

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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MARCH 16, 2018
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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E:

COUNCIL MEMBERS: James G. Van Bramer, Chair
Laurie A. Cumbo, Majority Leader
Karen Klosowitz
Francisco P. Moya

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

Tom Finkelppearl, Commissioner for
Department of Cultural Affairs

Linda Johnson, President and CEO of
Brooklyn Public Library

Dennis Walcott, President and CEO of
Queen Library

Tony Marx, President and CEO of New York
Public Library

Corey Johnson, Speaker

Valentin Colon, President, DC37 Local
1930

John Hyslop, President, DC37 Local 1321

Ron Barber, President, DC37 Local 1482

Brooklyn Public Library Employees

Leonard Paul, President, DC37 Local 274

Tress Walker, Public speaker for
Libraries, Completed Program at Job and
Business Academy Queens Library

EK Williams, Public Speaker Technology
Trained Supervisor Brooklyn Public
Library

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

LaMeane Isaac, Branch Manager Macon
Library Bedford-Stuyvesant and Brooklyn

John Calvelli, Co-Chair of the Cultural
Institutions Group (CIG), Executive Vice
President for Public Affairs at the
Wildlife Conservation Society, Co-Chair
of New Yorkers for Cultures and the Arts

Christopher Carroll, Representing Local
802 the American Federation of Musicians

Sheila Lewandowski, Founder/Executive
Director of Chocolate Factory Theatre

Yosenix Orango (SP?), Young Adult
Librarian at Brooklyn Public Library
Stone Avenue Branch in Brownsville,
Brooklyn

Lucy Sexton, Executive Director for New
Yorkers for Culture and the Arts

John O'Reilly, Community member concerned
about the Queens Museum

Ellen Leszynski, Brooklyn Academy of
Music

Mark Rossier, Director of Grants at the
New York Foundation for the Arts

Joal Ochalla (SP?), customer service
specialist at Woodside Community Library

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

Bashir Osmani (SP?), representing newcomers

Ana Diaz (SP?), Student at Queens Library English for Speakers of Other Languages Class (ESOL)

Jeffery Omara (SP?), Actor, member of Organization for Fair Wage on Stage

Stephanie Wilchfort, President and CEO of Brooklyn Children's Museum

Tiffany Bryant, for the Public Theatre

David Johnston, Executive Director Exploring the Metropolis

Tiffany Geigel, Dance NYC

Jamie Bryant, Member of New York City Artist Coalition and an Artist Safety Advocate

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(test, test, test)

(Introduction: Today is a Committee on
Cultural Affairs and Libraries. Today's date is
March 2018 and this is recorded by Sargeant Brala
(SIC, SP?).)

JIMMY G. VAN BRAMER: Good morning
everyone. Good morning everyone. First of all, uhm
I want to thank all of the Sargeants at Arms and Carl
de Alba and the entire team for moving us back here
into the chambers, obviously when Libraries come to
town, they come full force and that requires us to
have a little bit more space so I want to thank all
of the, the team here for quickly setting this up for
us and getting us back here for our hearing so we
don't clap in the Chambers but we, we raise our hands
for all of the Sargeants in Arms and all the staff
members who have helped put us together back here in
chambers. So, my name is Jimmy Van Bramer, I am
proud to be the Chair of Cultural Affairs and
Libraries and proud to Chair this, our hearing on the
Mayor's Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2018 and
we are now in session. I want to thank all of you
for being here, all of you who joined the rally and
press conference to should loud and clear and in

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unison that libraries are for everyone and we need to protect and defend our libraries. I want to thank our three Library System Heads and all of you, the members of the Library Community. Also just to know, because I see some folks in the audience are here for the Cultural Affairs portion of this hearing that will follow this hearing, so uhm, you will get to learn all you ever wanted to know about libraries while you await the second portion of this hearing which will include Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl on the Department of Cultural Affairs Budget. Uhm, let me recognize and thank Councilmember Karen Koslowitz from Queens who is a new member of our committee but certainly not new to the City Council and certainly not new to libraries and library issues. Uhm, and as I said earlier today, I joined the Staff of the Queens Library in January of 1999 and one of my duties was to help craft the testimony for the then Director of the Queens Library, Gary Strong in 1999 and so this Preliminary Budget Hearing I would have attended in February/March of 1999 and this marks the 20th year that I will be involved in the Budget Process on behalf of Libraries and I was thinking about that this morning, thinking about the fact that

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20 years of my life have been devoted to protecting
and defending our Libraries, something that I am
immensely proud of, it's become really my life's work
and I am thrilled to be a part of you and a part of
this effort. Now, we know that Libraries are
essential. We know that they are vital. We know
that as our values are under attack all across the
country that Libraries and Library workers are at the
front lines of defending those values and making sure
that every single New Yorker has a safe place to
congregate, to learn, to strive and to simply be,
really. Because Libraries provide that space for
people to simply be and I am immensely proud that
over the last several years not only did we fight
back millions and millions dollars in budget cuts,
but we were also able to then restore tens of
millions of dollars to the Libraries Budget and then
achieve what we have worked for, for the 20 years
that I have been involved in this effort, the base-
lining of six day service. We have also seen record
investment in the Capital Budget for Libraries and
that too has been a very significant advancement.
But that's not to say that we can rest on our laroza
(SP?) that we should stop there. The truth is that

