I love ballet.  
23 Oh, there's Wayne. Patsy Chin from the Youth  
24 Orchestra. Patsy is here, and then we have-we know  
25 we have four more. So I guess I'll wait to call the

1  
2 last panel after these three are done, if that's  
3 alright with everyone. Let me just tests this. Is  
4 Peter Kim still here? Peter Kim. Is Hannah  
5 Frochette? Meg Ventrudo. Joyce Adaloni.

6 JOYCE ADALONI: I'm here.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Extra credit.

8 Everyone is here, the last panel. Thank you so much  
9 for waiting. I will fight for more funding for the  
10 Cultural Immigrant Initiative. I can't say it for  
11 you all specifically because that would  
12 inappropriate, though. Who wants to go first?

13 PATSY CHIN: I teach. I'm the Artistic  
14 Director of the Youth Orchestra, Chinese Youth Group  
15 of New York. Our kids are from 10 to 18, and we  
16 thank Peter Koo and the New York Council members to  
17 fund us, and enable our kids to play as local as the  
18 hospital nursing home in Queens, and the  
19 Thailand(sic) Center in Flushing, and also go to  
20 Lincoln Center and Alice Tully Hall. And the kids  
21 have very good self-esteem and the families for our  
22 life, and we thank so much for this year in physical  
23 and new Council. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and  
25 who all, which Council Member?

1  
2                   PATSY CHIN: Peter Koo is the one from--  
3 designate it for us.

4                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wonderful

5                   PATSY CHIN: Yes.

6                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Peter Koo is a  
7 great champion of culture--

8                   PATSY CHIN: [interposing] Yes.

9                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --in the arts  
10 and while I love every borough equally, I'm from  
11 Queens. So, we love Queens, love Flushing. Well, we  
12 love Brooklyn, too. We love everybody. So thank you  
13 very much. Brooklyn Ballet. I'm looking at all of  
14 your materials. So you might as well go next.

15                   LYNN PARKERSON: Okay, great. Thank you.  
16 Thank you, Council Member Van Bramer for creating  
17 this program. My name is Lynn Parkerson. I'm the  
18 Founding Artistic Director of Brooklyn Ballet. I  
19 founded the company in February 2002, the first of  
20 its kind in Brooklyn in more than 40 years. Brooklyn  
21 Ballet brings a contemporary vision to the treasured  
22 art form of ballet with repertory and programs that  
23 revitalize and re-imagine the classical form.  
24 Brooklyn Ballet presents its company in annual  
25 performances and in Brooklyn and operates the

1  
2 Professional Dance School located on the Cimarron  
3 Street in Downtown Brooklyn. Our company includes  
4 dancers from Cuba, Trinidad, Japan and Brazil,  
5 immigrants who comprise nearly one-third of the  
6 company, and one-half of our ballet school faculty  
7 are immigrants from Cuba, Mexico and Russia, and many  
8 of our students come from immigrant families. The  
9 artistic and pedagogical contributions from our  
10 immigrant colleagues are inestimable. In 2015 and  
11 2016 Brooklyn Ballet received funding from the  
12 Cultural Immigrant Initiative from Council Member  
13 Steve Levin. This funding has supported the ongoing  
14 work of the Brooklyn Ballet's immigrant colleagues, and  
15 it helped the ballet create and produce the Brooklyn  
16 Nutcracker, a ballet that transforms familiar  
17 Nutcracker characters and scenes to represent the  
18 diverse traditions and vibrant cultures of melting  
19 pot Brooklyn. The Brooklyn Nutcracker premiered in  
20 December at the Brooklyn Museum to six sold out  
21 performances before 2,400 audience members including  
22 400 public school children during a weekday matinee.  
23 To create this production, Brooklyn Ballet reached  
24 into the Middle Eastern community for an authentic  
25 Arabian belly dance, into the Afro Caribbean

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community to add African influence movement to the Marzipan dance. We will continue to expand the Brooklyn Nutcracker to include authentic Spanish, Georgian and Chinese dances. The Cultural Immigrant Initiative funding ensures that Brooklyn Ballet's immigrant colleagues continue their valuable work with our community, that we continue to bring world dance traditions into our repertory and that Brooklyn Ballet's programs remain accessible to immigrant communities through targeted marketing [bell] and free performances. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, and did you say that you re-founded this organization, or it was the first?

