

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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September 20, 2017

Start: 1:16 p.m.

Recess: 3:45 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers-City Hall

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

ELIZABETH S. CROWLEY  
JULISSA FERRERAS-COPELAND  
ANDY L. KING  
PETER A. KOO  
STEPHEN T. LEVIN  
COSTA G. CONSTANTINIDES  
LAURIE A. CUMBO  
HELEN K. ROSENTHAL

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

Tom Finkelpearl  
Commissioner of Cultural Affairs

Marta Moreno Vega  
Founder of the Caribbean Cultural Center African  
Diaspora Institute

Charlotte Cohen  
Executive Director of Brooklyn Arts Council

Ariel Estrada  
Actor, Producer, Communications Designer, Grant  
Writer

Sheila Lewandowski  
Co-Founder and Executive Director of the  
Chocolate Factory Theater, Board Member of the  
New Yorkers for Culture and Arts

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

Lisa Robb  
Executive Director at the Center for Arts  
Education

Todd Stoll  
Vice President of Education at Jazz Lincoln  
Center

Jenny Louloudes  
Executive Director of Art New York

Caron Atlas  
Director of Arts and Democracy Project and  
Coordinator of the Naturally Occurring Cultural  
Districts New York, NOCD-NY

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

Christopher Carroll  
Political Director at Local 802, American  
Federation of Musicians

Lane Harwell  
Executive Director of Dance/NYC and Member of the  
Cultural Affairs Advisory Commission, Board  
Member of New Yorkers for Culture and the Arts

Antonio Serna  
Artist and Cultural Worker, Member of Artist for  
Color Bloc

Joanna Crispe  
Director of Community Engagement and Education at  
The Municipal Art Society of New York

Ben Davis  
Independent Writer

Robert Lee  
Executive Director of Asian American Arts Centre

Diane Fraher  
Director at American Indian Artists Inc., Osage  
And Cherokee Nations, Founder and Director of  
AMERINDA and a New Yorker

Simon Dove  
Executive and Artistic Director of Dancing in the  
Streets

Javier Medrano  
Senior Associate of Public and Private  
Partnership at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue of Business  
Improvement District in the South Bronx

Olympia Cazi  
Representing New York City Access Coalition

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[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great, okay.

Good afternoon everyone and welcome to this oversight hearing of the Committee on the Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations. My name is Jimmy Van Bramer and I'm very proud to be the Chair of the committee. A little housekeeping obviously, we've moved from the Chambers to the Committee Room because the Education Committee is running late and rather than wait for that to end I chose to move here to this room which is a little bit more intimate so I apologize for those who are standing so we could roughly go on time. Obviously, we're very excited to have Commissioner Finkelpearl here and all of you here to talk about Create NYC and where we go from here. I'm thrilled to be joined by Council Member Peter Koo also from Queens, we have some other Council Members who are on the way and of course we also have two Council Members who have had a... babies recently so we have some maternity and paternity leave going on so our committee is blessed to have those new babies in our committee family but we won't have the presence of Council Member Levin who obviously is co-sponsor of New York City's

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1 Cultural Plan but I want to thank him although I know  
2 he's enjoying very much where he is right now with  
3 his family and of course Council Member Cumbo who  
4 recently gave birth to a beautiful little boy who  
5 also can't be with us here today but we will now  
6 commence the hearing and again if anyone wants to  
7 sign in to speak we have the list up here, I see more  
8 people are coming in and again apologize for the  
9 closeness of the room but we're a cultural community,  
10 we're close and we'll make it work. So, thank you all  
11 for your interest, thank you for being here and as  
12 many of you know and hopefully everyone has read  
13 every single page of Create NYC, this very impressive  
14 document that I'm proud to see have come out of the  
15 legislation that Council Member Levin and I passed.  
16 All of us know how important our community is, how  
17 important artists will always be in the city of New  
18 York and, and everything that artists and the  
19 cultural community contribute is hard to encapsulate  
20 in one document. In fact, it's impossible but this  
21 was a noble effort and I know the Commissioner will  
22 speak a little bit to what went into it but obviously  
23 we want to focus more in this hearing on what's next,  
24 what's being done. Obviously there are some  
25

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1 significant recommendations towards the end of this  
2 document and we want to talk a little bit about those  
3 recommendations and what is being done to make sure  
4 that we attain the goals set forth in the plan and  
5 I'm anxious of course to hear from everyone in the  
6 community about the plan, what your thoughts are,  
7 where you think we should go and of course we're  
8 aware that any plan will have its supporters and  
9 there will be those who maybe feel it doesn't go far  
10 enough, doesn't go deep enough and I'm interested to  
11 hear from everyone and where they might feel there  
12 are gaps in what is being presented and what is in  
13 this document. So, its, it's good to be here with all  
14 of you celebrating this document but also more  
15 importantly to talk about what we can do to address  
16 in very, very substantial and meaningful ways access  
17 and equity and some of the challenges that we know  
18 the cultural community are faced with in terms of  
19 diversity, in terms of displacement, in terms of all  
20 of the things that everyone is, is working with. I do  
21 want to say at the start that we once again secured  
22 record funding for culture and the arts in the city  
23 of New York. The Commissioner and I both fought  
24 incredibly hard and, and I know that some of the  
25

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1  
2 funding that we secured in this year's budget is  
3 already being envisioned and being used to address  
4 some of the recommendations but obviously I want to  
5 hear a little bit more from the Commissioner on how  
6 we're doing that and how we're putting your tax  
7 dollars to work right away to make sure once again  
8 that we're addressing access and equity and making  
9 sure that everyone is being served, everyone has  
10 access to the arts, everyone can participate in the  
11 arts, that is what we're all about. I want to thank  
12 Aminta Kilawan and Chloe Rivera who are here with me,  
13 our council and Matthew Wallace and Andres Villa from  
14 my office as well for their help and... so that we can  
15 get going and stay roughly on time I'll ask  
16 Commissioner Finkelpearl to read his testimony but  
17 before that we will ask him to swear that everything  
18 he's about to say is the truth.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK KILOWAN: Do you affirm  
20 to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but  
21 the truth in your testimony before this committee and  
22 to respond honestly to council member questions:

23 TOM FINKELPEARL: I do.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK KILOWAN: Thank you.  
25

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1  
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well that's a  
3 relief, thank you Tom, thank you. it's also a very  
4 serious room, everyone if you... if you agree with  
5 anything or you want to laugh you can actually do  
6 this, right so why don't we exercise, how many of you  
7 think arts and culture are incredibly important in  
8 the city of New York? Aright, how many of you would  
9 like more funding to be allocated to culture and the  
10 arts in the city of New York? Alright, so with that  
11 affirmation of the importance of the arts and the  
12 desire to see more funding I give you Commissioner  
13 Tom Finkelpearl.

14 TOM FINKELPEARL: Thank you. Good  
15 afternoon Chair Van Bramer and members of the  
16 Committee. I'm Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom  
17 Finkelpearl here today to testify regards... in regard  
18 to the Create NYC Cultural Plan. I'm joined by a  
19 number of my colleagues from the agency. I'm here  
20 today to tell you about what is being done and what  
21 comes next but first I want to give a quick overview  
22 of how we got to this point. The Mayor signed the  
23 Cultural Plan legislation co-sponsored by Chair Van  
24 Bramer and Council Member Levin in May 2015. We  
25 watched the public engagement process in September



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2016. Over the next nine months we heard from nearly  
200,000 residents, more than 25,000 people showed up  
in... at more than 400 live events and tens of  
thousands more participated online. A range of  
partners, advocates, activists, and other residents  
responded to the planning process and focused their  
efforts on getting it, the plan to reflect issues  
important to them and the members of the city council  
were some of the most significant participants in our  
public engagement efforts hosting town halls and  
welcoming participants at events across the city.  
Your participation meant so much to us and showed New  
Yorkers that you truly are listening to their  
concerns. As you all know we released the city's  
first ever comprehensive cultural plan, Create NYC in  
July, it was a milestone moment, we were so glad that  
we could host in Chair Van Bramer's district at the  
extraordinary Materials for the Arts. We're also  
happy that Council Member Levin there, the Co-sponsor  
of the legislation alongside Chair Van Bramer was  
there. With so many cultural groups, advocates,  
artists and other stakeholders and NYC's creative  
sector gathered in the same room as the Mayor and the  
First Lady Chirlane McCray together we set a clear

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1 message that equitable arts access is a top priority.

2 On day one we were able to announce new funding

3 programs aimed at furthering the goals and strategies

4 laid out in the cultural plan thanks to increased

5 support from both the Mayor and our partners in the

6 city council. The Mayor's funding increases allowed

7 us to continue paying energy support for cultural

8 groups in city owned property including Harlem State,

9 Pregones, Puerto Rican Traveling Theater and others.

10 This is a diverse set of groups that are cornerstones

11 of communities across the city and we're proud to

12 provide additional support allowing them to increase

13 access and programming for their constituents. We are

14 to increase funding for smaller cultural

15 institutions, members of the CIG, members which are

16 located in or serve low income communities. This

17 application is out and is due back to us in three

18 weeks. Able to fund language access programming so

19 cultural groups can expand their engagement with the

20 city's diverse populations and increased disability

21 access efforts at cultural organizations. As a direct

22 result to the plan our new disability inclusion

23 associate started just this past Monday. This

24 position will help guide the agency's own internal

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1  
2 and external efforts of being more inclusive of  
3 people with disabilities and the disability arts  
4 community. The city council added funding at adoption  
5 and is aimed at the goals of the plan thanks to  
6 leadership of the Speaker and Chair Van Bramer for  
7 that. For one the borough arts councils are receiving  
8 an additional one million dollars to provide support  
9 for individual artists. Not surprisingly  
10 affordability was the single biggest issue we heard  
11 time and time again at Create NYC outreach.  
12 Supporting working artists across the city is a  
13 critical... is critical to maintaining our  
14 neighborhoods as fertile ground for creative activity  
15 and the benefits of it that it brings to our  
16 communities. The council funding also increased  
17 programming, programming funding by four million  
18 dollars that will increase funding for all cultural  
19 groups meaning... that's in the, the CDF but with  
20 special focus on smaller organizations. These small  
21 groups do remarkable programming and these increases  
22 are incredibly impactful, we applaud the council for  
23 this expanded support. One of the most significant  
24 announcements we made at the launch of Cultural Plan  
25 is a new effort as our Diversity Equity Inclusion or

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1  
2 DEI Initiative to track demographics, allow cultural  
3 organizations to report on their diversity efforts,  
4 and promote diversity planning among cultural non-  
5 profits. For both the CIG members and the 900  
6 organizations that receive funding from my agency we  
7 will collect demographic data on their staffs and  
8 boards, this data will be scrubbed of any information  
9 that could be used to identify individuals. Starting  
10 next fiscal year, we will also require the 33 members  
11 of the CIG to develop DEI plans or policies or risk a  
12 portion of their funding. Let me... let me be clear,  
13 these efforts are not something that my agency is  
14 doing to the cultural community, in hundreds of  
15 meetings we had across... we had for Create NYC public  
16 engagement and in countless conversations with  
17 organizations themselves this is a top priority for  
18 all New Yorkers. We all understand how critical it is  
19 to cultivate cultural programming that reflects and  
20 speaks to an increasingly diverse population. What  
21 we're doing is working with cultural sector to make  
22 sure that DEI efforts remain a priority so that  
23 cultural programming here in NYC can reflect its  
24 audiences, its artists, and its workers. As the 2016  
25 DCLA diversity showed us we're doing better than the

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rest of the... of the US, we've got a long way to go  
towards achieving meaningful results. Create NYC also  
lays out a bold vision for reducing energy  
consumption at cultural organizations. Over one fifth  
of DCLA's support at cultural organizations goes to  
fund energy costs at cultural groups in current... in  
the current fiscal year. Our big institutions have  
unique energy needs to be both public facing and  
while maintaining their collections inside. That's  
why DCLA is creating a new position specifically to  
work with cultural organizations to help them reduce  
their greenhouse gas emissions to create a more  
sustainable city. This energy managed position...  
management position is open and currently posted on  
the city's job website. The Mayor's One NYC plan sets  
a goal for 80 percent reduction in all emissions by  
2050 with a focus on the city's more than one million  
buildings of all sizes, types and uses including  
cultural. This new position at DCLA will work with  
cultural organizations and our capital projects unit  
to reduce energy consumption. As part of Create NYC  
we have a goal of directing five million dollars in  
capital funding to energy efficiency projects.  
Another milestone achieved was the launch of the

1 cultural cabinet, a coordinated internal effort among  
2 agencies to troubleshoot issues and more effectively  
3 implement cultural programming across city agencies.

4 While the city is the largest local funder for  
5 culture in America, DCLA is not the only source of  
6 funding for the arts or even its largest. The  
7 Department of Education invests nearly 400 million  
8 dollars in arts education for public school students  
9 each year and a host of other agencies deliver  
10 services through cultural engagement. The Culture  
11 Cabinet, which had its first meeting just last week  
12 here at City Hall will help us leverage these  
13 resources and make sure that we're working together  
14 to increase access for culture for all of our  
15 constituents. Beyond, beyond funding increases and  
16 new initiatives Create NYC also includes policy  
17 recommendations that various advocates called for in  
18 our public engagement. These include reexamining the  
19 city's Cabaret Law and creating an office dedicated  
20 to supporting nightlife at... and music venues. As you  
21 all know I'm thrilled that the council and the Mayor  
22 have joined together to move on both of these  
23 priorities. Just last night the Mayor and members of  
24 the council gathered at House of Yes in Brooklyn to  
25

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1 sign in a law creating the new nightlife office to  
2 serve as a point of contact between members of our  
3 vibrant nightlife community scene and the city  
4 something we saw a major demand for. The  
5 administration also has voiced support for repeal of  
6 the Cabaret Law as long as strong safety precautions  
7 remain in place. These are just some of the most  
8 immediate actions that we have been announced... that  
9 we have announced following the release of Create  
10 NYC. We look forward to building on this work and  
11 dozens of other strategies and recommendations as  
12 described in the plan. As we said before the launch  
13 this is not something that will set on the shelf, its  
14 already sparked so many new conversations, coalitions  
15 and support from the city and other resources and  
16 this is just the beginning. The Citizens Advisory  
17 Committee which included members appointed by the  
18 council will continue to advise, guide and promote  
19 oversights, pre-implementations of the plan's  
20 recommendations and will continue to host office  
21 hours of the Commissioner which provided such a rich  
22 point of engagement with New Yorkers throughout the  
23 planning process, look for these open office hours to  
24 restart later this fall. Thank you for your support  
25

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1  
2 of Create NYC and our city's vibrant cultural  
3 community, I am happy to answer questions you may  
4 have.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
6 much Commissioner Finkelpearl and apologize again  
7 anyone who has to stand but it's great to see so much  
8 interest in the cultural plan and Create NYC, I do  
9 want to acknowledge we've been joined by some more of  
10 my terrific colleagues; Council Member Elizabeth  
11 Crowley from Queens and Council Member Costa  
12 Constantinides also from Queens. I'm sure it is just  
13 a coincidence but all four of the council members are  
14 from Queens right now, we love cultural and the arts  
15 in the borough of Queens. So, Commissioner I wanted  
16 to point out a few things, number one you mentioned  
17 the council's work in, in allocating the million  
18 dollars an incredible increase for our borough arts  
19 councils so that individual artists can receive  
20 dramatically more funding, I want to repeat that and  
21 emphasize that especially in front of my colleagues  
22 who obviously are a big part of this and, and who  
23 supported all of us in getting that funding and so  
24 when all of our arts councils receive this incredible  
25 infusion which then is going to go out to our artist,



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individual artists all over the boroughs know that the council fought for that and made that happen. Also, the four million dollars at... which represents a big increase for the cultural development fund itself. Again I just want to highlight the emphasis on smaller organizations and the real emphasis to get at, fund and support in particular many of our smaller cultural organizations throughout the five boroughs, I am enormously proud of the work that we've done with that, I think that seeks to address in part some of the issues that face some of our smaller groups and very, very excited that those increases will be coming everyone's way those who are of course in the CDF at this point but also the individual artists and the borough arts councils, huge increases. So, with that what you didn't speak to I think in your testimony very much was the additional funding from the administration and how that funding will be used to address some of the priorities and some of the targets and goals that you laid out in the plan itself and, and if there are new initiatives that are coming right out of the plan and right out of that year of discussions and meetings

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1  
2 and town halls what are they and what are they  
3 seeking to address?