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the Capital Needs for our three Library Systems are still immense and require immediate investment and attention and of course, we haven't increased the Budget for Libraries in three years in a meaningful way and we need to do that because not only do expenses increase but the need for Libraries has increased, the desire for the information, the services, the programs has increased dramatically and so we believe that Libraries can and should receive more from the City Government and the Council has always lead the way, literally for the last 20 years, the Council has led the way in the fight for Libraries and Library Services. So I am thrilled to be a part of that effort along with Councilmember Koslowitz and the members of this committee and this council to fight for Libraries. So, with that, I want to welcome the three Library Presidents and CEOs, Linda Johnson from the Brooklyn Public Library, Dennis Walcott from the Queens Library and Tony Marx from the New York Public Library and I know that some representatives from the unions and the DC37 locals may be speaking later as well. So with that I will ask Linda Johnson to begin the testimony on behalf of the Library Systems.

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LINDA JOHNSON: Thank you Chairman Van
Bramer, thank you Councilwoman Koslowitz and members
of the committee, Speaker Johnson, Majority Leader
Cumbo, Finance Chair Drum and Brooklyn Delegation and
the City Council for supporting New York City's
Libraries. We deeply appreciate all you have done to
ensure our Libraries remain welcoming institutions,
open to everyone nearly every day. We rely on your
commitment to our Libraries so we can help the many
communities who depend on us. Your support has
helped reverse years of underfunding but our job
is far from finished; as well, thank you to all the
Library workers who came out to City Hall today
including our Partners at DC37 and Brooklyn's local
1482 and local President Ron Barber. I am certain
you will appreciate their eloquent testimony. It is
due, it is due in large part to our staff that
Libraries can be counted on as safe, welcoming spaces
for all. This aspect of our mission has never been
more important. We know that you and the City Council
share this core value. Our doors are open wide to
accommodate everyone from the New American practicing
English at a Conversation Group in Bay Ridge to the
Senior Bowling with a Virtual League in Bed Stuy,

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from toddlers enjoying Saturday story-time to the
parents on Riker's Island reading to a child via
teleconference to Coney Island Library. There is no
question that public libraries are truly here for
everyone. We need the City's increased support to
fulfill this mission. Today we submit our Fiscal
Year 19 Tri-Library Executive Budget request, an
increase of \$16 million in operating funds to be
split among the three library systems, coupled with
an increase of \$20 million in Capital dollars for
each library system. For Brooklyn Public Library,
the \$4.5 million we are requesting, an increase in
expense dollars to provide the exceptional library
service our patrons deserve. It is imperative that
we maintain our physical spaces. We need funds to
cover repairs and upkeep that are not capitally
eligible and to invest in highly trained staff and
up-to-date materials and collections. The cost of
providing 6-day service has increased and it is all
the more challenging to remain nimble and responsive
to the changing needs of our patrons. Just last
month for example, our Immigrant Services Team hosted
its first Legal Clinic to help patrons renew Haitian
Temporary Protective Status, a benefit that the Trump

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Administration has recently terminated. Every day families who are facing uncertainty about Immigration Status in the United States turn to the library for free legal services and reliable information. In many cases, the Library is the only institution they trust. You can also see what a difference 6-day service has made by visiting one of our standing room only Story Time Programs. We offer them every week in every library and in multiple languages as often as possible. Cortelyou Library for example provides Story Time in English, Spanish, Urdu and Russian every single week and they are seeking ways to add Napoli to their repertoire. To sustain this incredible work we must continue to support our staff and ensure our materials and collections budget, particularly in world languages or increase to a level commensurate with expanded service. In a borough of 2.6 million we should be spending at least \$10 million on our collections but we are not there yet. Brooklyn Public Library finds new and inventive ways to engage communities that might otherwise be isolated or overlooked. Our services for Older Adults launched Senior Debate last week which gathers seniors in the Library for lively discussions about

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pressing issues with their peers while learning and practicing the art of debate. Earlier I mentioned that Brooklyn Public Library's popular Virtual Bowling League for senior citizens library lane, an incredibly popular program. It has 24 teams around the borough who compete virtually for the league trophy while making friends and becoming technologically adept. Technology at the Library is the life-line for all of our patrons but children and teens in particular appreciate Brooklyn Public Library's new technology resources. Last year, BPL launched its first ever Brooklyn Robotics League. Young adults throughout the borough are invited to join one of a dozen teams to learn the value of teamwork and problem solving while building coding and programming robots. At the end of the 8-week program we held a competition and judged their creations. This Team Tech Stem Program is in such high demand we expanded the league to all of our branches just last month. Our focus on teen engagement has grown stronger thanks to the Library's Brooklyn Incubator, a process that supports innovative programming by providing mentorship and resources to Library Staff with creative new ideas.