LYNN PARKERSON: There was a Brooklyn ballet that in the '60s, and it-it tanked at some point, and so then 2002, I-I brought another Brooklyn ballet to life. Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. That's terrific.

LYNN PARKERSON: And the photos on the other side are the Arabian dance upside down. I'm sorry [laughs] and the--

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing] I  
3 thought they were very talented dancers.

4 LYNN PARKERSON: [laughs] It's amazing  
5 what they can do.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's amazing.

7 LYNN PARKERSON: And the—the African  
8 Mazipan dance, too.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And Council  
10 Member Levin is the source of your--

11 LYNN PARKERSON: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's  
13 wonderful. Thank you very much. I'm also looking at  
14 the Youth Orchestra materials and last, but not least  
15 on this panel.

16 ANNA BECKER: Hello, and thank you very  
17 much for this opportunity and for all that you're  
18 doing for the arts community.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

20 ANNA BECKER: We very much appreciate it.  
21 I'm Anna Becker. I'm the Executive Director of On  
22 Stage at Kingsborough. We are a professional multi-  
23 disciplinary performing art center located on the  
24 campus of Kingsborough Community College in Manhattan  
25 Beach, Brooklyn. I'd like to begin by just providing

1  
2 and overview of the activities that we've undertaken  
3 as a direct result of the Cultural Immigrant  
4 Initiative. Last season, we presented six culturally  
5 specific workshops and performances free of charge at  
6 four separate locations in Brooklyn: FDR High  
7 School, the Home Crest Senior Center, Kings Bay  
8 Library and at our venue at On State at Kingsborough.  
9 In addition, we also took artists out of doors and  
10 into the community when we partnered with the Coney  
11 Island Sports Foundation to provide dance and music  
12 along their 5K race route on the Coney Island  
13 Boardwalk. We presented dance and music not only to  
14 hundreds of runners, but also to hundreds and  
15 hundreds of Brighton Beach and Coney Island beach  
16 goes. The workshops, performances and 5K race  
17 audiences were exposed to theater, dance and music  
18 artists from Spain, China, Israel, Latin America,  
19 Russia and West Africa. In every case, our  
20 activities were designed to reach immigrant audiences  
21 of all ages with performing arts forms for their—from  
22 their countries of origins, and to reach audiences  
23 that otherwise do not have easy access to the  
24 performing arts. The initiative has also been  
25 invaluable to On State at Kingsborough because it has

1  
2 allowed us to expand the number and kind of artist  
3 that we present, which has enriched the aesthetic of  
4 our performing art centers as a whole. We now have  
5 experienced presenting artists from countries we had  
6 not previously showcased and will be more likely to  
7 do so on our main stage in the future, thereby,  
8 exposing them to entirely new audiences again. I  
9 would like to echo the recommendation that has been  
10 put forth. I believe that the program would be  
11 greatly enhanced [bell] given the details of the  
12 funds and the actual money aside, notification in  
13 advance would be a huge help to us in planning the  
14 program and finding the right partners and really  
15 strong partners and the artists to do this so that we  
16 can plan ahead more. Again, I would like to state  
17 the Cultural Immigrant Initiative allowed us to reach  
18 many, many new and underserved populations with  
19 international performing artists. On Stage at  
20 Kingsborough in turn has been enriched by its ability  
21 to present a wider variety of performances. Thank  
22 you again for your time, and for all that you do.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
24 much, and I've been to Kingsborough a few times, but  
25

1 never to see one of your programs. Maybe we'll have  
2 to correct that.