4 TOM FINKELPEARL: So, actually I... some of  
5 the things that I mentioned are the... where the money  
6 is going. So, from the administration side the ten  
7 million dollars, we did 4.5 million dollars going to  
8 the CIG with a... the 12 percent increase for the  
9 smaller CIG's, six percent for the larger CIG's,  
10 there's funding for disability arts access and  
11 disability arts. So, we have a new staff position I  
12 mentioned but we also have funding that's going to go  
13 to organizations to either allow disabled artists to  
14 participate in, in exhibitions or plays or  
15 performances or to allow access for audiences, there  
16 will be funding that is going to go to language  
17 access as I mentioned which will be... so,  
18 organizations let's say who don't have the money in  
19 the their current budget to provide translation  
20 services for a performance or translate a catalogue  
21 or something can, can get funding for that. So, these  
22 are some of the initiatives, there are some  
23 initiatives that actually haven't been announced yet  
24 but are getting announced quite soon which I can't  
25 say in public. There's the million dollars that's

1  
2 going to the energy costs for the... what's called the  
3 energy coalition. So, those are some of the things  
4 that are being rolled out, they're directly in  
5 relationship to the... to the cultural plan and there  
6 is funding that's going to be added also in addition  
7 to the funding that you guys have thrown in to the  
8 smaller groups. We are analyzing the maps that were  
9 created through the SIAP Study, Social Impact to the  
10 Arts Study which showed areas of the city that had  
11 either very low arts participation and assets or the  
12 sort of mixed bag communities which they call diverse  
13 and struggling to put additional money into those  
14 communities for... yes... So, those are... so, where the  
15 money is going to go...

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, if, if the  
17 top priority or the top implementation strategy is to  
18 increase support for the cultural life of low income  
19 communities underrepresented groups which could  
20 include and obviously does include, underrepresented  
21 neighborhoods, neighborhoods... [cross-talk]

22 TOM FINKELPEARL: Yes... [cross-talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...that aren't  
24 seeing as much activity as they rightly deserve, what  
25

1 specifically are you going to do to address that very  
2 top fundamental priority that you... [cross-talk]

3  
4 TOM FINKELPEARL: Yes, so I think there  
5 are... I mean there's a couple first of all I do think  
6 that the money that the council's provided, those  
7 bigger increases, those large, very... 33 percent  
8 increases for the smallest groups, a lot of the  
9 communities that are underserved have smaller groups  
10 and so by, by definition a lot of that money is going  
11 to go into those communities but there's also  
12 additional funding that we're putting in specifically  
13 targeted at those communities with the lowest  
14 support. The other thing I'd like to say just as that  
15 the... there's going to be... I didn't spell, spell this  
16 out, it was spelled out at the news conference, it  
17 was not spelled in the testimony. The new CDF  
18 application which we're working on right now which  
19 we're going to try to finish in the next month and a  
20 half or two months is going to have questions about  
21 how does your organization address issues of  
22 diversity, equity and inclusion. As part of the... you  
23 know the, the evaluation process for all grants I  
24 think a lot of the smaller organizations if you look  
25 at the diversity, equity and inclusion... or the

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1  
2 diversity study we did it showed that a lot of the  
3 most diverse organizations are smaller organizations  
4 which are CDF organizations and I think that those  
5 questions will inevitably also put... pour funding into  
6 those communities.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, anticipating  
8 maybe some of the criticisms, right you've certainly  
9 seen and heard of some of the others who may be have  
10 a different cultural plan and what is... what is your  
11 response to that, obviously we'll hear testimony from  
12 lots of... [cross-talk]

13 TOM FINKELPEARL: No, so look... [cross-  
14 talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...folks... [cross-  
16 talk]

17 TOM FINKELPEARL: ...I... absolutely I... folks  
18 are here who will I know testify, the People's  
19 Cultural Plan was a very helpful document, there's  
20 stuff in there that I think was, you know very much  
21 in concert with the stuff that we proposed. The  
22 people's cultural plan also calls for, you know that  
23 aspirational number, really it adds up with the one  
24 percent for art that means one percent of the city  
25 budget which would mean a 700 million dollar

1  
2 increased to the Department of Cultural Affairs  
3 budget which would require additional taxes etcetera.  
4 Anyway, I just... I, I'm sure you will hear from them,  
5 I don't want to speak for a group that's going to  
6 speak directly to you, I will say that I met with  
7 Alisha and some other folks since then who are  
8 members... who... people who have worked on the... on that  
9 People's Cultural Plan, I want to keep an open  
10 dialogue, I think there are good ideas in there and I  
11 fully respect that plan. The plan that we did is  
12 based on the reality of, of city government and by  
13 the way I, I want to say also it's amazing that the  
14 council put in an extra three and a half million  
15 dollars also into council initiatives, this is the  
16 largest cultural budget as you said Chair Van Bramer  
17 that we've ever had, it is the largest cultural  
18 budget any city in America has ever had, we believe  
19 it to be the highest per capita budget of any city  
20 ever in America. So, those are achievements that we  
21 should be celebrating, I'm proud of it, I'm proud of  
22 your contribution, our contribution... [cross-talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes... [cross-  
24 talk]

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1  
2 TOM FINKELPEARL: ...which doesn't  
3 necessarily get to the finish line of some of the...

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah... no, I, I  
5 wanted just to obviously... you know I, I will hear the  
6 testimony of, of all of the folks including the  
7 People's Cultural Plan but at that point while you  
8 often are very generous with your time and stay to  
9 hear it you won't be there to respond... [cross-talk]

10 TOM FINKELPEARL: My staff will be...  
11 [cross-talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...so I just  
13 wanted to get an additional... [cross-talk]

14 TOM FINKELPEARL: Okay, got it... [cross-  
15 talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...word in there  
17 on that and, and thank you for pointing out the  
18 council's cultural initiatives because again working  
19 with all of our colleagues it was we who created the  
20 cultural immigrant initiative which is now over five  
21 million dollars, incredibly targeted amount of money  
22 that didn't exist three years ago in addition to CASA  
23 and all of the others, SU-CASA but again the, the  
24 focus with the, the new four million dollars, the  
25 groups with budgets of 250,000 dollars or less

1 receiving a 33 percent increase is very significant  
2 and the groups between 250,000 and eight million  
3 receiving a 15 percent increase also very significant  
4 while obviously there's more to do, we are very proud  
5 of those numbers, very proud of the work that we're  
6 doing and I want to thank the Speaker for, for  
7 joining me in, in feeling very strongly about those  
8 targeted percentages. I want to also recognize we've  
9 been joined by Councilman Helen Rosenthal from  
10 Manhattan so it is not just a Queens thing, we all  
11 love culture and the arts across the city of New  
12 York. So, the, the DEI, the Diversity Equity and  
13 Inclusion Initiative there were a lot of questions at  
14 the press conference with the Mayor about how that  
15 will actually be implemented and whether or not any  
16 organizations will essentially be punished for, for  
17 not being diverse enough and to what extent or how  
18 deeply will that particular question or series of  
19 questions be waived, what will be the way to give in  
20 to that when groups are applying for funding.  
21 Obviously, that was an early announcement, I don't  
22 know if there's any more... [cross-talk]

24 TOM FINKELPEARL: I... [cross-talk]



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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...clarification  
on that.

TOM FINKELPEARL: A, a little bit. So, I  
mean basically for those who haven't heard there's,  
there's the CDF and there's the CIG and these are  
being handled a little bit differently than the CDF,  
it's a new application question which means every  
application will have a question about diversity,  
equity and inclusion and how do you address it so  
that's then weighed amongst all the other questions  
that are at the, the CDF. The CIG nothing happens  
this year, this year we spend working with the CIG  
and I'm, I'm going to be I think attending a meeting  
quite soon to talk about this, I'm in contact with  
the CIG, I've spoken on the phone to about two thirds  
of the CIG Directors about this already personally.  
We want to understand what a meaningful diversity,  
equity and inclusion plan for each institution is and  
it's not one size fits all, it means a very different  
thing to do an initiative like that. Let's say a  
studio museum compared to the Metropolitan Museum  
compared to the Zoo, wildlife conservation so we want  
to talk to people what's meaningful, what's useful  
for your organization, we already have a program

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1  
2 called Culture Stat which holds organizations  
3 accountable for having a certain set of policies  
4 that... and there's funding implications if you don't  
5 and this is done under the last administration have a  
6 certain set of policies there are funding  
7 implications. So, it'll be something quite similar to  
8 that where organizations are not at risk to lose  
9 their entire funding but where there's actual funding  
10 implications involved and we're... you know by next  
11 year around this time in the fall when people submit  
12 their annual report to us which is a very exhaustive  
13 document they'll be required to have that as part of  
14 this Culture Stat.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And will all of  
16 the organizations then have a, a sense of what is  
17 both being looked for... [cross-talk]

18 TOM FINKELPEARL: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...what is being  
20 expected and then also if they were to fall short  
21 what might be the, the consequences in terms of  
22 getting to exactly how much weight is going to be  
23 placed on that particular question.

24 TOM FINKELPEARL: Right, so, so all of  
25 these questions are not 100 percent decided yet but

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1 we are working... we want to make sure that we're  
2 working with the Cultural Institutions not, you know  
3 that there's some separate processes going on in  
4 terms of goals, that everybody understands the goals.  
5 The other thing I want to just say clearly as... we're  
6 talking about forward looking on these plans so the  
7 question is not simply what is the diversity, equity  
8 and inclusion sort of status of your organization but  
9 sort of once the plan is implemented what kind of  
10 actions are you taking going forward. So, we're  
11 looking at other cities, we've been in... very much in  
12 contact with Los Angeles, the British Arts Council's  
13 rolled out very similar... and they're much, much  
14 bigger than us but the next equivalent in the United  
15 States is LA County so we're trying to understand how  
16 they're doing it, what are the best practices, what  
17 have they learned from their information gathering in  
18 their initiatives. So, it's... we're trying to be  
19 thoughtful and collaborative with the Cultural  
20 Institutions.

21  
22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Obviously I  
23 think that's very important going forward. The, the  
24 goal of course is shared I think by, by all of us  
25 and, and I'm sure every group as well but having some

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1  
2 transparency around what's expected, what's being  
3 looked for and then what might be the consequences  
4 should folks fall short of what it is that the  
5 Department of Cultural Affairs is looking for in  
6 terms of an answer to those questions.

7 TOM FINKELPEARL: Absolutely, yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I, I wanted to  
9 say one last question and then Council Member Crowley  
10 and Council Member Koo I know have questions. I was  
11 at an event yesterday and, and someone questioned  
12 whether or not all of this was worth it, the time,  
13 the energy and could we and should have been... we are  
14 spending all of this time and money on other things I  
15 don't... I don't particularly share that view but since  
16 much of that was leveled at the department and all  
17 the work that, that you all entered into for the last  
18 year what's your response... [cross-talk]

19 TOM FINKELPEARL: So, first of... [cross-  
20 talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...to that  
22 question... [cross-talk]

23 TOM FINKELPEARL: ...all I want to say  
24 that... [cross-talk]

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...this, this was  
one colossal big waste of time and, and we shouldn't  
have done it?

TOM FINKELPEARL: It wasn't a waste of  
time but I wanted to say that, that I, you know  
applied for money for my entire adult life from many  
foundations etcetera and what I've seen happen at  
other foundations, I've seen it happen at Rockefeller  
and elsewhere is when they're doing their planning  
they stop giving grants for a year or two, we... my  
incredibly hard-working staff, you know all the money  
got out to the groups, we didn't stop doing anything,  
we kept working. It was the busiest life... you know  
period of my entire adult life, I've never worked  
that hard, I've been very hard working so I think it  
was worth it, I think getting out... I think that the  
certain groups activating more so even than they had,  
had before, we saw that certainly in our ability to  
have good communications with disability and  
disability arts communities, that was fantastic same  
with the, the, the sort of DIY arts spaces etcetera,  
they're a certain group... anyway that, that had sort  
of formed around the plan almost and maybe you'll  
hear from some of them. Not everybody is happy with

1  
2 the plan but I feel it was absolutely worth it and as  
3 you know I was a bit of a skeptic a couple of years  
4 ago but absolutely I think I learned so much and even  
5 just the idea of doing the open office hours with the  
6 Commissioner but Eddie Torres who just left for a  
7 great new job said cultural affairs gets to talk to  
8 the cultural field all the time, this gave us an  
9 opportunity to listen to the cultural field for a  
10 period of time, we want to continue to do that. So..  
11 [cross-talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah...

13 TOM FINKELPEARL: I'm happy to talk to  
14 whoever this person is, I'm... you know...

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well I'm not at  
16 liberty to dispose... [cross-talk]

17 TOM FINKELPEARL: I don't think it's a  
18 waste of... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...that  
20 information Tom... but that's... I was... that's what I was  
21 sort of looking for because obviously not only did we  
22 keep funding the arts but we dramatically increased  
23 funding for the arts while this was also happening  
24 and, and I would think that what came out of this was  
25 a greater understanding of why it is we do what we do

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and, and, and a real reflection on how we could do it better and, and if you, the Department of Cultural Affairs, the city of New York our community come out of this with a better understanding of the community that we work every day to serve it was very much worth it and at the same time to boot we kicked in, you know nearly 20 million extra dollars for the arts to make sure that we put some money behind the words in the documents and the intentions of the document.

TOM FINKELPEARL: Great, yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Council Member Crowley?

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: I'd like to thank the Commissioner and the Chair for putting together this plan and executing it. I... I'm interested in seeing where... how far out you've reached and it's not surprising it seems like the bulk... the closer you get to Manhattan the more you are able to engage and I just want to make sure that all community boards gets a greater level especially because I think it's those that are further away from the core of the city that have a hard time accessing culture and it doesn't mean that they need to go into the city to do that but it probably means that

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1  
2 they're most deprived and don't even realize it and  
3 don't even know to engage in such a survey like this  
4 to, to show that they are lacking in the... in the type  
5 of enrichment provided by the arts. So, my question  
6 was in mind, I was... you know Jimmy sort of asked it  
7 before me but I don't have a full understanding of... I  
8 remember last year or a little over a year ago your  
9 agency was able to understand the diversity make up  
10 of boards and realize that... you know that they're,  
11 they're too pale and not enough diversity and so that  
12 you set forth goals for many of your partner  
13 institutions but you know a lot of city agencies are  
14 having problems with this too when contracting out,  
15 giving awards and they seem to have a, a... an obstacle  
16 so its... it would be better to understand how you, you  
17 could ensure diversity and, and whether you're really  
18 able to make it to funding whether... because it seems  
19 as if when we contract out in the city we're having...  
20 [cross-talk]

21 TOM FINKELPEARL: Yeah... [cross-talk]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: ...a great big  
23 obstacle in, in doing so.