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Book Match Teen for example is based on the premise that Teen Library Services are most successful when they are spearheaded by the teens themselves. This series involves training participant in reader advisor group skills including interviewing, writing book reviews and crafting book lists. The popular Remix Academy is a 6-week DJ and Music Production Workshop for Bed Stuy teen culminating in a final product presented in a teen showcase. Likewise, Brownsville Excerpts Teens Podcasting is a 10-week instructor lead program in partnership with Brownsville Community Justice Center which builds broadcasting skills for young adults who record and edit their own podcasts about life in Brownsville. In these, and so many other ways, Brooklyn Public Library has strengthened our commitment to community engagement which is the center of our recently completed Strategic Plan. We are determined to be responsive to the different needs of the neighborhoods our libraries serve and will continue to prioritize community input for all major Capital Projects over the next several years. Indeed, a cornerstone of our Strategic Plan is to provide inclusive and inspirational place, providing a

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welcoming environment to our patrons is vital but so many of our libraries are plagued by maintenance issues, equipment failures and drab, uninspiring interiors. We spend upwards of \$1 million of our operating funds every year on infrastructure, upkeep that is not Capitally eligible, maintaining old boilers, replacing dilapidated furniture and funding temporary heating and cooling solution which we wait for a Capital Project to replace nonworking systems. These costly needs compete for our treasured operating dollars and ultimately steal fund from our critical programming needs. We are forced to spend limited operating dollars treating the symptoms of our Capital Crisis. Just a few year ago, Brooklyn Public Library carried \$300 million in unfunded Capital needs for the 59 libraries in our system. With the help of the City and our Brooklyn Council Members, the State and Creative Capital Projects Partnerships we have reduced the need to \$240 million. You have helped BPL enter its most significant era of building in recent memory. Over the next five years, 1/3 of Brooklyn Public Library System will have been rebuilt or renovated. While we are turning to the, while we are turning the ship in

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the right direction, the bad news is that we still have \$240 million in unmet Capital needs system wide. Approximately 1/3 of those needs are emergency infrastructure projects like boilers, HVAC systems, roofs and security upgrades. We are facing a deferred maintenance crisis that still impacts many neighborhoods in the borough. We are not alone in this crisis. Together our three library systems are requesting a total of \$60 million in funding this year, \$20 for each system. For Brooklyn Public Library, this funding will address our most critical Capital needs including failing infrastructure and equipment that has long exceeded its useful life. While we have begun to make progress for libraries, our overall funding level continually forces us to triage only the most serious projects and leave the countless critical infrastructure needs and preventative work unaddressed. We spend much of our time and resources responding to emergencies. The lack of a reliable source of recurring funding also makes it impossible for us to manage Capital Projects efficiently. This is why the undercurrent of this years request for \$20 million each in Capital, the request that we employ you to remember after this

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Budget is finalized is to push for Library inclusion in next years 10-year plan. At our present level of funding, we cannot perform necessary preventative maintenance. We cannot ensure that projects that encounter a short-fall can continue to move forward and we cannot manage our program, the largely city-owned buildings in the most holistic and efficient way possible. New York City's Libraries are and always will be for everyone. We are a haven for immigrants, a provider of hope to the unemployed, a source of endless wonder for children, a place for discovery and learning for whoever has the inclination to walk through our doors. There has never been a better time for the City to stand with us and proclaim that everyone is welcome here. Help us fulfill our mission by supporting libraries and the people who need us most. Thank you.

JAMES VAN BRAMER: Thank you. Dennis.

DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you Chair and good morning to you. My name is Dennis Walcott and I am the President and CEO of the Queens Library and thank you Linda for outlining the challenges our three systems collectively face next year and how we can meet them. Uhm, it's really an honor to be here once

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again Chair to talk to you and to the members of the
committee and to the Chair of the Queens Delegation,
Karen Koslowitz. It is always a pleasure to see you
and as always a pleasure to interact with you around
libraries, and you may be new to the committee but as
indicated, you are a person who has been there for
the Queens Library for years and years and years and
years and we truly appreciate all of your support and
to also to your other new member for Queens,
Councilman Moya, my best to him as well. He has been
a steward advocate in his former life for our
libraries and now in his new role as Council Member,
we always look forward to his support and actually
have appeared together already in his new roles, so
we thank him for his leadership and his total
commitment to all of us. As you know, uhm, Queens
Library alone maintains a collection that consists of
print and digital materials in 223 languages and our
total circulation of materials and languages other
than English last year was 1.3 million. While our
numbers are impressive they are vulnerable to
stagnation, decline unless we keep pace with the
every changing learning needs of this most this most
heterogenous city in the world. For example, in a