3 ANNA BECKER: Oh, yes, please do. We're  
4 there all the time.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, and  
6 how do you have a college on a beach? I've always  
7 wondered how that happens.

8 ANNA BECKER: How does it happen?

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: How does anybody  
10 pay attention when you're on a beach?

11 ANNA BECKER: They probably don't, but  
12 we've been [laughter] inside for the performances so  
13 they have to. The students are not worried about it.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [laughs] I  
15 appreciate your honesty, but no, it's a lovely-a  
16 lovely--

17 ANNA BECKER: [interposing] Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --place, a  
19 lovely space, and the Council has its annual outing  
20 there and so that's how--

21 ANNA BECKER: [interposing] Right, right.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --I've-I've only  
23 seen it on beautiful sunny beach days, and--  
24

1  
2 ANNA BECKER: Right. So we're—we—you can  
3 hear the music wafting down. We're at the Band Shell  
4 on the July nights doing the cultures.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]  
6 How wonderful.

7 ANNA BECKER: So yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
9 much. Thank you to—to this panel, and now our last  
10 panel, which group I won because we want to hear  
11 everyone who has waited, and I want to thank everyone  
12 for—for being here. So, all those folks I already  
13 called. Joyce Adewumi, Meg Ventrudo, Hannah Fchette  
14 (sp?), Peter Kim and we're going to throw Ben  
15 Spearman from the Bronx Opera Company onto this one  
16 as well. Ben, just pull up a seat and then when we—  
17 we move over the—the—yep, nope. The sergeant-at-arms  
18 has got one for you. [background comments] That's  
19 right, and we'll just move over the microphone to Ben  
20 at the end. Alright, why don't we start left to  
21 right. Go for it.

22 JOYCE ADEWUMI: Good afternoon, Chairman.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good afternoon.

24 JOYCE ADEWUMI: Thank you so much for the  
25 opportunity to report on the many benefits that the

1  
2 Cultural Immigrant Initiative funding has provided to  
3 the New York African Chorus Ensemble as well as the  
4 many communities we serve. I am Joyce Adewumi,  
5 President of the New York Africa Ensemble. The  
6 organization was founded in 2004 to provide easy  
7 access for learning about, and the viewing of African  
8 music performances. When our organization was first  
9 formed, I was told that it would be very difficult  
10 for us to get funding because of the word African in  
11 our name. Yes, it has been more than difficult.  
12 Nevertheless, we struggle to stay afloat and our  
13 programs have grown over the years providing a  
14 platform for more folks organizations to perform for  
15 more divers audiences. Council Member Mark Levine's  
16 grant is more than a life saver. The Cultural  
17 Immigrant Grant Initiative --Cultural Immigrant  
18 Initiative Grant helped to vitalize and expand our  
19 community programs. The gathering presented on  
20 February 27<sup>th</sup> attended New York City Multi-Cultural  
21 Festival of June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016 in Harlem. We presented  
22 performances by excellent folk organizations from  
23 countries such as Jamaica, Japan, Korea, Mexico,  
24 Nigeria, Saint Lucia, and so forth. More than 100  
25 performers participated on stage as well as in the

1  
2 Children's International Village. That project  
3 included Chinese culture of crafts, face painting,  
4 multi-cultural pup-puppeteering, a global language  
5 project, Guatemalan, worry doll making and more.  
6 Collaborating with these organizations is made  
7 possible because of the many immigrant populations in  
8 New York City and access to world class cultural  
9 options. This grant brought to the fore the fact  
10 that New Yorkers can adjust and learn about the many  
11 other cultures around them while preserving and  
12 maintaining their own traditions. The performances  
13 were absolutely authentic and performers-and  
14 observers began to take connections-sorry. Observers  
15 began to make [bell] connections with their own  
16 feelings and likes. They began to connect the dots.  
17 At the concert and festival people were always on  
18 their feet with the excitement of witnessing  
19 exceptional talent. This exposure to other cultures,  
20 the costumes, the movement, the dance that valid  
21 human expressions. The children and everyone else  
22 got the message: It is okay to be yourself. This is  
23 one of the things this grant made possible. It gave  
24 children the opportunity to see something they may  
25 not be learning in school. It is okay to be