24 TOM FINKELPEARL: Yeah, so I mean I'm by  
25 the way very... I go to MWBE meetings all the time, I'm



1 very aware of the issues that the city is facing and  
2 the goals that the city has set for itself. I wanted  
3 to say that our own diversity, equity... our diversity  
4 numbers are publicly available and all city agencies  
5 do publish that information, we do have a plan in  
6 terms of diversity at our... at our agency so we're not  
7 fooling our... anybody to feed to the fire who, who...  
8 we're not doing ourselves. The... it... so, we actually...  
9 one of the things you said is we, we... so, we actually  
10 have not set any particular goals at this point for  
11 organizations, we haven't said you must do X, Y, and  
12 Z, what we've said is that CIG by next year will have  
13 to set for themselves their own goals. So, each  
14 institution will be required to have a diversity,  
15 equity inclusion plan. We're going to spend this year  
16 trying to figure out what kind of plans are out  
17 there, what kind of plans work. In my discussions  
18 with CIG leadership many organizations are already  
19 working on these plans and actually are going... some  
20 of them will have the plans this year, a year ahead  
21 of schedule. So, it is... you know the goals, I don't  
22 know if you saw there was an article in the New York  
23 Times recently about... it was about both staff and the  
24 board diversity issues were more severe than the  
25

1  
2 staff diversity issues. So, we understand that, we  
3 recognize that but you know the, the question is how  
4 to get to the finish line, you know this is a city  
5 that's two thirds people of color today, this is not  
6 the future, this is the present, we need to  
7 acknowledge that and work towards that and so I've,  
8 I've said this many times I'll say it again in  
9 public, I'd like... if anybody has an example of an  
10 organization that's got a very diverse staff and  
11 doesn't have a very diverse audience and diverse  
12 artist on the stage or on the walls I'd like to meet  
13 that organization because I haven't met that  
14 organization yet. So, I feel like when people find  
15 diversity, I've seen it in organizations I've worked  
16 in as you know in Queens it's like things naturally  
17 flow from diversity in the... in house so that's what  
18 we were very excited about working on.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: And just to, to  
20 make sure your plan is including all 59 community  
21 boards... [cross-talk]

22 TOM FINKELPEARL: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: ...too because I...  
24 [cross-talk]

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TOM FINKELPEARL: So, yes, it is and..

3

[cross-talk]

4

5

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: ...but then you  
know you, you may have very diverse community boards  
close to the core of the city and still have diverse  
ones outside and them not be engaged as much like  
Rockaway or... [cross-talk]

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TOM FINKELPEARL: So, we had very... we had  
a lot of... I'm sorry, we had a lot of different kinds  
of input in the Cultural Plan; there was online,  
there was a public opinion survey because you know we  
got... you know it's one thing to get opinions from  
people who come to meetings it's another to do an  
actual scientific public opinion survey. We had  
online, we had in person, we did... so, I believe is  
Nadia here? We covered all but one community... yes,  
all but one community board and I have to find out  
which that is, I should probably go to that community  
board, we got input from the entire city out of... you  
know not necessarily equal number of people but we  
did get input from every community board but one.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: And make sure  
that moving forward in the plan in terms of funding

and enrichment we're still engaging all community...

[cross-talk]

TOM FINKELPEARL: Yes... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: ...boards.

TOM FINKELPEARL: Absolutely, that's the goal... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Thank you...

[cross-talk]

TOM FINKELPEARL: ...appreciate it, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you Council Member Crowley and we're just going to hope that it's not Community Board five in Queens the one that wasn't covered. Council Member Koo?

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you Chair Van Bramer and Commissioner Finkelpearl. Thank you for your leadership and supporting culture in the arts in our great city of New York. my question is has DCLA identified the low income neighborhoods and underrepresented groups in which you will increase cultural programing because right now I think a lot of underprivileged groups especially in the other boroughs they have never even gone to the Lincoln Center or Carnegie Hall or, or they have never seen a

1  
2 performance, a symphony or a, a Broadway show or, or,  
3 or those recitals no, it would be great for them to  
4 have opportunities to go there to see a professional  
5 performance may even inspire some of them they, they  
6 become musicians or artists so how do we increase  
7 programming for those outer borough groups?

8 TOM FINKELPEARL: So, there's a couple of  
9 different answers to that and I'm... by the way I do  
10 want to as Council Member Koo knows we, we did go to  
11 different neighborhoods and do focus groups in  
12 different languages as well so we did a Mandarin  
13 speaking at Flushing Town Hall, thank you Flushing  
14 Town Hall is here which was a really good and very  
15 enlightening... [cross-talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah... [cross-talk]

17 TOM FINKELPEARL: ...moment for us so... and  
18 we did it in other languages as well. So, there,  
19 there are different ways to answer that question so  
20 there... one is that we did the University of  
21 Pennsylvania Think Tank, Social Impact to the Arts,  
22 spent two years analyzing millions of data points to  
23 understand which communities in New York City had  
24 more or less cultural assets and cultural  
25 participation. So, we do have some maps we could

1  
2 share that with you if you want to take a look at  
3 those parts of the city that, that are the most  
4 underserved culturally. There's no such thing as a  
5 cultural desert, there's cultural activity in every  
6 part of New York City but there are communities that  
7 get more assets and so we are focusing some funding  
8 on those neighborhoods but also as Council Member Van  
9 Bramer said if... the smaller groups also tend to be  
10 the groups that are in other parts of the city not  
11 center city or Central Brooklyn, Central Manhattan so  
12 the idea of increasing by 33 percent those smaller  
13 groups that itself also identifies... or gives money  
14 to, to the smaller groups in... all over the city. So,  
15 there, there are a couple of different ways, one is  
16 locational, one is sort of by the nature of the kind  
17 of organization.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Is there a way we  
19 can like reimburse some of the... like, like  
20 orchestra's hey, you know give out some tickets to  
21 some public schools or give... you know they, they  
22 won't sell all the tickets anyway, I mean they, they  
23 must have some empty seats so use... utilize those  
24 seats... [cross-talk]

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TOM FINKELPEARL: So, we, we... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: ...to increase the attendance by... [cross-talk]

TOM FINKELPEARL: So, you're talking about a... kind of a ticket distribution program?

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah.

TOM FINKELPEARL: So, we don't... so, we don't do programs, we fund programs in general, we have done some... we have funded some ticket distribution program especially through the theater sub district council but I will say also the public theater for example goes to different parts of the city and last year for example I was one of the people distributing those tickets to Shakespeare in the Park at the Point up in, in the Bronx so that was a moment in which we were able to get out there and, and the cultural organizations doing exactly what you're saying to, to go to different parts of the city where people might not naturally, you know run down to Manhattan to get a ticket but to get a ticket for a Shakespeare in the Park which is free so it was a free distribution of tickets, that does happen there are free distribution programs but again we're

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2 not... we fund the public theater, we have funded  
3 through the theater sub district council... the theater  
4 ticket distribution programs but we're not... we're not  
5 the ones actually handing out... you know we're funding  
6 those.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
8 much Council Member Koo and because we have so many  
9 folks who would like to weigh in obviously this will  
10 not be the last hearing we have on Create NYC, we're  
11 going to thank the Commissioner for his time and  
12 start with our first panel of four, they're going to  
13 be three minutes, we're going to be on the clock and  
14 we want to hear from all sides so we're going to  
15 start with a panel that includes Marta Moreno Vega,  
16 Charlotte Cohen, Ariel Estrada, and Sheila  
17 Lewandowski. alright, need you to flip a coin on how...  
18 who would like to start, how about in the order, the  
19 order that I called you if we can all remember that.

20 MARTA MORENO VEGA: Yeah, okay...

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alright, Marta  
22 you're up.

23 MARTA MORENO VEGA: Good afternoon and  
24 I'd like to start first by thanking the council for  
25 the efforts made to increase funding, I think that's



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2 extremely important but I think that in the process  
3 we have to look at the framing of issues and the  
4 framing of language in terms of affirming racial,  
5 equity, cultural equity because I think diversity is  
6 being used and it's not being defined. So, my  
7 presentation focuses on the framing of the narrative  
8 of policies of errata for, for racial non-white  
9 communities while affirming policies and practices  
10 for viewer centrality or white supremacy. I think  
11 it's important to note that the study uses  
12 terminology that appears inclusive but lacks the  
13 details and practices of implementation to shift past  
14 an existing funding's inequities. Using those words  
15 that simply change or cloud the details requires a  
16 shift in the distribution of funds. Using diversity  
17 to imply racial and cultural justice is not present  
18 in the plan. In the forward of the report the errata  
19 belittling of the work that community based groups  
20 have accomplished continue to be identified as  
21 grassroots driven by community's needs and simple  
22 love for what they do. And this does not address the  
23 fact that these institutions are at the front line of  
24 dealing with racial situations, dealing with  
25 education, dealing with frontline issues that are

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1 within communities and other purpose and should be  
2 the purpose of art. Art as transformative, art as  
3 activists and art as empowering people. So, in  
4 categorizing grassroots provides a lower scale  
5 definition lessening the equity and the quality of  
6 the programs being said. The 33 groups that are  
7 considered CIG are defined as bringing scientific  
8 research, experiential learning and grand scale  
9 experiences so that already the dichotomy of whose  
10 grand, the 33 organizations and more than 900  
11 organizations funded by DCA are considered less than  
12 so that if you use that dichotomy then funding just...  
13 is justified for the grand institutions and  
14 minimalized for the smaller institutions. So, that  
15 when you're dealing with a city that's primarily  
16 comprised of people of color, racial groups that have  
17 an extreme diversity within and across including  
18 diversity of, of disabilities and, and different  
19 types of disabilities we need to better define what  
20 we're talking about because the change is in the  
21 details and the terminology used by DCA at this point  
22 is just general. So, that I would say that the  
23 grassroots definition for example within the 33 CIG  
24 groups, El Museo Del Barrio which I directed, I was  
25

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1 the second director, Studio Museum in Harlem are  
2 grassroots organizations yet they're in the 33 which  
3 is good. In that there was inequity and Museo Del  
4 Barrio and Studio Museum was getting less money than  
5 the other 31 organizations. What defines them as  
6 grassroots is that they are grounded in community,  
7 relevant to the communities they serve and  
8 institutions and in communities that need more  
9 expansive services in the arts.  
10

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, your time is  
12 up but I just want to ask a couple of questions, so I  
13 understand language is important and, and I believe  
14 that but do you really believe that the Department of  
15 Cultural Affairs believes that the 900 or so program  
16 groups are in fact the other less important not as  
17 grand as the cultural institution group members?

18 MARTA MORENO VEGA: I'm not saying it;  
19 the report says it.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right, I  
21 understand what you're saying but I would imagine...  
22 [cross-talk]

23 MARTA MORENO VEGA: The report says it  
24 that's... provides the justification for an action.  
25

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: What I would...  
but I'm... so, I... because I'm guessing that if Tom  
Finkelpearl were back up here he'd be like no, no, no  
we would never ever mean to imply nor do we believe...  
[cross-talk]

MARTA MORENO VEGA: But it, it said in  
the report... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I know that's  
why I'm asking you what you believe.

MARTA MORENO VEGA: No, it's not a  
question of belief, it's a question of what's written  
down and what's going to drive action.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay, so then if  
we... so then if we believe that the terminology and  
the wording in the report is, is inappropriate or...  
[cross-talk]

MARTA MORENO VEGA: ...in that... inequitable  
in terms of framing the, the... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay... [cross-  
talk]

MARTA MORENO VEGA: ...cultural picture...

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And I get that,  
that wording is important and language is important,  
right but does that then negate the good that's in

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1  
2 the report, right, the, the, the work that I think  
3 went into the report that was meant to tackle  
4 inequality... [cross-talk]

5 MARTA MORENO VEGA: No, what that does  
6 Jimmy is the following, now that there is increased  
7 resources and it should of happened without increased  
8 resources because what we're talking is about  
9 policies of racial equity, cultural equity of  
10 identity, right that services all of our communities  
11 so that that language is what drives, that's how we  
12 communicate as human beings, you can't have language  
13 that is policy and go to your belief, you have to go  
14 to what is written because that's what policy is so  
15 what I'm suggesting is that given the opportunity to  
16 look at the report that the report and the wording  
17 and the terminology and the definitions be changed.  
18 For example, the acronym Alana absolutely erases  
19 saying African American, Native American, Asian  
20 American, Latino American, it erases it that's called  
21 errata and that's the language that's in the report  
22 and there's the opportunity to change it and to  
23 change the framing of it and we should do that so  
24 that there is a, a constructive and systemic way of  
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2 changing the language and the practice because the  
3 practice ultimately is how resources are distributed.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I know that  
5 there are members of the Department of Cultural  
6 Affairs staff who are still in the room, I think the  
7 Commissioner is not but I'm sure they are taking note  
8 of all of this and, and I think these are good  
9 questions to take back to the Department of Cultural  
10 Affairs, language is important and in, in that I  
11 certainly agree with you on. I want to hear from the  
12 others as well. Of course, I have now forgotten which  
13 order I called you in but... there you go, Charlotte.

14 CHARLOTTE COHEN: Thank you. I'm  
15 Charlotte Cohen, Executive Director of Brooklyn Arts  
16 Council. Thank you for hearing my testimony today and  
17 thank you for allowing us to quantify and qualify the  
18 city's cultural sector to make sure all New Yorkers  
19 have access to the arts. Thank you particularly for  
20 the increase in DCLA's budget so that the borough  
21 arts councils can be a closer partner with you to  
22 implement this important plan, particularly for the  
23 funding for individual artists that was mentioned and  
24 for the council's initiatives. The council's... the  
25 borough arts Councils are the pipeline for helping

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city government engage with local communities on a profound level. Art is community and artists are at its core. Today I'm focusing on an aspect of the Cultural Plan that relates very directly to Brooklyn Arts Council's work. We are at the forefront of building infrastructure for the arts in low income communities, we reach deeply into local Brooklyn neighborhoods to engage community members and make sure they have access to the cultural offerings inherent in their own areas as well as from other cultural resources. We've help build coalitions comprised of neighborhood based arts groups and individual artists in East New York, Brownville, Cypress Hills, East Bushwick, Penrose and Flatbush. It's a model of working that's at the center of our vision for healthy, vibrant communities. In these cultural, culturally rich yet physically fragile and economically unstable neighborhoods we respond to local conditions and engage local residents, businesses and community organizations. In our Brownsville PhotoVoice program this summer in that catalogue I passed around is from that program, we engaged almost 30 teenagers not only... and they not only learned how to take photographs but they were

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1  
2 introduced to associated career opportunities by  
3 visiting a photo editor at the New York Times and the  
4 CUNY School of Journalism for example. They also  
5 learned the life skills necessary to pursue those  
6 career options by working collaboratively and on  
7 assignment if you will. The photos they took were  
8 about their neighborhood from their own perspectives  
9 not those of the media or outsiders and their images  
10 appeared on local photo murals as well as in a  
11 professional catalogue that you're holding. They were  
12 also invited to participate in a public panel at the  
13 Photoville festival in DUMBO last week. These  
14 students are examples of success, affecting their own  
15 community positively and this investment at a local  
16 level by Brooklyn Arts Council will help the city  
17 retain talented young people and encourage them to  
18 contribute not to leave their communities. I could  
19 continue but my time is up... [cross-talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yep, I think  
21 that was powerful enough, this is great and... [cross-  
22 talk]

23 CHARLOTTE COHEN: Thank you.  
24  
25



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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Did... were the  
young people able to use cameras that you supplied or  
did they have their... [cross-talk]

CHARLOTTE COHEN: Yes and they got to  
keep the cameras as well.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay...