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recent survey at the Queens Library Customers as part of our process for developing our Strategic Plan, we heard repeated calls for additional investment in a number and variety of print and electronic books, job skills and training programs for immigrants and resources to provide meaningful learning experience to our teenagers. We are committed to delivering for them and are looking forward to working with you on behalf of them and the patrons of our sister library systems. Before I get further into my remarks, I want to also acknowledge all the other members of the committee who have been there, whether they are representing all the other boroughs or the borough of Queens itself. You are supporters of us and we truly value your support as well and thank you for all the outstanding commitment to guaranteeing free access to information, learning opportunities and the joy of discovery for everyone we serve in person, on the phone or over the internet. You have consistently demonstrated that the people of New York deserve the City's firm financial support. Immigrant and New Yorkers at the forefront of Queens Library Mission are extremely important. The proof that we are indeed delivering for our customers is in the

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numbers. Last year, Queens Library Programs and Services drew a record 1.4 million people, an increase of 27% from the previous year. Many of the participants are immigrant New Yorkers. For them, Queens Library offers the first stop on the path towards their dreams in this country. Of the 2.3 million people who live in Queens, nearly half were born outside of the United States. Let me repeat that, of the 2.3 million people who live in Queens, nearly half were born outside of the United States. Queens Library provides classes, workshops and services in the language spoken by the boroughs immigrant communities which assist new immigrants to adapt to live in America and offer programs that celebrate the cultures of the diverse ethnic groups in Queens. Last year, we offered 126 English for Speakers of Other Language Classes at 36 sites across our system to nearly 4,000 individuals with 7,100 session and attendance of nearly 90,000 individuals. We presented Citizenship Classes, Citizenship Application Assistant and Confidential Financial Counseling to 2,000 people. Queens Library has long been the primary destination of the immigrant New Yorkers. With the establishment of our New Americans

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Program in 1977, we became the first public library in the nation to provide comprehensive programs and services to new comers. The goal was to help them adjust to their new home and keep them connected to what the left behind by building a multi-lingual collection and creating relevant programming such as coping skills, workshops, native language coding classes and cultural events. To keep pace with the ever changing communities of Queens, members of our staff can Federal and Local Demographic Data to pinpoint where the boroughs newcomers live and where they are from. This information is enhanced by what our community librarians are seeing on the ground. They reach to their communities to understand who is living in the diverse neighborhoods of Queens and look out foretelling details like new restaurants, new newspapers and languages other than English on the newsstands. Through our New Americans Program, we presented to more than 4,000 people, coping skill workshops in Spanish, Mandarin, New Ghali, Korean and Russian, the five most spoken languages in Queens aside from English. Professionals including Lawyers, Social Workers, Doctors, Business Experts guide them through the Immigration Law, Citizenship, Housing,

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Worker's Right, Starting a Business, Finding a Job,
Parenting and Health. The program works in close
partnership with organizations such as United States
Citizenship Immigration Services, New York City
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Queen
Borough President's Immigration Task Force, Women for
Afghan Women, New York Tibetan Services Center and
many, many others. It helps people to get real
results, people like Robert Melbourne, a recent
immigrant from Jamaica, seeking to improve his
reading skills. Last July, Robert enrolled in
literacy classes and went from a second grade reading
level to a fifth grade reading level with less than
20 weeks of instruction. He also sought employment
opportunities. The library helped him create a
resume and referred him to another of our Signature
Initiatives, our Job and Business Academy through its
services, Robert received Security Guard Training and
Certification and recently obtained his Employment
Authorization and a New York State Driver's License
and we hired by a major shipping company. The Job
Business Academy provides specialized training,
learning opportunities with an emphasis on
technology, training to job seekers, aspiring

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entrepreneurs and business owners. In Fiscal year
2017 the Job Business Academy Staff served 25,422
customers with 41,366 hours of training and
individual assistance. In total the Job Business
Academy offered 700 technology training classes, 700
job search workshops, 175 entrepreneurship and small
business workshops and 84 job skill training
workshops. The Job Business Academy prepares Queens
residents to thrive in the modern workforce.
Individuals seeking access to Job Business Academy
Services get started by using the Job Map, an
innovative online job skills assessment tool
developed by the Queens Library. Based on assessment
and one-on-one interviewed the Job Business Academy
staff customers are enrolled in structured job search
classes, workshops and technology training classes.
The Job Business Academy also runs a free incubator
for aspiring entrepreneurs in conjunction with the
New York City Economic Development Corporation called
The Jamaica Feast Program, food, entrepreneurship and
services training space. The program was created to
provide resources to those who are looking to start
and run their own food business in Queens. Those who
participate in this program learn the fundamentals of