1  
2 yourself, and it is okay to appreciate other people's  
3 culture. Also, these events gave folk organizations  
4 the opportunity to celebrate themselves in New York,  
5 celebrate themselves as New Yorkers, and to see our  
6 culture expressions as valid on the main stage. It  
7 gave us the opportunity to celebrate New York as the  
8 most culturally diverse city in the world. We really  
9 are a gorgeous mosaic. Folk organizations have  
10 almost become resigned to the fact that they will not  
11 be paid for their performances. We should not be so  
12 complacent. Excellent performers regardless of  
13 culture background should be compensated for their  
14 work. This grant made possible such financial  
15 acknowledgement of their work, although we wish we  
16 could have done more. Let me also mention a few of  
17 the benefits of the festival briefly. We also had  
18 health screening available for festival attendees who  
19 were immigrants. During the year, we also provided  
20 five to six workshops for potential street vendors,  
21 mostly immigrants. Many of them also were members of  
22 folk organization who needed funding to run their  
23 program. Thank you very much for this opportunity to  
24 provide testimony, and look forward to continue a  
25 productive relationship with you. Thank you so much.

1  
2                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
3 much, and I apologize. You read that as fast as you  
4 could.

5                   JOYCE ADEWUMI: [laughs]

6                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: But—but also  
7 since this panel has waited so long, obviously we're—  
8 we're giving you a little more leeway. I don't want  
9 to interrupt you all given that you've—you've had so  
10 long to wait, but—but thank you for—for that, and it  
11 is really, really good to hear your story about Mark  
12 Levine and what this grant meant to your program. Do  
13 want to go next?

14                   MEG VENTRUDO: Good afternoon. My name  
15 is Meg Ventrudo, and I'm the Executive Director of  
16 the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art in Staten  
17 Island, and for those of you who do not know, Jacques  
18 Marchais was an American woman and not a French man,  
19 [laughter] and she was a very early collector of  
20 Tibetan art in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The Tibetan Museum  
21 is the first museum in the United States solely  
22 dedicated to preserving, exhibiting, and educating  
23 the public about the art and culture of Tibet. Thank  
24 for the opportunity to speak here today in support of  
25 the Cultural Immigrant Initiative. Last year, the

1  
2 Museum received a Cultural Immigrant Initiative award  
3 of \$15,000 and that was through Council Member  
4 Matteo. The museum is small, and we had an operating  
5 budget of under \$250,000. A grant of this amount is  
6 significant funding for the museum and it supports  
7 our mission. These funds enabled the museum to bring  
8 Tibetan musicians, artists and speakers to the museum  
9 to supplement our ongoing cultural programming.  
10 These programs focused on Vedism and the environment,  
11 traditional and modern education in Tibet, and  
12 Tibetan music and dance. The programs are important  
13 to the museum, and this grants supports one of the  
14 goals of the museum's strategic plan, which is  
15 greater outreach and engagement with the Tibetan and  
16 Himalayan communities in New York City, which numbers  
17 over a little 30,000 people. We believe the art and  
18 culture of Tibet is the art of living culture and  
19 it's the role of the museum to present these arts in  
20 a contextual and educational manner. Most  
21 importantly, the programs presented by this grant  
22 support greater cultural and civic activities that  
23 foster understanding among communities. The grant  
24 provides opportunities for immigrant artists to  
25 showcase their cultural traditions to a large

1  
2 audience and also we do compensate artists for their  
3 travel and for their performance time. Activities  
4 supported by this grant create greater engagement  
5 among audience members, and the artists to create  
6 cross-cultural understanding, and activities  
7 supported by this grant bring artists from across the  
8 [bell] city into our borough. The museum had  
9 approximately 300 audience members from all five  
10 boroughs to our programs. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and as  
12 you probably know, we have a large Tibetan and  
13 Himalayan community in Queens in my district sort of  
14 the Woodside portion of my district, and then also in  
15 Jackson Heights not too-too far down Harris. I'm  
16 assuming you work with that community, and--

17 MEG VENTRUDO: That's--that's where our  
18 live artists resides. So we--we do have good  
19 relationships with them, and it's been--it's been  
20 growing as our community becomes more established.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: How wonderful.  
22 Terrific and I work closely with Council Member  
23 Matteo, and--and so I would love to learn more about  
24 what you do, particularly with the artists in my  
25 neighborhood. Thank you so much.