CHARLOTTE COHEN: So, these are the types  
of programs that correlate exactly to the Cultural  
Plan and its goals and we look forward to partnering  
with DCA and with the council to implement them.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great.

CHARLOTTE COHEN: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great and I just  
looked at my, my notes here and, and the Brooklyn  
Arts Council is slated to receive a very significant  
increase this year which I'm really proud of. Who's  
next, there you are, alright. Thank you Charlotte.

ARIEL ESTRADA: Hi, my name is Ariel  
Estrada and I am the Manager of Communications and  
Community Engagement at the Asian American Arts  
Alliance. I am also an actor and a long-time arts  
advocate but this is my very first time presenting a  
formal testimony at a hearing and thank you for  
hearing my testimony... [cross-talk]

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, you can  
channel your acting skills and... [cross-talk]

ARIEL ESTRADA: Yes... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...and, and  
suddenly you've done it a million times, right,  
that's great, you're doing great so far though.

ARIEL ESTRADA: Thank you...

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

ARIEL ESTRADA: Majority, Majority Leader  
Van Bramer and members of the committee, all of as  
the Alliance welcome the opportunity to work with  
you, the entire city council and the DCLA to help  
transform the cultural panel... plan from just a  
document into a real mechanism for making New York  
City a more equitable just and vibrant city through  
the power of arts and culture. We are grateful to the  
council and the DCLA for your leadership in creating  
a plan and prioritizing a number of issues that are  
especially important to us at the Alliance, one that  
arts and culture are for all New Yorkers. Two, that  
funding should be distributed more equitably  
especially to under resourced and historically  
underrepresented Upper East... underrepresented  
communities and three, that the staff and leadership

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of the arts and cultural sector should more fully reflect the diversity of our city's population. For 35 years the Alliance has been working hard to address these three priorities and we could not be more pleased that now due to the Cultural Plan that there is a mandate directly from the Office of the Mayor that we all work together across sectors to tackle these complex issues but the next steps must in... must include actionable realistic plans forward as well as appropriate funding and resources to make the plans a reality. The Cultural Plan cannot be achieved by expecting more people to work harder and to build more partnerships all for free. In particular the Alliance urges the council, the Mayor's Office and the DCLA to provide the necessary resources to one, lower the barrier of access to funding resources to small community based organizations and to individual artists. For example, the plan sites increasing regrant programs through a borough arts council which is an excellent start. However, we urge that the circle of partnership be increased to include other partners and service organizations especially smaller ones that service specific communities including the Alliance. Two,

1 instead of focusing primarily on diversifying boards  
2 and staff of major cultural institutions in a vacuum  
3 meaningfully engage small community based  
4 organizations that have been doing this work directly  
5 on the ground for decades, we are here, we have  
6 knowledge, we have credibility and trusted  
7 relationships and we want to work with you. and  
8 finally, three, be open about... to thinking of and  
9 valuing leadership in new and creative ways. There's  
10 always much talk about the pipeline of leadership and  
11 how they aren't qualified enough... that there aren't  
12 enough qualified candidates of color in the cultural  
13 workforce, we beg to differ, this is New York City  
14 which is already 65 percent people of color, we're  
15 here and living and working already in leading in the  
16 community, please engage us. Thank you for your  
17 attention.  
18

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
20 much, I always love when folks come and testify and  
21 actually have bulleted recommendations. So, do you  
22 feel that Create NYC did engage both the Alliance  
23 and... [cross-talk]

24 ARIEL ESTRADA: They absolutely did...  
25 [cross-talk]

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...the communities  
that you represent?

ARIEL ESTRADA: In fact... in fact my boss  
Andrea Louie is actually featured in one of the  
photos in there and we were definitely engaged. We're  
talking more on the... on the programmatic level for  
example one of our programs is the Jadin Wong Dance  
Award that we've been doing for, for years now and  
fun fact, Jadin Wong before she passed away was one  
of my first agents in New York City when I moved here  
20 years ago when I was a young un and you know it's...  
we've been doing this kind of work for a long time  
and working directly with, with emerging Asian  
American artists and you know we have the knowledge  
to be able to help the, the council reach out to  
these communities. One of the things that I know that  
we would love to be able to expand out to is working  
for example with, with, with Muslim communities and  
with... for example there's a Cambodian community out  
in Queens that we would love to be able to engage  
with but again we don't have the kind of resources  
that, that would enable us to reach out that... further  
and to, to these communities. So, these are the sort  
of things that with direct council support we would

1  
2 be able to expand out to because right now, I mean we  
3 quite... in all honesty I feel like we have its... I, I  
4 think somebody brought up earlier about that there's  
5 a... that the... basically the closer you are to, to  
6 Manhattan the, the more funding you're going to get  
7 or the more help you're going to receive and we'd  
8 like to, you know disrupt that, that what we feel is  
9 a... kind of an old trope in terms of the funding and  
10 really start to reach out into communities we  
11 haven't, you know engaged with in the past.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right. So...  
13 because you mentioned the borough arts councils  
14 there's... every pot of funding that we have is  
15 increasing, right literally every pot of funding that  
16 we have is increasing... [cross-talk]

17 ARIEL ESTRADA: Yes... [cross-talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...are you not  
19 eligible for any of those pots or...

20 ARIEL ESTRADA: I believe we are, we're  
21 eligible... and we're definitely apply... doing a lot of  
22 applying for those pots. It's... you know it's...  
23 traditionally in the past we have... we... there's been a  
24 struggle to get that recognition particularly...  
25 [cross-talk]

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: From the arts  
councils?

ARIEL ESTRADA: From the... from the arts  
councils, we're... we've been... definitely been funded  
by the DCLA and we are going to... and we, we hope to  
continue very much to continue that relationship, we  
enjoy it. We are... again it's a matter of what we're  
able to fund and how we're able to reach, reach out  
to them and I think... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right... [cross-  
talk]

ARIEL ESTRADA: ...even working with... you  
know just even wood shedding here, being able to work  
with say the Bronx Arts Council and being able to  
create those kinds of relationships it's the kind...  
the... unfortunately the funding since it's going  
directly to the arts councils means that we... rather  
than to some of the smaller groups out in the... who  
are working in the trenches directly to us means that  
we have to do... we have to do a lot of work to get the  
attention of the councils essentially.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right...

ARIEL ESTRADA: So...

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well we can... I mean I, I, I'd like to adopt the strategy of, of a thousand flowers blooming and, and sort of everybody winning which includes the arts councils, I was once the president of the Queens council in the arts before my elected career and certainly want to build more bridges and make sure that you're working together and more collaborative, collaboratively but I believe that we can... we can really dramatically increase support for both the arts councils and, and their constituencies including individual artists while also increasing everyone's CDF grants then also increasing access to CDF and to all of the other pots of funding including the cultural immigrant initiative which I think you do get... [cross-talk]

ARIEL ESTRADA: Yes, we do... we do have that.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right. So, we can... we can get I think to everyone I hope but I appreciate your, your testimony...

ARIEL ESTRADA: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sheila Lewandowski?



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1  
2           SHEILA LEWANDOWSKI: Before, before I  
3 start I'll say as you know I don't usually read  
4 testimony but today I am because I'm not here  
5 representing the Chocolate Factory I'm here as a  
6 Board Member of New Yorkers for Culture and the Arts.  
7 Thank you Chairman Jimmy Van Bramer and the council,  
8 Mayor De Blasio, Commissioner Finkelpearl and all of  
9 your staff for the incredible vision and leadership  
10 and hard work on the Cultural Plan. As I said my name  
11 is Sheila Lewandowski, Co-founder and Executive  
12 Director of the Chocolate Factory Theater but today I  
13 speak to you as a Board Member of New Yorkers for  
14 Culture and Arts that came out of a merging... a  
15 progressive merger between one percent for culture  
16 and the New York City Arts Coalition so we've joined  
17 forces and created a new organization that is  
18 chartered and committed to help secure the resources  
19 needed to sustain artists, cultural organizations,  
20 arts ed. and institutions as well as the cultural  
21 workforce at large. Our comprehensive efforts are to  
22 ensure a vibrant future for culture and the arts  
23 through New York... throughout New York City through  
24 advocacy, strengthening of the... of public policy and  
25 funding for the arts and through advancing equity,

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1 diversity and inclusion to benefit all New Yorkers.

2 We believe that culture and art are the essence of

3 cultural vitality enrich the lives of every New

4 Yorker and attract friendly visitors from every part

5 of the world. New Yorkers for Culture in the Arts

6 endeavors to speak for the workers, institutions,

7 community organizations, artists, arts educators,

8 businesses, and all that comprise this very diverse

9 cultural sector. We, all of us are critical partners

10 in this public service. This planning effort, the

11 Cultural Plan has generated great interest and

12 momentum in the cultural community and this process

13 has energized and engaged hundreds of thousands of

14 New Yorkers across every borough. Culture and art are

15 connected to every aspect of life in the city

16 including housing, education, affordability,

17 economic, health, racial and cultural understanding

18 in equity and the planning process has helped us to

19 recognize and we need to push further to recognize

20 all of the voices, needs and aspirations set forth as

21 was in the People's Cultural Plan. We believe Create

22 NYC establishes a framework for continued dialogue

23 but more importantly creates a framework for action.

24 Moving into the next budget cycle we now have sound

25

1  
2 basis for increasing support for culture and arts in  
3 a way that provides equitable funding while also  
4 recognizing and celebrating our diversity. The plan  
5 makes a strong case for increased city funding for  
6 culture and arts. With that being said we understand  
7 this plan represent a beginning and is the start of  
8 richer conversation. We also know that culture and  
9 arts are in the hearts and minds and lives of all New  
10 Yorkers and are essential to the well-being  
11 emotionally and economically of all our neighborhoods  
12 and all our people. We look forward to the process  
13 yet to come and plan on being a passionate advocate  
14 for all New Yorkers to ensure our city continues to  
15 nurse one of its greatest natural resources, all of  
16 us.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
18 much and I appreciate your mentioning that this  
19 report makes the case for cultural funding, that was  
20 of course one of the reasons that I supported it so  
21 much and believed that it could actually create a  
22 mandate for more meaningful support and more stable  
23 support of the arts because we have increased funding  
24 dramatically over the last several years but we still  
25 have yet to baseline that funding and that is one of

1  
2 our big efforts and so we are really thrilled with  
3 the Department of Cultural Affairs and, and the  
4 Mayor's Office, believe in this report and of course  
5 it'll be my never ending argument that this report  
6 should lead to increased funding and all that funding  
7 should be baselined and not threatened the next time  
8 there is a downturn in the economy when everyone says  
9 oh we... that was great while it lasted but now we're  
10 going to take all that back, we can't have that  
11 happen, we can't go back. So, thank you very much  
12 Sheila and to the panel and I would ask if anyone has  
13 any thoughts including Marta on what the plan got  
14 right, what, what do you think is the most important  
15 thing to come out of it?

16 SHEILA LEWANDOWSKI: That every... that  
17 every person in, in the city cares and wants this and  
18 needs this, I mean before we had this plan, before we  
19 stepped out there was not a collective gathering of  
20 voices saying this is critically important to this  
21 city, I mean to me that's something that this plan  
22 had got... has gotten right, it doesn't mean that every  
23 word is right and I agree with what Marta said about  
24 like grassroots versus community based and things  
25 like that, some of the verbiage is still decisive but

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1  
2 it, it's... there's no one in this city who doesn't  
3 need and want this and to me that's something that...  
4 it's a start of something right.

5 MARTA MORENO VEGA: well I think that  
6 what it recognizes is that every community... [cross-  
7 talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Take the  
9 microphone Marta, yes.

10 MARTA MORENO VEGA: Every... what it  
11 recognizes is that every community has culture and  
12 every community has creativity and that's extremely  
13 important because the report itself indicates that  
14 they were surprised to find culture and art in  
15 communities, right and that addresses the assumption  
16 that because people are not on the radar that art is  
17 not happening and what it does testify is that art is  
18 happening everywhere.

19 ARIEL ESTRADA: I am absolutely thrilled  
20 to see the, the plan starts to move money and  
21 attention away from sort of what is considered high  
22 art, art institutions like the MET or bigger museums  
23 and starts to move it towards... you know towards the...  
24 towards... back towards the community but again to  
25

1  
2 Marta's point that there is art happening everywhere  
3 in this... in every, every borough.

4 CHARLOTTE COHEN: I agree with my  
5 colleagues and also appreciate some of the issues  
6 that were raised around needs for disability and  
7 language inclusion and so some of the really, you  
8 know importantly highlighted areas as I mentioned low  
9 income neighborhoods very specifically and  
10 particularly individual artists being at the core of  
11 all the work that we do.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I agree, thank  
13 you all very much for being here for your... [cross-  
14 talk]

15 CHARLOTTE COHEN: Thank you... [cross-talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...role in all of  
17 this and I appreciate you taking the time. Our next  
18 panel is Mark Rossier, NYFA; Lisa Robb, Center for  
19 Arts Education; Jenny Louloudes Art New York and Todd  
20 Stoll Jazz at Lincoln Center. Mark why don't you  
21 start off.

22 MARK ROSSIER: Okay.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And we'll go  
24 right down the line. No, is the red light on in front  
25 of you?

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MARK ROSSIER: There, okay... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There you go.

MARK ROSSIER: Thank you Chair Van Bramer and members of the committee not simply for calling this hearing but for spearheading the city's first ever Cultural Plan, it's a wonderful document and one that is completed in an impressively brisk period of time. NYFA was deeply involved in providing information for the plan, we held numerous focus groups, arrangement of office hours with the Commissioner for immigrant artists and forwarded the survey to literally thousands of artists working in all disciplines. I am very pleased to see that the concerns of our constituents raised are... concerns our constituents raised are reflected specifically affordability, understanding and acknowledging the critical role individual artists play in the city, increased language access, increased support for underrepresented communities in arts and education and the variety of equity initiatives. Coming from an organization with two disabled board members I was also delighted to see emphasis placed on accessibility for this community. The values espoused in the plan are very much the values of NYFA and our

1 constituents, we are committed to expanding the scope  
2 and reach of our services, diversifying our staff and  
3 especially our board and reaching artists of all  
4 ages, disciplines, ethnicities, races, religions, and  
5 gender identities regardless of their citizenship of  
6 immigration status. We provide services in multiple  
7 languages in geographically underserved communities  
8 and to, to artists of color who are not traditionally  
9 have access to such resources. It is heartening to  
10 see the city so forcefully committed to achieving  
11 these same goals. I am especially impressed the way  
12 DCLA has outlined a timeline for activities and  
13 prioritizes those to implement promote or explore,  
14 this seems a thoughtful approach to a plan of this  
15 scope and ambitious... ambition and we look forward to  
16 working with DCLA and other city agencies on  
17 execution. We are grateful to the council's  
18 dedication and that you have allocated additional  
19 funds to move the plan forward. We hope it is a  
20 commitment which will remain for the foreseeable  
21 future, the funds provided should cover not only the  
22 initiatives outlined but added resources to DCLA as  
23 well. The plan is strong, the timeline is reasonable  
24 and the support needed to realize it must be  
25



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adequate, continuous and long term. Thank you for  
your steadfast and visionary support of the arts  
community and especially funding to the arts council  
for increased support to individual artists.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and I  
made the case for baselining before your testimony,  
we're... [cross-talk]

MARK ROSSIER: Right, but... yes...

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: We're thinking  
alike, okay.