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getting a start in the food business with hands on
workshop, access to a commercial kitchen and one on
one session with industry expert. The program is the
only one of its kind in Queens. Workshops cover a
range of topics including financial planning,
marketing and food industry best practices. It is
ideal for neighborhood cooks seeking to expand their
experience, New Americans looking to start a business
and recent Culinary School graduates who want to
learn the business side of the food world. The
program has achieve some amazing outcomes for its
participants like a woman named Tress Walker,
founding of Mom's Kitchen, Mom's Kitchen, in Jamaica
which sells West Indian cuisine and baked goods. Her
vision was to create a space where moms like her from
various ethnic and cultural backgrounds could cook
together and sell their goods. Through the program,
she gained all of the legal, financial and logistical
knowledge needed to build her business. Next month,
Mom's will be debuting next month at the night market
and Flushing Meadows Park. Just as it is never too
late for adults to start a business or to take their
career in a new direction, we believe it is never too
late for adults to learn how to read, improve their

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writing skills or get a high school equivalency diploma. Our full time professional staff and volunteers facilitate writing groups, technology assistant instruction and ongoing tutoring. Last year, these sessions helped 1,300 adults become readers and writers and helped 500 adults prepare for their high school equivalency exams. But we also know that the joy of learning is now just for the able body and younger adults. That's why we operate a mail a book program for those who are homebound with an annual mail a book circulation of 50,000 people. We have dedicated staff that recommends books in different format from large print to electronic version and mails them to our customers on a regular basis. We offer a wealth of programs and resources that help older adults, population build relationships with people of all ages as well as nurture their creativity and growth. For example, the Library holds an annual Older Adults Day Fair which I will probably attend soon which features free health screenings, live entertainment and information on healthcare benefits and other important topics from partner organizations like Live on New York, the North Shore (LIJ) Long Island Jewish Cancer Services

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and local senior centers. Customers also have access to programs such as intergenerational creative arts program, book discussion groups, live performances and readings, talks and panel discussions, film screenings, drama clubs, chess clubs, arts and crafts our Stay Well Exercise Program which introduces adults over 60, again I will qualify for that to special exercises, relaxation techniques and principals of good nutrition. Computer training courses, we offer a range of classes appropriate for older learners including beginning classes on using computers, the internet, email, Microsoft programs, Google, Facebook and other technologies and social media. Let me take a minute to focus on the Capital part of our life as well. Maintaining our 65 locations and aging infrastructure is a short and long-term challenge for us. We are very lucky in Queens. We have had and continue to have dedicated Council Members who get it. They get it big time as far as the importance of investment in the infrastructure and our Queens delegation has been truly outstanding along with three successive borough Presidents as well who have constantly invested in our infrastructure. Even with them getting it, we

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still have a lot more work to do. The average community library in Queens is over 60 years old. More than 1/3 of our buildings are over 50 years old. They are heavily used and most were not constructed to accommodate the traffic that we experience on a daily basis due to the growth and demand of our services. The Library has identified a Capital Funding need of nearly \$173 million over the next 10 years, \$46 million in Fiscal year 2019 to address the critical infrastructure issues and to modernize all of our facilities and bring them in a state of good repair. Immediate critical infrastructure needs exist in our Astoria, Douglaston, Flushing, Forrest Hills, Queensboro Hills, Ridgewood, Steinway and White Stone Community Libraries. The Mayor and the City Council's Capital Investment in Libraries over the last several years have had a significant and positive impact on the state of our facilities; however, clear that much needs to be done and your continued support is critical. When the Library is forced to make as Linda has indicated so ably and always so well that as far as critical infrastructure around emergency needs, it comes out of our Expense Budget and sometimes not from the Capital side and

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that takes away from critical needed programming. We do not have the luxury of waiting for the Capital Procurement and Construction Process to play itself out. In order to prevent our buildings from being closed to our customers for months on end, the Library finds itself in an unfortunate position where Operating Funds and necessary funds that should be used for our customers using their for Capital Repairs. Additional Operating Funds are needed to maintain the increased amount of services we provide to our customers six days a week and to address the Emergency Capital Repairs to our Libraries. Before I close, I want to draw our attention to an article that was in today's New York Times. It wasn't about Libraries but if you take a look at it, it could be sometime in the very near future about Libraries and the article is about Toys R Us and how Toys R Us is declaring bankruptcy and if you really read that article it takes about both the indebtedness of Toys R Us but also the competition that it faced and the pressure it put on it for now to declare bankruptcy and close basically all of their United States stores. We do not want to be in that position. We need your continued investment and support because we

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have shown and produced on a record basis that the customers need us and as we have said Libraries are for everyone. Thank you for your support and we truly appreciate it.

JIMMY VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much.
Tony.