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2

MEG VENTRUDO: Thank you.

3

PETER KIM: Hi. Good afternoon.

4

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good afternoon.

5

6

PETER KIM: My name is Peter Kim. I am

7

the Executive Director of the Museum of Food and  
Drink. We are New York's first and only food museum,

8

and to my knowledge the only museum with exhibits

9

that you can actually eat as well.

10

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That has got to

11

be the coolest job in the whole world.

12

PETER KIM: [laughs]

13

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Honestly, the

14

Museum of Food and Drink.

15

PETER KIM: Well, for anybody who runs

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this small museum, I think you also know that there

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are some—some drags with that as well, but, you know,

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the—the mission is really what drives you forward.

19

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You actually get

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to eat and drink what you curate?

21

PETER KIM: Yeah, absolutely. So, we

22

started actually as a mobile museum, and we had a

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mobile exhibit that looked at the story of breakfast

24

cereal. We took that around the city, and we had

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programs around the city, and then we opened our

1  
2 first brick and mortar location in October 2015, and  
3 so we also received an allocation via Council Member  
4 Margaret Chin through the Cultural Immigrant  
5 Initiative, and being a fledgling museum, this was  
6 nothing short of critical for us, and it allowed us  
7 to launch a program series that we call MOFAD City.  
8 MOFAD City was based out of this realization that as  
9 I think you would know very well, determine that the  
10 food—the city in a lot of ways is like a food museum  
11 itself, and Queens I think is a great example of  
12 this, but so we realized that we wanted to do a  
13 program series that would tell the stories of how  
14 immigrant communities have contributed to New York  
15 City food culture. So we held programs looking at  
16 Afro-Caribbean food in Crown Heights, Polish  
17 Greenpoint, Himalayan in Jackson Heights, Italian-  
18 American food in Belmont in the Bronx, Jewish-  
19 American cuisine in the Lower East Side, and then  
20 looking at the way that Chinatown developed in  
21 response to the Exclusion Act and successful voice of  
22 immigration. This brought us to—in every case we  
23 partnered with local community institutions including  
24 the library and other museums, and we did a print  
25 guide, which you're holding right now and, you know,

1  
2 this-this is a great way for us to show how a museum  
3 can connect to communities and particularly  
4 underserved communities around the city. Going  
5 forward from that, we actually launched a series of  
6 digital exhibitions also under MOFAD city. [bell]  
7 That allows people to just visit these neighborhoods,  
8 and almost the museum exhibition taste and learn  
9 going around the neighborhoods. And if I may also  
10 add because of MOFAD City we ended up focusing our-  
11 our full attention at the museum on immigrant food  
12 culture, and so we launched an exhibition that opened  
13 in November called Chow: Making the Chinese-American  
14 Restaurant, and we chronicled the development of  
15 takeout restaurants, and how that started and  
16 basically with the Exclusion Act and the U.S. telling  
17 Chinese immigrants they didn't belong. So all that  
18 is to say that the Cultural Immigrant Initiative  
19 certainly helped us as a museum highlight the very  
20 valuable contributions of immigrants to the city, and  
21 so, I can't think you enough and anybody here  
22 including my fellow panelists you're welcome to visit  
23 the museum or I can take you on a tour through some  
24 of the neighborhoods we looked at. Thank you.

1  
2                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's awesome  
3 and are you going to do this again?