LISA ROBB: Thank you, good afternoon.  
Thank you for the opportunity to continue to  
participate in the work around Create NYC, what a  
great job Hester Street and DCLA did on gathering us  
many, many times and many hundreds of thousands of  
others. I'm Lisa Robb and I'm the Executive Director  
at the Center for Arts Education. On behalf of our  
staff and the board and those we serve big, big, big  
congratulations to the council and the Mayor, the  
advisory committee, DCLA, government agencies,  
organizations and members of the public for this  
historic accomplishment. From the beginning of the  
process arts education for students has been a  
central issue of the plan and in the workshops and

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1 the final document we learned arts education is  
2 important to the public too. The very first headline  
3 in the Executive Summary on page 11 of this plan  
4 sounds like a sweet melody, this is what it says; New  
5 Yorkers believe that quality arts, culture, and  
6 science education must be available for every  
7 student. This is the very first headline in the  
8 Executive Summary and we applaud it loudly. We  
9 applaud the plan's consistent call to bring more  
10 quality arts education to New York City's public  
11 students and by relation to their school communities  
12 and their families. This month 1.1 million students  
13 were welcomed back to 1,800 schools, we are the  
14 largest school district in this country. We should  
15 not forget the power and the promise that New York  
16 City's arts learning requirements bring to advance  
17 and support, create N... New York's issue areas and  
18 strategies. There are rigorous arts education  
19 learning requirements in PreK through 12<sup>th</sup> grade and  
20 this presents a long term giant opportunity to  
21 advance the goals of this plan as does baseline  
22 funding. The city's focus on citywide coordination...  
23 I'm sorry, the plan's focus on citywide coordination  
24 also strengthens support for student learning and  
25

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1  
2 social well-being. There are dozens of city programs  
3 and agencies and thousands of non-profits that invest  
4 in student potential and equitable educational  
5 opportunity for all students. Engaged in successful  
6 students help themselves and the rest of us achieve  
7 our goals and dreams. In the budget process for next  
8 year as the year past unrelenting efforts must be  
9 made to reallocate and increase funds which support  
10 the plan's recommendations. There is one gorgeous  
11 arts learning budgeting opportunity on the horizon, I  
12 want to bring to the committee's attention. At the  
13 end of this school year 2014's four-year budget  
14 funding for arts education will expire. At another  
15 time, we will celebrate together how well managed and  
16 impactful that 93 million dollars has been for  
17 students, cultural organizations, artists, educators  
18 and the school community and its families. So many  
19 parties from differing and in fact competing  
20 interests will benefit from that funding. We want to  
21 make sure you get good information the months that  
22 come ahead on how we can help you bring actionable  
23 items to play to help make the plan and its  
24 recommendations come to life for New Yorkers. Thank  
25 you.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, first of all  
thank you for raising that, I can assure you as  
someone who raised that issue in the budget  
negotiating team four years ago and then we're  
thrilled to see the Mayor include that funding in his  
executive budget after the council put it in our  
priorities, our budget priorities. It is really  
essential that we continue that funding absolutely  
essential, it's a great four-year investment of  
nearly 100 million dollars. I have spoken to the  
Chancellor a million times, I know we've used that  
money incredibly well but we have to continue it so  
you and I can both do this together like... but, but  
I'm laser like focused on it and what the challenges  
are next year for that funding, absolutely, thank  
you.

LISA ROBB: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Jenny.

JENNY LOULOUEDES: We aren't ready to go,  
I'm a... I'm confused, I'm not sure if I'm going to go  
off script or on script... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay, take your  
time, you have approximately three minutes to figure  
it out, go ahead.

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TODD STOLL: Thank you to Chairman Van  
Bramer and members of the council and the committee.  
My name is Todd Stoll, I'm the Vice President of  
Education at Jazz Lincoln Center. This is our 30<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary season and we have grown from three  
summer concerts to now being the world's largest arts  
organization dedicated to jazz. In 1996, we became a  
constituent of Lincoln Center legitimizing the first  
original American art form alongside with the ballad,  
the opera, and the symphony orchestra. In 2004, we  
cut the ribbon on our performance facility, Frederick  
P. Rose Hall and each year we present over 100  
concerts by the Jazz at Lincoln Center orchestra  
along with guests. Making our programming available  
to traditionally underserved audiences is an  
organizational imperative. With our education and  
community outreach programs we work to ensure that  
children and adults regardless of social economic  
status have access to world class jazz programming. I  
applaud the committee and the city council for the  
Create NYC plan and thank you for your generosity.  
Providing arts and cultural programming and support  
to individuals and organizations in all boroughs is  
vital to the health of our city and should be a

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1  
2 priority for our entire community. We partner with  
3 many smaller and grassroots organizations to have  
4 greater reach into specific communities and will  
5 continue to do so. The work that Jazz at Lincoln  
6 Center has done since the 1990's it continues to do  
7 every day, delivering free and low cost educational  
8 community programing to schools and families across  
9 the city speaks directly to the key aims and goals of  
10 Create NYC. Our education programs are at the core of  
11 Jazz at Lincoln Center's mission. To ensure that jazz  
12 will be appreciated and performed both now and in  
13 future generations we connect communities with age  
14 appropriate programming that explores this distinctly  
15 American art form. The greatest concentration of our  
16 programming takes place in New York City public  
17 schools chosen with a focus on those with a large  
18 percentage of low income students and a lack of arts  
19 programming. We work very closely with the DOE to  
20 choose those schools most in need. During the past  
21 academic year of 2017 over 60,000 New York City  
22 students at 197 schools across the five boroughs took  
23 part in one of our education programs. Of these  
24 participating school's 92 percent received Title One  
25 funding. DCA funding allows us to offer a number of

1  
2 programs which are at low cost or no fee. We have one  
3 of the largest youth programs dedicated to jazz  
4 education in the world with more than 250 students  
5 coming each weekend during the school year to study  
6 jazz. Our let freedom swing outreach program is in  
7 100 schools but also in a number of community based  
8 organizations, hospitals and community centers around  
9 the city. Our programs distribute free sheet music to  
10 schools throughout the five boroughs as well as the  
11 nation and the world as well as free professional  
12 development for teachers interested in teaching jazz.  
13 In our Jazz for Young People concerts based on  
14 Leonard Bernstein's original young people's concerts  
15 provide low cost tickets for nearly 9,000 students  
16 each year. I have included a breakout sheet with  
17 programming divided by program, school and council  
18 districts along with this testimony. I would... thank  
19 you for the opportunity to testify and we look  
20 forward to doing more jazz programming across the  
21 greater New York area, thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
23 much and let me compliment you on the attached  
24 documents, first of all for choosing some really  
25 amazing schools in my district to serve but also to

1  
2 encourage you... in the hat that I used to wear before  
3 I got elected to make sure that all of the council  
4 members who are in this document see this document  
5 to... so that they know the work that you're doing in  
6 their districts, I'm sure you're already doing that  
7 but it is... it is terrific and I read through both of  
8 them and it's impressive, obviously we're big fans  
9 but thank you for, for the work that you're doing  
10 and, and for getting into all of the boroughs and all  
11 of these schools, that's terrific work, thank you.

12 Jenny do we have a resolution to the situation?

13 JENNY LOULOUEDES: Yeah, I'm going to read  
14 and I just want you to know that what you have is  
15 longer than what I'm saying.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And I will be  
17 reading along with you and... [cross-talk]

18 JENNY LOULOUEDES: No, don't read it  
19 because it's going to confuse you because I'm totally  
20 off scrip with a new script... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh we're going  
22 off script, okay... [cross-talk]

23 JENNY LOULOUEDES: Yeah, I'm on a new  
24 script.

25 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay.



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JENNY LOULOUDES: Good afternoon, my name is Jenny Louloudes, I'm the Executive Director of Art New York, the service and advocacy organization to New York City's 380 non-profit Theaters two of whom are CIG's. I would like to thank Council Majority Leader Van Bramer for organizing this hearing on Create New York City and I want to thank you as always for not only fighting to increase the DCLA budget but for succeeding. You are sometimes a lone voice out there and thank god for you. all of us at Art New York applaud the council, the Mayor and of course the Commissioner and his staff for this ambitious and important undertaking. Reading the plan was truly humbling and as the leader of a cultural organization I'm committed to working with all involved to activate many of the goals. As some of you may know Art New York has led the way on creating affordable office and rehearsal space, we have 40 offices, we have seven rehearsal studios, I think one of the greatest contributions the city of New York made towards affordability of theater space was the creation of the Art New York theaters which opened in January of this year, the two theaters are rented out to members at below market rates and we give them

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1 free state of the art lighting and sound and video  
2 equipment and boy are they using it. in response to  
3 the DCLA 2016 diversity study we created two creative  
4 opportunity fellowships to create pipelines to  
5 leadership positions for administrators of color.  
6 Last year we began working with Beth Prevor, the 2015  
7 recipient of the Kennedy Center Arts and Disability  
8 Award who taught a cohort from the arts bloc how to  
9 make small but meaningful changes to their  
10 organizations in order to become more physically  
11 accessible. Each theater came up with a disability  
12 plan which receives seed funding for implementation,  
13 this year we'll be offering two cohorts with Miss  
14 Prevor. In addition, we're offering two workshops on  
15 what are called relaxed performances. Open to the  
16 general public relaxed performances welcome people  
17 who are on the autism spectrum, we provide pre-show  
18 information, train companies to reduce noise and  
19 harsh light, allow audience members to move and  
20 speak, create a space for them to go during, during  
21 the performance and this way these individuals can  
22 experience theater in a welcoming way with the  
23 general public. This summer we received funding to  
24 launch diversifying our organizations, a program that  
25

1  
2 will be led by the Raben Groups diversity, equity and  
3 inclusion practice. The program's goal is to over the  
4 course of three years' work with many of our members  
5 to help them diversify their staff and boards.

6 Through our work with the Raben Group we have learned  
7 that the process of organizational diversification  
8 must come from the top and takes time and this is

9 where I'm going to digress, I have to say I was

10 really disappointed to hear the Commissioner say that

11 the CDF proposal is going to immediately ask us about

12 diversity, equity and inclusion statistics but that

13 the cultural institution groups are going to have a

14 year to talk about it, it just seems a little unfair.

15 The plan also states that DCLA will seek to provide

16 funding to many community based cultural

17 organizations identified through their research, this

18 is fantastic but given the budget where 80 percent of

19 the agency's funding goes to CIGs how will this be

20 funding and I'm just going to say one thing I like

21 about the plan that hasn't been raised, we applaud

22 the plan's goal to leverage private investment in

23 arts funding and hope that DCLA will open doors that

24 for too long have been closed to most of us

25 corporations. So many corporations are able to

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1  
2 attract talent because of the city's rich cultural  
3 offerings, it's not their civic duty to invest, its  
4 good business. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you Jenny  
6 and the point that you mentioned I will raise with  
7 the, the Commissioner... [cross-talk]

8 JENNY LOULOUEDES: Thank you... [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...without a doubt  
10 as usual very compelling from you and, and I trust  
11 where you're coming from so thank you all very much  
12 for being here. Our next panel is Caron Atlas,  
13 Christopher Carroll, Lane Harwell and Antonio Serna.  
14 and we have two more panels after this so if you're  
15 still waiting I have you here, just two more panels  
16 of four. Antonio, okay. Why don't we start with Caron  
17 and work our way down to Antonio in that order,  
18 amazingly you sat in the order that I called you,  
19 very, very good panel, thank you, Caron.

20 CARON ATLAS: To email you my testimony.  
21 My name's Caron Atlas and I direct Arts and Democracy  
22 and Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts New York,  
23 NOCD-NY and NOCD-NY was a partner with the Hester  
24 Street team with a focus on community engagement for  
25 the Cultural Plan. We were really moved and excited

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1 about the commitment that communities across New York  
2 made to weighing in on the planning process. New  
3 Yorkers really care about arts and culture in  
4 neighborhoods across the city and they want to  
5 continue to be listened to and they're committed to  
6 making arts and culture and integral part of a just  
7 and equitable city. I want to highlight some ways  
8 that Arts and Democracy and NOCD-NY think this can  
9 happen. The first is equity, the planning process  
10 made visible the wealth of arts and culture in  
11 neighborhoods in all five boroughs. For New York to  
12 truly fulfill its commitment to equity it needs to  
13 support the small cultural organizations that make up  
14 the full diversity of the city. This includes  
15 increased funding to address historic and equities,  
16 multiyear general support so programs and community  
17 relationships can be sustained, valuing the  
18 leadership expertise diverse aesthetics and cultural  
19 traditions and not equating small with lack of  
20 capacity. In recognition and support for the powerful  
21 neighborhood networks. It means decreasing barriers  
22 that are particularly challenging for small  
23 organizations, aligning deadlines between DCLA and  
24 local arts councils, opening up DCLA to fiscally  
25

1 sponsored organizations and streamlining permits and  
2 insurance. Second, I want to reinforce the importance  
3 of recognizing the leadership of the field which was  
4 well documented during the cultural planning process  
5 through its recommendations and white papers and  
6 convenings. Some of the best examples across sector  
7 social justice work are initiated by the field and  
8 happen organically in our neighborhoods. Artists and  
9 cultural organizations played a key role post Sandy  
10 and the round table we had about this during the  
11 Cultural Plan demonstrated the possibilities for  
12 partnerships with city agencies. Artists and cultural  
13 organizations bring people together to check... to  
14 address challenging issues like human rights and  
15 racial justice and are playing a key role in  
16 activating civic participation at a time people want  
17 to get involved but face growing political  
18 polarization. The youth forum we organized was a  
19 great example of how easily young people are  
20 connecting arts, culture, and community activism.  
21 NOCD-NY is leading a citywide project with over 27  
22 partners about further integrating arts and culture  
23 in public housing communities. The round table we had  
24 focused on the cultural plan and the community forum  
25

1  
2 you hosted and Council Member Levin hosted made clear  
3 that there are exemplary practices, policy  
4 recommendations and opportunities and a commitment to  
5 our community to make it happen and I have one more  
6 sentence, can I finish that... this requires an  
7 investment in infrastructure and programs that  
8 support the creativity of public housing residents in  
9 an ongoing manner such as reopening the community  
10 center at Gowanus Houses as well as community  
11 partnerships and sustained artist residencies. Thanks  
12 for the opportunity to testify.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you Caron  
14 and obviously you've, you've seen and, and heard and  
15 know a little bit about some of the targeted funding  
16 that was allocated this year, obviously you're  
17 familiar with the cultural immigrant initiative but,  
18 but in the way that we are allocating the increases  
19 this year with a heavy emphasis increases on the  
20 smaller organizations, does that address some of what  
21 you're talking about, I realize it doesn't address  
22 all of it?

23 CARON ATLAS: Yes, it does and one thing  
24 I didn't get to say is we asked you to consider a  
25 council initiative around public housing as a

1  
2 possibility but yes, I feel like the council has very  
3 much and I think that there are increases and we were  
4 glad to see that in the plan but we think it can go  
5 further.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah and, and I  
7 would welcome obviously and love to see a council  
8 initiative, a cultural council initiative focusing on  
9 public housing. As you know we, we stopped  
10 entertaining new initiatives a couple years ago but  
11 we are thrilled that while we were doing those we got  
12 a couple of really important cultural initiatives in  
13 like Cultural Immigrant and SU-CASA in addition to  
14 increasing CASA every year but, but I would love to  
15 work on that as well and Christopher.