TONY MARX: Thank you so much and thanks to my colleagues Linda and Dennis always for their eloquence and to all of the Library colleagues who are here, the DC37 Leadership, Val Colon our local president. Thank you Chairman Van Bramer, Council Member Koslowitz and all of the City Council who have been stalwart supporters of the Library. We know that you know how important our public libraries are and we are so grateful to you for that and for this opportunity to get testify. We are here simply to ask you to continue to invest and to invest further in our libraries for all the reasons that my colleagues have made clear. In FY19 the New York Public Library has asked as part of our tri-li-ask is an additional \$7 million. The majority of that will go to strengthening and maintaining and ensuring our six-day service with our great staff and making sure that they continue to be paid what they need to be

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paid and what is fair to pay them, adding to our collections as well as \$1.1 million towards our Research Centers including Schaumburg where I was last evening in Harlem. We thank again the Council for your amazing support. You know, we know how vital library services are to all New Yorkers to making this city great, whether it is from early literacy to English Language Classes, Video Visitation just to name a few which I will highlight quickly this morning. Early Literacy is one where we play a particularly vital role at a moment when the city is investing more in pre-K literacy we are the vital partners in that. The New York Public Library now welcome $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million attendees, so 750,000 slots in our early literacy program for a year, that is up from 200,000 just in FY15, so a massive increase as a partnership to ensure that our city's youth have the opportunities to learn to read, particularly in the poor neighborhoods where so many families don't even have books at home and need to come to us and get our support and our help so that they can help their kids learn how to read. We are proud to have partnered with the City Council's First Readers Initiative, New York Public Library distributed more than 105,000

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early literacy kits. We really are the foundation for literacy in this town and we all know that that is the foundation for opportunity, for skills, for jobs and for democracy. We partner with the Administration for Children's Services as well as the Department of Education Pre-K and 3K for All Initiatives. We provide direct services by going into pre-K classrooms and providing book lists. In fact, I am particularly proud to say that just in the last six months the circulation of material for our youth from our collections is up 27%, that is just in six months. So it is vital that we also have the resources to ensure that we have and grow our collections. We want the kids who come in and do pre-K literacy with us to grab those books on the way so they can take them home and continue that work at home with their parents or the caregivers or their grandparents. Uhm, we don't have the resources to ensure that we have the books that New York's Kids needs. This is, you know, 2018, uhm, this is New York, we cannot have a lack of just the basic materials for our kids to learn, that we need them to learn. Turning to our immigrant community, which of course, this city is almost everybody here comes from

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a background of Immigrants and as Dennis said so many of our current citizens uhm were not born in this country. We are proud of that, that's what makes New York so strong and so special and so many of those from the Immigrant Community want to learn English and look to us for help. In the past five years, we have invested in our English Language classes and increased them by 500%, that is a five-fold increase. We also provide as Dennis and Linda described citizenship classes and now even legal services in the libraries. Uhm, we are the New York Public Library is the largest provider of English Language Instruction after the Public Schools and Cuny in this City. We need to maintain that and we need to do more. We are particularly delighted to just last year, we launched English Language Classes at two Riker's Island Correctional Facilities. We continue to maintain and have to maintain collections in a great variety of languages. I was recently at the Andrew High School talking book and Braille Library in Manhattan which is a federally supported center for Tri-Li and for three states. I met with a blind patron who had immigrated recently from Syria, a country obviously in deep distress. She came to the

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high school library to learn the read Braille and she was using that to now work towards a high school equivalency degree so that she can then find a job and find the opportunity that America, New York promised that Syria has tragically failed to deliver on to put it mildly. Turning then to incarcerated and the formerly incarcerated who deserve our support. We all know that America has a crisis of incarceration. There are far too many of our fellow citizens. We need to make sure that they get support and services so that uhm can return to their families and the communities and find jobs and not return to incarceration. In 2016, in a moving ceremony after years of pushing carts around on Riker's Island, we finally opened our first dedicated library space at the Rosie M. Singer Facility and we will be opening a second dedicated library in the Manhattan Detention Complex this spring. We have been providing, circulating more than 30,000 books and magazines. It is heartwarming to see literacy the library staff carrying bags of books with them every day and guards from the facilities bringing books and contributing them and everyone working on these efforts together. The Video Visitation Program that you have supported

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has enabled us to bring together and keep together
234 families in 22 branches over the past year and we
have just recently expanded that program to two new
Bronx locations. We have to, we have to do better by
these populations. Even the formerly incarcerated
folks come to us for computer training. We have a
set of special resources for them that they publish
in a program called Connections. It is just one of
the symbolisms of this is often for people leaving
Riker's Island, they get off at 125th street and the
very first stop they go to is the 125th Street
Library. Uhm, that's where they can find a computer.
It's where they can find reading material. It is
where they can get information about housing,
information about jobs. We are the first stop for so
many in America and so many in New York who depend
upon us. We also know as my colleagues described, we
need the staff and we need the collections for those
programs and services but we cannot do it if our
facilities are falling apart. Again, this is New
York in 2018 and New Yorkers deserve, particularly in
the poorer neighborhoods where they may not have
other opportunities, facilities that live up to the
standards of this city. Thanks to you and the Mayor