4                   PETER KIM: Oh, yeah, we're--this is  
5 something that we looked as an ongoing initiative  
6 with the museum. I would love for--eventually one day  
7 people to be able to say, you know, I want to learn  
8 about let's say Uzbek food, and then MOFAD City would  
9 be the place you'd go to actually not just--just to  
10 where to eat, but really to understand the stories,  
11 and have a meaningful interaction with those  
12 cuisines.

13                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Huh, well, we'd  
14 love for you to come back to our district. I see  
15 you're at--in Modetsy (sic), right, which is in my  
16 district.

17                   PETER KIM: Oh, yeah.

18                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Which is awesome,  
19 and then Himalayan Yak is owned by--

20                   PETER KIM: [interposing] A great place.

21                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --the former  
22 intern of mine. [background comments] which is  
23 really cool, and this is great. So, we will

24                   PETER KIM: I gained a few pounds working  
25 on this. So, I also have you guys to thank for that.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You know what,  
3 there's the cost of doing business.

4 PETER KIM: Yeah.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So that's  
6 awesome. We'd love for you to tell us more about  
7 that, and your base list of headquarters?

8 PETER KIM: We're in Council Member  
9 Levin's district actually on the south side of  
10 McCarren Park in Williamsburg, Greenpoint.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great, a hop,  
12 skip and a jump to there.

13 PETER KIM: Absolutely.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great. Next.

15 HANNAH FACHETTE: Hello, my name is  
16 Hannah Fachette (sp?) I'm the Managing Director for  
17 Michael Revo Calla de Santa (sic). We're a small  
18 Spanish Music organization, and we received the  
19 Cultural Immigrant Initiative for two years running,  
20 and I have to say we did a big dance for joy in our  
21 office when we first learned about the initiative  
22 because there's been a long overdue conversation  
23 about diversity and equity and really supporting  
24 those culturally specific organizations that make up  
25 the vibrancy of the city that we've hearing about,

1  
2 and this was one of the initiatives that really put  
3 that talk into action. So thank you. So we used our  
4 designations to really go deeper into arts education  
5 work. We have a long history of working with English  
6 language learners, and in public schools across the  
7 districts, but particularly in our Council District  
8 for Daniel Garodnick has supported us with  
9 discretionary funding for a long time, and we really  
10 use this Cultural Immigrant Initiative to work  
11 specifically with the L students who are often  
12 overlooked for incoming arts and culture programming.  
13 So we're able to say specifically no this grant says  
14 we are supposed to work with these students, and to  
15 have a nice full experience with them. I just also  
16 kind of on the logistical side after everything  
17 that's been said, but for us the challenge on the DCA  
18 side has been minimal. It's really been on the  
19 Council side, but has a reason at the resistance and  
20 just be lack of transparency. I actually had a  
21 meeting this morning, and the—there was actually no  
22 idea whether the funding had been allocated or not  
23 for Fiscal Year 17. So, I have to commend the DCA on  
24 their transparency on their end being very clear

1  
2 about what they know and what they don't, and  
3 keeping--

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: It's whether or  
5 not your grant has been--

6 HANNAH FACHETTE: Correct.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

8 HANNAH FACHETTE: And--and also keeping  
9 the process once the allocation has been made on the--  
10 on the Council Member side. That two-page  
11 application is really a dream compared to a lot of  
12 the other funding streams through the Pratt  
13 Foundation and things like that that we have to go  
14 through a small organization. So I just wanted to  
15 throw that out there as an--as an applause for them.  
16 [bell] Yes. So, yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. Last  
18 but not least.

19 BEN SPEARMAN: First of all, I want his  
20 job. [laughter]

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: We all do.