16 CHRISTOPHER CARROLL: Good afternoon  
17 Chairman Bramer. It is a pleasure to be providing  
18 testimony today and my name Christopher Carroll, I'm  
19 the Political Director at Local 802, American  
20 Federation of Musicians. I would like to thank you  
21 for the opportunity to testify and I'm abbreviating  
22 our testimony, I provided a longer testimony in  
23 writing. A comprehensive cultural plan has never been  
24 more important than it is today and we commend the  
25 Mayor, the council and the Commissioner for taking



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1 the... some of these challenges that artists face head  
2 on. As you know many musicians, students, immersing  
3 musicians and even established art... artists struggle  
4 to make and build a career that is economically  
5 sustainable and artistically fulfilling. The Mayor's  
6 Office has found that the median income for musicians  
7 is 30,000 dollars a year, the Center for Urban Future  
8 has found that musicians and singers make less than  
9 the national median income when adjusted by the cost  
10 of living across the nation. This is not a viable way  
11 to preserve our artistic communities or our unique  
12 neighborhood fabric. This makes our city's first  
13 Cultural Plan particularly important and as the plan  
14 has taken shape we've been pleased to see the  
15 council... the city has shown a strong support for both  
16 expanding and improving access to the arts citywide  
17 as well as promoting the fair wages and treatment  
18 that will help all... allow New Yorkers to, to... allow  
19 New York to remain a magnet for many of the greatest  
20 musicians in the world but Create NYC should not be  
21 seen as a prescriptive plan or a strategy, it's a set  
22 of recommendations, values, priorities, it's a vision  
23 document and a roadmap, one that must be used to  
24 guide future development, future policy and future  
25

1  
2 legislation. Though the plan is impressive in vision  
3 it at times lacks specificity both in policy  
4 recommendations and implementation strategies and as  
5 a result is a responsibility to city council arts  
6 advocates and... throughout the five boroughs and the  
7 city to hold the city themselves accountable for  
8 these priorities to ensure that the recommendations,  
9 the objectives, the strategies that have been  
10 identified are achieved. To accomplish this the  
11 administration must identify how it will determine  
12 success, we must determine what the benchmarks are  
13 going to be and we must be prepared and eager to... or  
14 the... as a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee,  
15 Local 802 is prepared and eager to help in this  
16 process as, as our countless advocates across the  
17 city. Create NYC is an advocacy tool, its one that  
18 should be used prior to rational future legislation  
19 that supports the arts. As members of this committee  
20 we have constantly heard one extremely important  
21 theme throughout the city's public engagement process  
22 that's that the arts are... it's not affordable to  
23 create art in New York City, housing and workspace is  
24 too expensive, wages are too low, the arts... artists  
25 are finding themselves under increasing financial

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1  
2 pressure to either leave or find a career outside of  
3 the arts altogether. We must therefore prioritize  
4 legislation and policies that address affordability  
5 both to the cost of living and the wages that are...  
6 that the artists pay to make that living... [cross-  
7 talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And I went ahead  
9 and actually read the rest of your testimony so... it's  
10 incredibly important series of, of paragraphs that  
11 come after that so thank you for that and, and we'll  
12 continue to get into that very important... [cross-  
13 talk]

14 CHRISTOPHER CARROLL: Thank you... [cross-  
15 talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...critical issue  
17 of affordability and artists feeling driven out by..  
18 [cross-talk]

19 CHRISTOPHER CARROLL: And, and luckily..  
20 [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...the prices..  
22 [cross-talk]

23 CHRISTOPHER CARROLL: ...there are a lot of  
24 tools that the city has at its disposal that can  
25

1  
2 actually help create a... an environment that artists  
3 can live in.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right...

5 CHRISTOPHER CARROLL: ...and create art in  
6 rather than doing other things that then become a  
7 hobby.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely and I  
9 just want to compliment you, I actually read the  
10 magazine that 802 sends out, it's called Allegro.

11 CHRISTOPHER CARROLL: That's right...

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...and, and your  
13 column I, I read as well so... [cross-talk]

14 CHRISTOPHER CARROLL: Oh thank you man...  
15 or thank you very much... [cross-talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I know a lot of  
17 folks send things out to, to all of us in the council  
18 and you're like do they ever look at this stuff, do  
19 they ever read this stuff, I actually try and go  
20 through all of my mail and, and I just happened to  
21 read your article yesterday or the day before so...

22 CHRISTOPHER CARROLL: Oh I appreciate  
23 that, thank you very much.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And Lane to talk  
25 a little bit about Dance NYC.

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LANE HARWELL: Is this on? Thank you  
Chair Van Bramer. Executive Director of Dance/NYC and  
Member of the Cultural Affairs Advisory Commission  
and like Sheila a, a Board Member of New Yorkers for  
Culture and the Arts. I, I congratulate the city on  
its first every Cultural Plan and commend the city  
for engaging nearly 200,000 New Yorkers through the  
planning process. I'm pleased by how significantly  
the plan builds on research and recommendations  
delivered by partners such as Dance/NYC in particular  
first year priorities include increased funding with  
a focus on individual artists as recommended by the  
advancing fiscally sponsored artists and arts  
projects report that I've, I've handed you there  
published this spring by Dance/NYC with nine fiscal  
sponsor partners including Brooklyn Arts Council and  
NYFA which presented today and an expanded diversity  
equity inclusion agenda that expressly addresses  
disability and disability artistry as has been called  
for by Dance/NYC's work and partners such as a new  
Disability Arts NYC task force, DANT. The plan also  
advances priorities for affordable workspace for  
artists and increase arts education that are  
important to Dance/NYC. For us it's a significant

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1 milestone but it's also a launching pad for  
2 strengthened and new advocacy. With the city's vision  
3 for a sustainable, inclusive and equitable sector in  
4 place it is now as Chris has suggested incumbent upon  
5 the city to operationalize that vision funded at  
6 adequate levels and baseline that funding and  
7 establish benchmarks and measure progress over time.  
8 As the city establishes its evaluation framework I  
9 strongly advocate for tracking the success of each  
10 planning strategy by creative discipline to ensure  
11 that the art form of dance as well as all of our peer  
12 disciplines is equitably served. The reality of how  
13 greatly artist needs and opportunities differ by  
14 discipline is underscored by Dance/NYC's latest  
15 report advancing fiscally sponsored dance makers  
16 which shows the chronic undersupply of dance and  
17 rehearsal space reaching a crisis point. Among the  
18 planning successes that can already be counted is a  
19 strengthened, louder and more collaborative arts  
20 advocacy community. I'm incredibly impressed by the  
21 work of the people's Cultural Plan and happy to see  
22 so many representatives here today to tackle the  
23 challenge of inequity in, in, in arts and culture of  
24 Dance to create a platform for disability arts and of  
25

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1  
2 the New York City Artists Coalition and partners in  
3 that led NYC Dance Campaign to advance local law  
4 1652, to amend the existing Cabaret Licensing Law and  
5 advance creativity and free expression, it's time to  
6 let NYC dance. In celebrating Create NYC I thank  
7 Chair Van Bramer, Council Member Stephen Levin who,  
8 who set this in motion and the whole New York City  
9 council for its vision. I thank the Commissioner who  
10 spoke earlier and all who contributed to the plan,  
11 thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you Lane,  
13 I was wondering when the Cabaret Law was going to  
14 come up today and there it goes. I have a meeting  
15 with the coalition... [cross-talk]

16 LANE HARWELL: Anytime... [cross-talk]

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...meeting with  
18 some folks in the coalition tomorrow so, I look  
19 forward to that and thank you for the reports, I love  
20 the fact that Dance/NYC always produces these  
21 amazing, really important... [cross-talk]

22 LANE HARWELL: Thank you... [cross-talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...reports, thank  
24 you. Last but not least on this panel.

25

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ANTONIO SERNA: Good morning Chairperson  
Van Bramer and members of the Committee on Cultural  
Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup  
Relations. My name is Antonio Serna, I'm an artist  
and cultural worker, member of Artist of Color Bloc,  
a group working to address the intersectional  
conditions of artists, workers, and communities of  
color and more recently a member of the People's  
Cultural Plan with a focus on labor equity and artist  
equity. Thank you once again for inviting the public  
and the work... and working-class artists like myself  
to address our concerns regarding the production of  
culture and all that it entails in New York City. I  
would like to also extend this thanks to Deputy  
Commissioner Edwin Torres and the Department of  
Cultural Affairs for meeting with our group to  
discuss our recommendations for the Cultural Plan.  
Judging by the language used around such issues as  
labor and equity throughout the cultural city plan it  
is clear that Department of Cultural Affairs was  
indeed listening and for this we are thankful. Within  
the Cultural Plan there are several positive sections  
that stand out for me as an artist and cultural  
worker of color specifically the increased support



1  
2 for historically underrepresented cultural workers  
3 and producers inclusive of artists and art  
4 organizations, page 78, the support for educators and  
5 teaching artists, page 123 and employment and career  
6 development for cultural workers again of color and  
7 page 89. So, as we move into a new chapter for the  
8 Create New York City Plan I would like to make two  
9 suggestions, first that we put in place a transparent  
10 and accountable framework for achieving these goals  
11 as I mentioned above. As a working-class artist, we  
12 don't always have the time or the resources to follow  
13 up and crunch all the numbers that will hopefully  
14 point towards improvements throughout the city. It  
15 would be great that this data and detailed reports  
16 are equal... easily accessible. Secondly that issues  
17 that remained unresolved in the first draft are  
18 reexamined wholeheartedly. Issues like gentrification  
19 that seem to be out of the purview of this department  
20 and which can easily be linked in one effortless  
21 phrase, displacement destroys culture. If somehow  
22 this connection is hard to understand let me explain  
23 to you that in the last decade and a half we have  
24 seen the level of homelessness in New York City  
25 double from about 30,000 to nearly 60,000. Family in

1  
2 New York City's homeless shelters went from spending  
3 six months to over... to now over one year in these  
4 shelters. The majority of which are... is  
5 disproportionately affecting black and Latino  
6 communities. If this department and council does in  
7 fact seek to provide culture for everyone in New York  
8 they should seriously consider partnering with other  
9 departments and commissions to halt this  
10 displacement. I speak from a firsthand experience as  
11 a person of color first generation Mexican American  
12 who moved here more than 20 years ago and is still  
13 constantly struggling with low paying jobs, student  
14 debt, rent burden, evictions, medical bills, welfare  
15 and all to, to just... to, to create all this is  
16 taking... its making it difficult for me to create the  
17 thing I moved her for a constant struggle for me. I  
18 can... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yep, I, I went  
20 ahead and, and read the last two paragraphs of your,  
21 your statement as well more on gentrification  
22 obviously, very important stuff so... let me say thank  
23 you, I, I, I think this is very constructive  
24 recommendations and, and, and you know criticisms of,  
25 of the department and of, of, of the plan but, but

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1  
2 also I do appreciate the concern for the homeless  
3 and, and that issue and I'm fairly certain that if  
4 Tom Finkelpearl thought he had the solution to that  
5 he would let us know but, but I, I... but I get the  
6 point that we all have a role to play in, in  
7 addressing those very important issues, right I think  
8 the Department of Cultural Affairs and even this  
9 committee alone are, are not going to solve the, the  
10 homelessness crisis but, but I get the, the  
11 connectivity to the issues that you're talking about  
12 and, and... [cross-talk]

13 ANTONIO SERNA: Yes... [cross-talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...and where that  
15 goes.

16 ANTONIO SERNA: I, I just want to add  
17 that there, there is ways to have cultural impact  
18 studies to kind of see how you would be displacing  
19 Latino and black cultures from communities that would  
20 then prevent displacement and development in those  
21 communities, I mean it's, it's, it's been done in  
22 other cities... [cross-talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure... [cross-  
24 talk]

25

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1  
2 ANTONIO SERNA: ...like, like Portland so..  
3 I don't see why it can't happen in New York City.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely. I, I  
5 agree and we'll take a look at the Portland study  
6 unless you want to send it to me, I'd be happy to  
7 look at that. Thank you very much to this panel for  
8 your input and we have a few more. So, we have... is  
9 Joanna Crispe still here or Crispe, you'll let me  
10 know how I said that name correctly or incorrectly,  
11 is Ben Davis... Ben Davis from the People's Cultural  
12 Plan, is Ben, Ben is still here, okay; Robert Lee...  
13 Robert Lee, it looks like Robert Lee it may not be  
14 from the Asian America Art Center. Great and Diane  
15 Fraher. Alright. And then we have one last panel  
16 after that which includes Simon Dove and Javier  
17 Medrano and it looks like Olympia Cazi if those folks  
18 are here. Alright, why don't we start with you and go  
19 right down the line.

20 JOANNA CRISPE: Thank you Council Member  
21 Van Bramer... thank you for the opportunity to testify.  
22 My name is Joanna Crispe and I'm the Director of  
23 Community Engagement and Education at the Municipal  
24 Art Society of New York. The Municipal Art Society of  
25 New York congratulates the Department of Cultural

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1  
2 Affairs on producing a comprehensive Cultural Plan  
3 that reflects an extensive community engagement  
4 process and the Mayor asked us please to contribute  
5 to this process informing community stakeholders  
6 about opportunities to participate in the drafting of  
7 the plan through our 2017 Livable Neighborhoods  
8 Program Workshop series. Because of MAS's focus on  
9 New York City's built environment we particularly  
10 applaud the strategies that DCLA has identified to  
11 address the issues of affordability, neighborhood  
12 character and arts and culture in public space. The  
13 Cultural Plan makes a stated commitment implementing  
14 processes that will increase local participation in  
15 the planning, design and programming of current and  
16 future city owned properties designated for cultural  
17 use. We urge the city to look at the 22 percent of  
18 properties under their management which are  
19 classified as having no current use for this purpose.  
20 Many of these properties are located in neighborhoods  
21 that the University of, of Pennsylvania's social  
22 impact of the arts project identifies as falling  
23 below New York City averages in terms of cultural  
24 assets and other social well-being indicators. The  
25 plan also commits to increasing the development of

1 appropriate, affordable, accessible housing and work  
2 spaces. MAS is supportive of the plan's intention of  
3 exploring the potential of new long-term  
4 affordability models that combat displacement  
5 especially community land trusts and rent to own  
6 options. The Cultural Plan will endeavor to support  
7 neighborhood based efforts to identify catalogue and  
8 protect locally significant cultural assets.  
9 Initiatives like Place Matters, a collaboration  
10 between MAS and the neighborhood creative and  
11 cultural asset mapping capacity building work  
12 conducted by MAS in partnership with the National  
13 Consortium for Creative Place Making and with support  
14 from the Department of Cultural Affairs provide good  
15 examples. MAS is supportive of DCLA's commitment  
16 within the neighborhood character issue area to  
17 increase coordination with DCP, HPD and EDC to  
18 proactively engage local artists as well as arts and  
19 cultural organizations in neighborhood planning and  
20 rezoning processes. MAS is in favor of the continued  
21 expansion of the percent for art program to provide  
22 for the maintenance of completed projects on city  
23 owned property. We encourage DCLA to also consider  
24 the model of the Philadelphia Redevelopment  
25

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1  
2 Authority's Percent for Art Program, the oldest in  
3 the country which includes an option for the  
4 provision of space for artists and arts organizations  
5 in fulfillment of their one percent requirements. The  
6 Cultural Plan also pledges to facilitate more artist  
7 led projects in collaboration with city agencies. MAS  
8 has a history of fostering sector collaborative  
9 projects such as the effort to restore Barry  
10 Faulkner's Mural series in Washington Irving High  
11 School. With the New York City Department of  
12 Education, the public design commission, conservators  
13 and the school's faculty and students we have  
14 experienced firsthand the multiple benefits of these  
15 types of collaborations and would welcome the  
16 opportunity to be a resource for the city as they  
17 continue in this work. We look forward... [cross-talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank... [cross-  
19 talk]

20 JOANNA CRISPE: ...to details around  
21 implementation and just one final point, while the  
22 engagements that took place in the drafting process  
23 is very impressive I think it's safe to say that most  
24 New Yorkers are still to learn about the plan and,  
25 and the impact that it will have on their

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1  
2 neighborhood so continued engagement with the public  
3 will be really critical, thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely,  
5 thank you and really appreciate the recommendation on  
6 the Percent for Art Program and Philadelphia's  
7 program, we will see if we can make that happen in  
8 New York City, next.