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we are now in the Ten Year Capital Plan, we are on schedule to renovate five historic Carnegie Branches including that Branch on 125th Street which is often a first stop after Riker's Island and for so many in that neighborhood, but we have an ongoing maintenance crisis. We have asked you this year for a combined \$60 million additional Capital Investment. We have work to do, some of it isn't glamorous, mechanical systems and energy conversation, building envelope and preservation work, ADA improvements and IT infrastructure but given that the average age of our libraries is 67 years old, and many of our branches date back more than 100 years, this is work that is absolutely essential. Let me give you a quick examples, St. George Library Center on Staton Island, the roof isn't holding any longer. The paint is peeling off the walls as water comes cascading down. The windows are rotting. Each aspect of this adds to further combinations of difficulties on physical structure. The front steps and the ramp there are crumbling. This just cannot be. In the Bronx, the staff at the Tremont Library are putting pails under leaks of water. They can't spend the time serving the citizens of that location when they are running

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around trying to put pails, garbage cans to collect water leaks. At the Columbus Library in Manhattan, we have an entrance that is inaccessible to those with disabilities. People even have to haul their heavy strollers up to get into the library with their children so that they can learn to read. This simply cannot be. We need your help to upgrade, we need your help to maintain and we need your help to ensure that all of our facilities are not only up to standard but inspiring welcoming spaces as the core civic locations in every neighborhood. Libraries are truly for everyone. They are for our immigrants, they are for our job seekers, they are for children seeking early literacy help. They are what makes New York great. We are so grateful for your support. We are grateful for the opportunity to testify. We have no doubt that City Council and Mayor De Blasio not only have made significant investments in the libraries but will continue to do so. We need more to keep up the momentum at this moment in history. We need the great staff fairly paid, we need the buildings up to standards and inspiring, we need the collections so that we can provide. Those are basics of the Library and they are the basics of what make

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the libraries the heart of this city of opportunity
for all of our citizens now and going forward. Thank
you Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much
to all three of our Library Systems Presidents and
CEOs for your eloquent testimony. I do want to
recognize that we have been joined by another new
member of the Committee, Council Member Francisco
Moya, also of Queens. We are very Queens centric
right way on the stayas (sp?). Never a bad thing. I
also want to say to Council Member Moya if you get a
chance to when you can't sleep at 3 o'clock in the
morning and watch back this when it airs on NYCT,
Dennis Walcott said the nicest things about it. It
is worth going back and watching it. Uhm, he gave
you a huge shout out before, I just want to make sure
that you are aware that.

FRANCISCO MOYA: My mom watches it and
called me and said "Why am I not there?", while you
were speaking so Dennis I have a lot of explaining to
do and thank you.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: It was well
deserved praised. Uhm at one point also in your
presentation Tony I looked at and I saw a lot of

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people smiling in the audience and I was wondering what they were smiling about and it was because this photo came up on the screen, perhaps the most adorable child in the City of New York. Just for showing us this photo and making everyone smile you deserve the \$16 million that you asked for. So I just have a couple of questions I know my colleagues both would, would like to speak as well. So listen, you, you know where I stand. There is no point in debating it. Obviously you do incredible work. I loved the testimony about all of the various ways that you are partnering with other organizations. I just hope that everyone in the world knows that you've got robotics clubs and you've got all of these incredible programs for our immigrant communities and they know that you are so much more than books and materials but in fact you are communities centers and you are the hubs of communities and you are really doing so much work and your staff, the workers do incredible work and they deserve and need to be paid appropriately and so we need to continue to reinvest. So I, myself obviously love libraries and love books and I know your collections have struggled to maintain pace with the usage that you get so uhm,

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just for all three, very quickly where are you at in terms of your Budget for materials, books, other materials, where would you like to be. What's the need for the three systems? Because I'm assuming that with some of the additional money were you secure it this year, you would bolster your collections.

TONY MARX: Very quickly Mr. Chairman, uhm, back in 15, FY15 our Branch Collections Budget so separate from the Research Library was just under \$16 million and that is pretty much where it stays today and that's after years of both the cost of material going up and thank god circulation and therefore demand for material going up. So we are simply not keeping pace. We want to add at least \$1 million from our request to catch on to that and to do better than that, and of course, we also have additional materials that we didn't use to circulate, electronic material, all of those requires additional investment.

LINDA JOHNSON: Brooklyn Public Library uhm is currently spending \$9 million on collections and with the additional increase we would hope to get to 10. I will say that during the years when the

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system was experiencing Budget Cuts, of course the place that we went was to the Materials Collection to save jobs and library hours. We have been building back steadily over time but we still feel that we are not keeping pace with demand or frankly with what our colleagues around the country are doing, so an additional \$1 million would go to the Collections Budget.

DENNIS WALCOTT: So in Queens we are woefully behind uhm currently with spending roughly \$6 million and again that as Linda indicated is a gradual build from when we were in a recession period and but still that is not satisfactory and also part of our Strategic Planning Process we did the Customer and Consumer Surveys and #1 on the hit list was Collections, Collections, Collections and we want more and we want more diversity and we want more e-books and materials as well and so as we get new dollars in we try to put it into collections but this investment that we are asking you for would definitely help us enhance on our collections and our publications and materials.