22 BEN SPEARMAN: [coughs] Just to echo one  
23 thing before I start talking, and making that  
24 statement. I think notification really is the key.  
25 The more you know, the sooner, the more you can

1  
2 leverage other funds, the more you can figure out how  
3 you're going to deal with whatever it is you're going  
4 to get. So even if the money itself isn't  
5 forthcoming, know how much you're going to get  
6 obviously is—even if it's sort of a compromise. In  
7 terms of—that would—I think that would help all of  
8 us. My name is Ben Spearman—Benjamin Spearman and I  
9 am the Managing Director of the Bronx Opera Company.  
10 Now in the midst of our 50<sup>th</sup> season, Bronx Opera is  
11 the only opera company in the Bronx and is the only  
12 opera company other than our much larger siblings in  
13 the—as Lincoln Center to produce opera in each year  
14 since our founding in 1967. We're proud of that  
15 record, and we're also proud of our participation in  
16 the New York Opera Alliance, which is a consortium of  
17 opera companies from all over the city, and in  
18 NYOLA's annual New York Opera Fest, second annual  
19 Opera Fest, which takes place all over the city in  
20 May and June. I'm here to talk to testify in support  
21 of the Cultural Immigrant Initiative, as everybody  
22 else is. For each of the last two seasons due to the  
23 good offices of Council Member Cohen, our company has  
24 received significant funds from this initiative to  
25 support work that we do with the Bronx's immigrant

1  
2 population. Since last year, the main bulk of our  
3 work has been in cooperative collaboration with the  
4 Kingsbridge Heights Community Center, which serves  
5 the majority of the immigrant community, a community  
6 where according to city data there are more than 70%  
7 of residents identified as Latino or Latina, and more  
8 than 60% speak in a language other than English at  
9 home. Working with them has enabled us to target our  
10 CIA related work, and has helped us to find the best  
11 ways to provide cultural education to our earliest  
12 immigrant communities. Last year, our collaboration  
13 results in the new creation of four groups, all of  
14 which performed--core classics I should say--all of  
15 which performed at the Center's year-end event in  
16 June. We created a choir for ages 5 to 11, a dance  
17 class for special needs students between the ages of  
18 6 and 19, an acting class for teens and tunes (sic)  
19 ages 12 to 19, and an English language singing class  
20 for English as the second or other [bell] language  
21 adults ages 20 through older than they would like to  
22 admit. These classes helped us [laughter] fulfill an  
23 aspect of our mission, which is becoming increasingly  
24 important to not just be in the Bronx, but of the  
25 Bronx. For a century, the Bronx has been a haven to

1  
2 immigrants. My own great grandparents came to New  
3 York City over 100 years ago, and so-so where I still  
4 live and work. At a time when services can be  
5 sporadic, the CIA has allowed us and organizations  
6 like us to help our communities and bring the arts  
7 into the lives and the general life of our-of our  
8 borough and our city. CAF (sic) funds also primarily  
9 I should say went to-went to-directly to the teachers  
10 who taught these classes who are-who are opera  
11 singers, but also work in many other disciplines as  
12 teachers. We are already-already planning for this  
13 year, and actually despite the fact that we don't  
14 actually know if we're getting any money, and we  
15 really hope to go-to continue moving forward with  
16 this program. It's enabled us to help our community  
17 in such incredible ways. I want-I want to thank-I  
18 think as we all do the Chairman, and the Committee  
19 and the City Council for really bumping up the level  
20 of art spending in the City over the last few years.  
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
23 much, and all of you get cultural development funds,  
24 right?

25 HANNAH FACHETTE: Yes, uh-huh.

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BEN SPEARMAN: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Have we all  
received our

PETER KIM: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So that?

PETER KIM: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Terrific. Well,  
thank you all so much for—for waiting, and for  
testifying. All of this is very helpful to me as the  
Chair of the committee, and—and really does make me  
want to fight even more to increase the funding even  
further, and—and I think good things will come out of  
this hearing, and all of you taking the time to be  
here today. So thank you for the work that you do.  
It's all incredibly valuable to the city of New York  
and to the people of the city of New York. So thank  
you all very, very much.

BEN SPEARMAN: Thank you.

HANNAH FACHETTE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And with that,  
we are adjourned. [gavel]

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date January 20, 2017