9 BEN DAVIS: Thank you for having me. My  
10 name is Ben Davis and I'm an independent writer but  
11 I've been part of this initiative, this very  
12 inspiring initiative called the People's Cultural  
13 Plan along with several other people on this panel  
14 and many other people throughout the city. I think  
15 it's very easy in a hearing like this and in a report  
16 like this to fall into this kind of anodyne, bleached  
17 out language about displacement and affordability and  
18 I think it's, it's worth saying... stating that we are  
19 in the middle of a crisis, I'm not going to go into  
20 that very deeply because I think most of us should be  
21 able to feel it but I could go to a different meeting  
22 about an artist being displaced or a small community  
23 organization being displaced almost every day.  
24 There's a real urgency to this moment and it is that  
25 urgency that I think needs to be amplified in this



1  
2 city's Cultural Plan as its going forward. The goals  
3 around diversity and cultural funding equity in the  
4 plan I think are to be applauded and very good. The  
5 proof of the... of the pudding is in the eating  
6 however, we'd like to see the goals be much more  
7 ambitious and I have to echo my colleague Antonio  
8 Serna that it's all about the framework going  
9 forward, we want to see the Department of Cultural  
10 Affairs document its progress towards these goals and  
11 publish their figures openly. In his testimony,  
12 Cultural... Commissioner Finkelppearl said that the  
13 number one issue that came up in all of the  
14 conversations, the many, many conversations around  
15 the city's Cultural Plan was around affordability, it  
16 is very notable then that the affordability, what  
17 they call the affordability and what I would call the  
18 displacement section of this report is the most vague  
19 and unsatisfying part. Every single practical  
20 strategy listed there is listed as medium or long-  
21 term implementation, not a single one is immediate in  
22 implementation meaning there is literally no sense of  
23 urgency in the Cultural Plan as it exists. The  
24 suggestions furthermore that it does include are not  
25 bold enough, it mentions the area or affordable real

1  
2 estate for artist initiative which plans to build 500  
3 affordable housing units in a decade just to give you  
4 an example of 53,000 people applied for 89 spots in  
5 an affordable artist complex a couple of years ago,  
6 the need is incredibly deep, I know that the response  
7 of the... a, a committee such as this one will probably  
8 be that the Department of Cultural Affairs doesn't  
9 have jurisdiction over housing matters, it is beyond  
10 their purview and I just want to say that, that that  
11 is not thinking boldly enough again for the, the  
12 state of urgency that we live in, I mean the city  
13 thinks it's in its interest, it has the ability to  
14 very imagine... imaginative things. To give you an  
15 example, they gave tax breaks to a developer in order  
16 to open New York's first tax free trade zone where  
17 rich people can store their art tax free, in Harlem I  
18 believe they just placed a church to do that so that  
19 shows you the kind of imagination that's possible  
20 when people think it is in their interest. The  
21 Cultural Plan... the city's Cultural Plan as I  
22 understand it is a set of recommendations for the  
23 council, it is an advocacy document, its advocacy has  
24 to be bolder, the small business job survival act for  
25 instance which we actually slow displacement of

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1  
2 artists from work places and... as well as the small  
3 businesses in general has been in city for a council  
4 for a long time, it should... you should advocate it...  
5 people should advocate it if we don't take much  
6 bolder action and seize on this opportunity which I  
7 believe is a real opportunity then this plan will  
8 just become a way of feeling better about ourselves  
9 as the cultural city... as the cultural life diversity  
10 bleaches out around us.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, very  
12 passionately delivered and I appreciate your, your  
13 point of view and your perspective and your  
14 testimony, I read through it obviously you were... you  
15 were jumping around a little bit but I appreciate  
16 everything that's in here and you know we, we will  
17 follow up on a lot of the issues that you raised with  
18 the reports and the follow through... [cross-talk]

19 BEN DAVIS: There needs to be  
20 implementation, a framework for the things that are  
21 in there and for the things that aren't in there  
22 around... it is impossible to have cultural justice  
23 without going beyond the narrow frame of culture, you  
24 have to address displacement and that means... and that  
25

1  
2 means addressing the real estate industry, you can't  
3 please everybody.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I appreciate  
5 that, thank you, next, Robert.

6 ROBERT LEE: I want to thank you Chairman  
7 Van Bramer for initiating this talk. I want to  
8 reinforce the urgency that you've just heard, I live  
9 in Chinatown and I've spoken to people who have lived  
10 there as long as I have or longer and they don't  
11 expect Chinatown to continue to exist for another  
12 ten, 20 years the way things are going. Let me get  
13 back to try to read a bits and parts of what I've  
14 given you. After decades of a history of benign  
15 neglect, racism, discrimination suffered by the POC  
16 artists and cultural community a resolution to this  
17 problem was sought through listening to the needs and  
18 concerns of all those effected. Given the CIG started  
19 to... even the CIG's started to worry publicly their  
20 funds might be shifted to POC organizations, People  
21 of Color Organizations reversing 40 years of  
22 documented inequity with the completion of the Create  
23 NYC Plan that promise has now died. Asian American  
24 Art Center was one of those who saw in this an  
25 opportunity that had been impossible for 40 years.

1 After nearly two years of listening to New Yorkers  
2 and, and the publication of an extensive record of  
3 such interactions the city has demonstrated it fails  
4 to listen where listening counts. Asian American Art  
5 Center and a thousand other art organizations,  
6 communities and boroughs they serve our voices go  
7 unrecognized instead the alliance share of funding to  
8 CIG has been re-inscribed, their funding assured and  
9 67 percent of New York City as people of color, their  
10 homes, their neighborhoods are left to the real  
11 estate developers. Opportunity in America reigns for  
12 developers as the people get priced out of their  
13 homes and their neighborhoods. At the Cultural Equity  
14 Conference held in April of 2015 sponsored by the  
15 Cultural Equity Group of which I am a member I  
16 started the need.. I stated the need to recognize the  
17 value of multiple cultures especially traditional  
18 wisdom bearers who should be honored, recognized as  
19 well as the elder non-profit cultural organizations  
20 many of these begun in the Civil Rights Era whose  
21 community infrastructure has grown priceless in their  
22 value to the city of New York as a roadmap to  
23 cultural transition. At the New York Community Trust  
24 gathering held in the Museo Del Barrio on November of  
25

1  
2 last year I spoke again of these elder community  
3 organizations how their need for succession funding  
4 was crucial for their continued survival, city  
5 officials like Tom Finkelpearl were present at both  
6 of these events, the city listens however it listens  
7 selectively. Now today three years... three of these  
8 elder POC organizations are dying as our Mayor  
9 fiddles with the number of people of color on the  
10 staff of CIG organizations. I'll just read one  
11 section... [cross-talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure... [cross-  
13 talk]

14 ROBERT LEE: ...that... at the end... or  
15 towards the end, in speaking with artists who live in  
16 countries where limits to artistic freedom is  
17 explicit some, some council that their situation is  
18 not so bad once as artists you accept your role and  
19 that desperate times require desperate measures. I  
20 think it was many, many years ago that Dubois said  
21 that the country simply needs to get to know each  
22 other and this opportunity was a great opportunity  
23 for us to wake up and hear that again and  
24 unfortunately, we see that that potential to change  
25 the country was not met.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I'm sorry you feel that way, I understand that it didn't entail all of the changes that you would certainly have wanted to see but I hope that there's evidence in the report of at least some of us listening in the sense that we are really prioritizing funding for small organizations and that is really where we directed the bulk of, of, of all of the new funding so... but I appreciate what, what you're saying very much so.

ROBERT LEE: I appreciate it, thank you...

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

DIANE FRAHER: Thank you sir. Although the Mayor's plan has revealed the need for greater cultural equity in the leadership and workforce of the city CIG groups... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Just state your name for the record?

DIANE FRAHER: Okay, hi. My name is Diane Fraher, I'm from Osage and Cherokee Nations, Founder and Director of AMERINDA and I'm also a New Yorker and a filmmaker also as well as an artist. Although the Mayor's plan has revealed the need for greater cultural equity in leadership and, and in the workforce of the city's CIG groups it has done

nothing to address the rampant discriminatory and exclusionary practices of the sudo elite non-profit arts complex against artists of color and ethnicity. Indeed, it condoned these practices while rolling out the Cultural Plan and continues to abdicate all responsibility for continuance of them in city owned property. For over 30 years AMERINDA has provided an avenue for Native American artists to present their work with dignity as central story tellers and creators of our own experience. Located in community board three for all of our existence we have been in search of a location within our greater community for a very long time. When 122 community center announced the availability of three spaces as a not for profits arts organization with a long history of excellence we applied. The announcement and application process indicated that there were three spaces available for non-profit community based organizations to apply for consideration and that there could be more than one organization accepted. On August 20<sup>th</sup> of this year we received a letter that indicates that all three spaces have been awarded to one organization, Movement Research. The city owned space that has been provided at a third of market rate to 122 by New York



1 City should have pulled the inclusion of the cultural  
2 arts diversity of organizations in New York City and  
3 the community, they have not and even in spite of the  
4 fact that DCLA and the district two city Council  
5 Member were on the selection committee and the city  
6 owns the building. Indeed, when Deputy Commissioner  
7 Edwin Torres, then Deputy Commissioner Eddie Torres  
8 informed us in a meeting in 2016 that the city's  
9 covenant with 122 allowed them to select new tenants  
10 the DCLA had the final approval. We so hoped that  
11 this included preventing discriminatory and  
12 exclusionary practices against us. It has also come  
13 to our attention that the selection of whom the space  
14 was to be awarded was a pre-determined outcome  
15 decided before the announcement of the RFP so all the  
16 applicants for the spaces in the building were  
17 victims of a fraudulent process with a pre-determined  
18 outcome, all wasted precious limited organizational  
19 resources because of a paradigm of white privilege.  
20 The residents in that... in 122 a now movement research  
21 reflect a narrow artistic vision not including  
22 organizations created and run by people of color and  
23 ethnic diversity that makes this wonderful city  
24 unique, okay, it is incomprehensible that 2,825  
25

1 square feet of space be afforded one organization.  
2  
3 There is no financial professional or legal  
4 justification for this exclusionary practice, it is  
5 also the second time that we have been treated in an...  
6 in an inequitable and fraudulent manner by a non-  
7 diverse arts consortium occupying city owned  
8 property. When we protest these practices, we receive  
9 no remedy or relief...

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Diane I, I'm  
11 familiar with the issue, I've, I've read through your  
12 testimony and, and while I understand that, that you  
13 connect to this, to Create NYC and the Cultural Plan  
14 I also understand it's a very, very specific awarding  
15 of, of space to an organization other than yourself  
16 that you are very concerned about and I've seen some  
17 letters to this effect and, and am aware that you  
18 take great exception to the Department of Cultural  
19 Affairs and, and to how this space was assigned or  
20 chosen so, so I want to just say thank you for that  
21 but also I read the rest and I understand your  
22 position and where you're coming from in terms of  
23 this issue and that you are very unhappy with, with  
24 how this was... how this went down. So, I will... [cross-  
25 talk]

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DIANE FRAHER: Sir may I have permission  
to... the... on behalf of the community who asked me to,  
to state two things that we affirm before the  
council... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, the...  
[cross-talk]

DIANE FRAHER: ...today, may I have...  
[cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I actually read...  
[cross-talk]

DIANE FRAHER: ...permission... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...that and it's  
important that you say that if you would like, yes.

DIANE FRAHER: Yes, both AMERIND Inc. and  
the American Indian Community House which is a social  
service agency serving the tribally enrolled  
community both affirm the following; we are the  
direct living descendants of the people whom Columbus  
first murdered and stole their land signatories to  
treaties between our sovereign native nations and the  
United States Government if the city cannot meet with  
us and support our current urgent request for a  
modest amount of space do not pimp the Native  
American community over a statue of Columbus in order

1  
2 to play a thinly disguised race card in an election  
3 year. The second thing we affirm is that no one can  
4 legitimately represent tribally enrolled communities  
5 unless they are from these recognized communities  
6 known by and accountable to them. we are honored to  
7 work with other unaffiliated indigenous communities  
8 as they represent their own constituents and uphold  
9 the principle that each community can only represent  
10 themselves unless prior informed consent is sought  
11 and approved.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you Diane,  
13 thank you... all of you to the panel for being here and  
14 participating and for your input. Our last panel if  
15 folks are still here Simon Dove, Javier Medrano and  
16 Olympia Cazi it looks like, I hope I'm saying that  
17 right. Yes.

18 SIMON DOVE: The last panel with the last  
19 of the water...

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Is there no more  
21 water? Do we need more water? You've waited long  
22 enough the least we could do is give you a proper  
23 glass of water... we can share ours, we've had very  
24 little, yes.

25 SIMON DOVE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: If you need... if you need reinforcements we'll just... we'll leave that jug there and then...

SIMON DOVE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Who wants to start? Is that you Simon?

SIMON DOVE: I can start...

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Two glasses of water this better be good...

SIMON DOVE: I'm good, two drinks is enough. Chair Van Bramer and what should I say, absent members thank you so much for this opportunity to testify today. My name is Simon Dove, I'm Executive and Artistic Director of Dancing in the Streets based, based now in the Bronx since 2011 established in 1984. We warmly welcome the long overdue strategic arts and culture plan for New York City, the document Create NYC, a cultural plan for all New Yorkers however falls somewhat short of its ambitious subtitle. The primary issue that Create NYC correctly identifies is the profound need for equity and inclusion and cultural provision I could not agree more yet the proposal to increase resources to existing CIG institutions in low income areas does

not address the problem, it simply perpetuates it.

This action will undoubtedly help the statistics

around cultural spend in each borough but it will not

impact the artists in communities who live there that

have been ignored for so long. We advocate changing

practice on the ground not statistics in reports. The

city council must begin to recognize and embrace the

reality that most resident's cultural experiences do

not take place in CIG's or even in designated arts

buildings. Citizens, cultural practices happen

everywhere throughout the city and it is not simply a

matter of making things or products for exhibition

performance but rather it's a process of ongoing

creative exploration and community celebration

ideally facilitated by artists who can afford to be

in long term relationships with the communities in

which they work. This arts activity known as social

practice brings artists and communities together in

long term and sustained relationships offering a

profound level of engagement, stimulating creativity

as well as individual and community development. The

benefits that ensue are well known, it develops

positive intergenerational and cross community

relationships and it stimulates overall community

1 health and well-being. Let us then try collectively  
2 to imagine how a system of interdepartmental public  
3 investment can be developed which is much closer to  
4 the communities in which the artist's work, it's  
5 about long term creative relationships, it supports  
6 ongoing creative process not simply product making,  
7 it connects with housing initiatives enabling artists  
8 to afford to live in the communities in which they  
9 work, it dovetails with community services around  
10 health and wellness, its delivered where people live  
11 and work and it's in buildings and public spaces  
12 where they feel welcome without any economic or  
13 physical barriers. The Commissioner writes in his  
14 intro to the plan that this plan signals the  
15 beginning of a new conversation. Let me assure you  
16 that artists and arts organizations in the South  
17 Bronx together with the communities they work are  
18 keenly awaiting to begin this new conversation. If we  
19 can really figure this out to use the Commissioner's  
20 words New York City will be truly supporting its  
21 artists and its communities and not just its grand  
22 buildings. Thank you.

24 JAVIER MEDRANO: Chair Van Bramer,  
25 members of the city council thank you for the

1  
2 opportunity to discuss New York City's comprehensive  
3 Cultural Plan, Create NYC. I am Javier Medrano,  
4 Senior Associate of Public and Private Partnership at  
5 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue in the South Bronx. The district  
6 represents the oldest commercial corridor in the  
7 Bronx with over 200 businesses and soon to grow to  
8 1,200 businesses while also serving over 200,000  
9 residents daily. The district is home to a rich  
10 prudent in arts and culture indeed at the turn of the  
11 century there are more theaters, dance halls,  
12 cultural enclaves in, in our corridor than what we  
13 have along the famed theater in Manhattan today  
14 founded in 1988 to protect businesses and grow  
15 community during the period of a Bronx economic  
16 decline our mission and purpose to always lead by  
17 demanding equity from a city government for an area  
18 that has suffered from over four decades of community  
19 disinvestment. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue of Business Improvement  
20 District welcomes New York City first ever Cultural  
21 Plan designed to support artists in all five  
22 boroughs, an ambitious initiative that stimulates  
23 creativity in our great city while also building upon  
24 our economic fabric. While we applaud the effort to...  
25 efforts to date and acknowledge the tremendous work



1 completed to bring all stakeholders to the table the  
2 Create NYC Cultural Plan does not go far enough to  
3 support our local communities and build our local  
4 artists base economies. Quite simply the plan lacks  
5 equity and inclusion and ignores the diversity of our  
6 city in it... and it represents... stated that Create NYC  
7 plans is solidly anchored by NYC cultural institution  
8 groups 33 publicly owned and privately operate  
9 organizations. These organizations include the  
10 American Museum of Natural History, Snug Harbor  
11 Cultural Center and Lincoln Center for the Performing  
12 Arts and the Metropolitan Museum of Art just to name  
13 a few. Many of these organizations have roots that  
14 clearly align the... with the city's fund, funders and  
15 some of the oldest New York City families... grand  
16 benefactor to their various funds. Our district  
17 values these important institutions however we must  
18 also acknowledge that, that by investing such portion  
19 of city, city cultural funds in these historic  
20 institutions that we are giving the city of New York  
21 the right to whitewash largely minority and  
22 disenfranchised communities that we hope that these  
23 grand organizations will learn to serve. The plan  
24 does not invest in cultural equity and it does not  
25

1  
2 empower the local artists in community and we must  
3 recognize the work... that work local artists have done  
4 and elevate that work to the highest platform often  
5 that platform is at a... is at a performance or an  
6 exhibition or an opening but rather an investment in  
7 the artist or the community that they represent. We  
8 must... we must move away from classifying culture  
9 within the confined spaces and realize just as one  
10 may enjoy the MET one might also enjoy the local  
11 artistry mural. We must also recognize the value of  
12 local artist, icons that brings to New York City.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Does 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue  
14 get any cultural funding, do you yourselves do  
15 cultural programming?

16 JAVIER MEDRANO: Well right now we're  
17 going to have a plaza opening up across from our  
18 offices... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Uh-huh... [cross-  
20 talk]

21 JAVIER MEDRANO: And we've been working  
22 with the Mayor's Office and that has been in the  
23 works for like almost ten years and we were planning  
24 on having a performance on the 23<sup>rd</sup> but the plaza  
25

hasn't been finally constructed so we are promoting  
arts and culture in our area... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right, I imagine  
you guys work closely together, huh?

JAVIER MEDRANO: Yes.

SIMON DOVE: No, just as they were... we're  
working with the community so we're trying to create  
this framework that I was talking about where you  
empower... communities over long periods of time in, in  
public housing projects but also develop... [cross-  
talk]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right... [cross-  
talk]

SIMON DOVE: ...community integration  
through the arts.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: But Javier your  
group doesn't get like cultural development fund,  
funding... you don't get part of Cultural Affairs  
funding...

JAVIER MEDRANO: No, we don't.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right, but would  
you like to?

1  
2 JAVIER MEDRANO: We're... right now we're  
3 raising funds to create, create more projects in the  
4 area... [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Got it... [cross-  
6 talk]

7 JAVIER MEDRANO: I mean that would be  
8 amazing if we could...

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, we should  
10 figure out if there's a way to make that happen but  
11 boy are you tough on the Cultural Plan. So, I mean I,  
12 I realize we're, we're, we're at the end of the  
13 hearing and, and you know I don't really... look  
14 everyone's entitled to their own interpretation and  
15 their own personal views of the plan I would just say  
16 this is a lot in both of your testimonies quite  
17 frankly about sort of art is not confined to a space  
18 but in fact it can happen out on the streets and all  
19 that... and I, I, I would just argue we can and we do  
20 both in the city of New York right now, I mean I, I,  
21 I understand part of the argument that you're making  
22 which is some people think, not necessarily myself  
23 but the, the CIGs get too much, right, I understand  
24 that that's an argument but I think it's a different  
25 argument to say we're not doing any of the other

1 things, right, we're not... we're not funding all of  
2 these small organizations that are doing the work  
3 outside of these 33 buildings, right, I mean to say  
4 that all of the art that's happening in the city  
5 that's funded by the city of New York is sort of only  
6 going on in these very few buildings that's not what  
7 you're saying, right, I mean... [cross-talk]

9 SIMON DOVE: Can, can I respond to that...  
10 [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, you're  
12 dancing in the streets, right?

13 SIMON DOVE: Yeah, it's, it's simply that  
14 the, the results is currently... my sense is the plan  
15 seeks to find ways in which it can expand current  
16 provision, the fact is that 75 percent of the budget  
17 is spent on 33 organizations so 900 small  
18 organizations are split by 25 percent of the budget  
19 it's actually the same amount you spend on the  
20 lighting and heating bills of the CIG's and we're  
21 saying we need to not look at institutions we need to  
22 look at communities and the Cultural Plan needs to  
23 start not with what exists but what needs to happen  
24 and how do we get there...

25 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right...

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1  
2 SIMON DOVE: So, we need a, a real  
3 roadmap with clear destinations with a process that  
4 is transparent and open which builds a mechanism, it,  
5 its, it's not in the plan... [cross-talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right, right and  
7 I would also just caution not all of the CIGs are  
8 exactly the same, right and, and, and so there's,  
9 there's a great diversity even within the CIGs and so  
10 I... there's a... there's a... I think a, a leap that,  
11 that... they're all the MET, right and, and look I  
12 think the MET is, is a terrific and very important  
13 and viable institution for our city but I think A we  
14 have to, to, to agree that there's diversity even  
15 within the CIGs, even within the organization and  
16 then I would just counter that the budget that we  
17 adopted this year and all the increases are heavily  
18 weighted towards smaller organizations, towards those  
19 900 organizations and others that could into that  
20 fund. I, I, I certainly hear you're, you're feeling  
21 about the funding that the CIGs get but I just want  
22 to push back gently because... and I'm really, you know  
23 Javier and I think... I'm, I'm really glad that you're  
24 here, I'm really glad that a... an organizations are  
25 not primarily a cultural organization is here to talk

1  
2 about this issue, I think that's great, I wish there  
3 were more but, but I think some of it is, is, is too  
4 harsh in a... in a general way about the, the, the plan  
5 and about the funding that we provide in, in the city  
6 of New York for culture where I think there is  
7 increasingly an awareness and certainly a belief  
8 that... on my part as the Chair and the Speaker that  
9 our funding, our new funding in particular we know  
10 we're driving towards the smaller organizations, the  
11 small non-profits, outer borough, the much more  
12 diverse in terms of population and service and  
13 targeted service groups so... we're working on that  
14 but, but I, I hear you I just wanted to engage a  
15 little bit there Javier because you know we're,  
16 we're... it's, it's... I don't think it's, it's, it's  
17 quite that simple but, but I appreciate that's..  
18 [cross-talk]

19 JAVIER MEDRANO: I mean I think the city  
20 has its great intentions, I don't think it's going  
21 far enough, I don't think that we should have these  
22 large institutions coming into communities and saying  
23 this is how you can do... create art, I think it should  
24 start from the grassroots and from the... [cross-talk]

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right... [cross-talk]

JAVIER MEDRANO: ...community and they should have the... they should be the ones who are first to have the voice.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alright. Do you think that the larger organizations go into communities and say this is how you create art?

JAVIER MEDRANO: I mean I guess from the language from the Cultural Plan it's like it might... it might come off... let's, let's say the South Bronx been ignored for so long and then you have... someone mentioned earlier gentrification of like this perspective like we're going to come in and we're going to help you out, we're going to do this but is it... is it really truly helping our community, I think we should really bring in... into like base organizations and listening to them...

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Uh-huh. I guess I would... I would just say can we do both, right, can, can, can we... can we agree that, you know the MET and the Zoo of Natural History, you know Lincoln Center that maybe they genuinely do want to provide their programs and services, they genuinely might want to



1 reach out to communities that maybe have  
2 traditionally been excluded or not had those  
3 opportunities and, and genuinely... and, and, and for  
4 the... for the good of, of society want to provide  
5 access to those programs at the same time having  
6 those groups that are small and non-profit, you know  
7 of the community also, right generating art, you know  
8 producing art that, that maybe... that maybe the, the  
9 intentions of all the large groups seeking to serve a  
10 diverse audience aren't, aren't bad and I guess the  
11 case I would make is that, that both can happen,  
12 right that in communities where, you know Carnegie  
13 Hall wants to provide a program or seeks to provide a  
14 free program or, or to get out into communities that  
15 doesn't necessarily exclude, you know a very small,  
16 you know neighborhood based cultural organization for  
17 example in Queens and Ecuadorian dance troop that  
18 that, that still can't happen in like a really  
19 authentic way, right and I guess that's what I would  
20 just add to that that, that both can happen together.  
21 We're just late in the hearing so I'm kind of like  
22 engaging this panel more plus you waited three hours  
23 to testify so now you'll regret it but I'm happy to,  
24 to engage this panel in particular because you waited  
25

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2 so long and, and, and I want to respect the fact that  
3 you, you did wait, you stayed so you get a little  
4 extra time. Last but not least.

5 OLYMPIA CAZI: Thank you very much and  
6 thank you also because you, Majority Leader Van  
7 Bramer and Council Member Levin legislated the  
8 creation of this very plan that we're here to  
9 discuss. So, my name is Olympia Cazi and I'm here to  
10 testify on behalf of the New York City Access  
11 Coalition. the Create NYC process is actually the  
12 birthplace of our coalition, a group of likeminded  
13 people who strongly believe in grassroots cultural  
14 spaces and I didn't know it was a contentious term  
15 I'm going to explain later what I mean by the use of  
16 grassroots. We came together around a meeting with  
17 Commissioner Finkelpearl and his flagging.. dream team  
18 basically, that's how we, we see them thanks to their  
19 openness and progressive use we were able to work  
20 together and provide recommendations that are now  
21 included in the plan that we're considering today.  
22 Our focus has been the safety and preservation of  
23 informal artists in community driven spaces that's  
24 the way we interpret grassroots at least and that,  
25 that the integral in the thriving diversity and

1  
2 demographic character of our city. This plan is a  
3 useful road map that contains many great ideas and  
4 principles however it would be important as you were  
5 just saying that we continue to work all together  
6 across, you know the board, between the city council,  
7 the Mayor, the non-profits, funders, advocates,  
8 artists and all the stakeholders. In order to  
9 understand the how these issues are going to become a  
10 reality. All the issues included in the draft are  
11 relevant and we must act on all fronts, culture is  
12 shaped by and shapes the lives of all New Yorkers  
13 culture emerges in the way we draft and enforce our  
14 policies and laws in the way we design out education,  
15 housing and healthcare as a result it is crucial that  
16 the insights that emerge through this plan inform the  
17 programs, services and policies of all city agencies  
18 and we'll be happy in the future you know to explain  
19 further what we mean by that. Helpful steps are  
20 already being taken, yesterday night when they did  
21 the signing of the bill to create the office of  
22 nightlife and this is one of the plans that the Mayor  
23 used and I shared the stage with Marky Ramone so I  
24 feel like that was a special night. We really hope  
25 that this, you know new office that it will, you know

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2 be on... to... focus on the thriving night life, that it  
3 will focus on working in preserving grassroots  
4 culture and what is important about the multicultural  
5 identity of our city. Now I cannot miss the  
6 opportunity to give a shout out to, you know the  
7 committee members that have already signed on, on the  
8 Cabaret Law repeal that is included in this plan,  
9 Stephen Levin whose been, you know one of our  
10 inspirations since the beginning of our work but also  
11 Councilwoman Rosenthal and Cumbo and I hope after our  
12 meeting tomorrow Majority Leader Van Bramer, I mean  
13 there are many reasons to repeal that law but in  
14 conclusion I just want to say social dancing is not a  
15 crime and we cannot allow anymore prohibition or law  
16 with racist and homophobic legacy to, to persist so  
17 thank you, thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, well I look  
19 forward to the meeting tomorrow, I appreciate you... I  
20 appreciate your thoughts on it and, and, and I can  
21 certainly say without qualification that as a gay man  
22 I do not support any homophobic laws and I, I love to  
23 dance including in the Bronx by the way I have  
24 danced... I have danced a few times in the Bronx...

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2               SIMON DOVE: Come on Saturday in the  
3 streets.

4               CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh do you only  
5 dance in the streets?

6               SIMON DOVE: Mostly, it's all we can  
7 afford.

8               OLYMPIA CAZI: Plus there's the  
9 Caballero.

10              CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: What's that?

11              OLYMPIA CAZI: Plus there is the  
12 Caballero, we don't know how my licensed spaces they  
13 have up there.

14              CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's a  
15 different hearing all together but thank you all for,  
16 for your input, I think it was a meaningful hearing  
17 and airing of, of the plan and, and I was glad to  
18 hear from so many folks, DanceWave unfortunately had  
19 to leave but they did their testimony and I did take  
20 a look at it as well so we will endeavor to continue  
21 to get better and get it more right although I think  
22 there is a lot of good news when it comes to culture  
23 and the arts in the city of New York, there are lots  
24 of things that we should feel good about and this  
25 plan I believe is one of them, our funding

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2 allocations are, are also something that we can feel  
3 good about, we all want more, we need more, we are  
4 fighting for more all the time and we certainly need  
5 it baselined and, and we definitely want to continue  
6 the work of the council and the council's funding if  
7 you look at the council's funding this year virtually  
8 all of it targets smaller non-profit cultural  
9 organizations, we're very, very proud of, of all of  
10 that work and the funding that's there and the  
11 Speaker and I and the council have been really,  
12 really determined to create some of those numbers and  
13 percentages that you see or will see in what's  
14 allocated this year including a 33 percent increase  
15 for groups with budgets of 250,000 dollars or less  
16 that is something that we did that I'm very, very  
17 proud of. So, with that thank you to everyone who has  
18 spent the last three hours with us and thank you to  
19 the staff and we will all continue to work together,  
20 dance together and fight together for the arts in the  
21 city of New York...

22 SIMON DOVE: Onwards...

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you all  
24 very much.

25 SIMON DOVE: thank you...

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OLYMPIA CAZI: thank you...

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JAVIER MEDRANO: thank you...

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[gavel]

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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 September 30, 2017