JIMMY VAN BRAMER: And I'll, I'll just stipulate from my side the Capital Need is clear, uhm

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and you need that funding, that funding is desperately needed. So I won't ask any questions about it because I know how deeply needed that funding is. My last question before I turn to Council Member Koslowitz and Council Member Moya uhm, we talk about staff all the time. Obviously it is greatly important that the staff are paid but I wanted to just ask in terms of your unionized, non-unionized, where are you at? How have those increases over the last... cause you have been doing some hiring over the last several years thankfully, how has that changed if it all? Uhm and I know because I worked at a Library for 11 years that people love working for the Library and so your attention generally is pretty good because once people start to work at your three Library Systems they realize how powerful it is and they love their jobs. So, if, if the three of you really quickly could also talk about the Union versus non-Union staff, your hiring over the last three years and and retention?

DENNIS WALCOTT: So in Queens we've been having and thanks to the Investment on the part of the City Council and Mayor's Office and uhm the

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significant proportion of people that we've hired are on the Union side so 7/1/17 through 3/15/18 we've hired 43 new Union workers out of a total of 61, 7/1/16 through 6/30/17 we hired 61 Union workers and then from 7/1/15 through 6/30/16 we hired additional 167 Union workers and from a base of 197 so as you can see, we have been hiring and really in the communities and the significant portion of those individual represent our Union.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Linda or Tony?

LINDA JOHNSON: Uhm sure, uhm, sorry, so uhm, in FY16 which is the last time we got an increase in Operating Dollars I will add Brooklyn Public Library hired 95 new people all of which were Union. Our current breakdown between Union and non-Union is 849 Union members and 163 non-Union members. Uhm, we have a retention rate of over 90%, sometimes hovering in the 95% range. I don't have the breakdown by category within our staff but it is a place where people like to work and we're thrilled to have such high levels.

TONY MARX: Mr. Chairman, uhm, the New York Public Library today has Unionized staff of about 1500 and a non-Unionized staff of just over 500

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and that's roughly comparable ratios going back for a very long time. Uhm, the last time we got the increase, uhm, some years back, three years back, we, we hired 120 new members of the staff because we know the people who work at the Library are the essential ingredient. All of those were Unionized staff as Linda and I think the same with Dennis, we have a retention rate of some hovering somewhere in the sort of 94% to 95% through natural turnover even though people love staying and working at the Library and we love having them. We have currently 40 Union positions vacant that we are searching for, so but let's be clear. What we applaud, the City Council and the Mayor's raising of the minimum wage, of adding Family Leave Benefits and others uhm, you could do the Math as easily as I can. If the costs go up which we agree they should, because people need to be paid more, uhm and have their rights protected in the ways that you have insured. If the Budget doesn't go up you know it makes it hard for us to maintain all the commitments that you want us to maintain and that we want to maintain.

DENNIS WALCOTT: And if I may add, just one quick point, I mean when you take a look at

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imagine or respective staff, they reflect the
diversity of the city as well and all you need to do
is take a look in the audience and beyond and you see
the core of our City who are on the staff of our
respective Libraries and our goal is to make sure
that we provide them the living opportunities to have
a successful life and so that's why we are requesting
the increase to meet the basics and to have the
people who are the diversity and the community who
are employed at our Libraries.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you and we
will be hearing from DC37, all of our local
presidents in the next panel, right after my
colleagues have an opportunity to weigh in. So I
will ask Council Member Koslowitz to speak.

KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Thank you, I want to
thank all of you for the work that you do for around
New York Public Libraries for the people of our city.
I'm going to be a little nimby (sp?) right now to
Dennis Walcott who has been a fresh, a breath of
fresh air to our system. The Regal Park Library
which we have worked on for many, many years, putting
money into it since the 90s and every time we thought
we were getting close the price of the Library went

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up and thanks to Dennis and the Mayor we finally have
the money there that we could do something with the
Library. Where are we at with this Library?

DENNIS WALCOTT: I have my nimby (sp?)
file here as well. So I am very well prepared with
our nimby (sp?) file. We have a full commitment of
money for Regal Park and so we are in the final
stages of getting details together then to deal with
the release and so the Regal Park is fully committed
and so we are very happy about that and we are
looking at a variety of different designs right now.
We will be sitting down because I imaging like my
colleagues, we sit down with our individual Council
Members and go over all the Libraries in their
respective districts so Regal Park is a part of that
and so we are fully committed.

KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Thank you and thank you
and thanks to you and thanks to the Mayor for making
this a reality. I just wanted to tell all of you
that Libraries are very important to me and during
Budget I will be fighting for the Libraries.

DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
much. Uhm, to the Chair of our Queens Delegation and

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it is great news indeed for all of us to know that Councilwoman Koslowitz will be in our corner fighting for us and congratulations Councilwoman I know how long you have been fighting for that Library to happen, that is a great victory. Uhm, now to hear from the highly praised Council Member Francisco Moya.

FRANCISCO MOYA: Thank you Chairman and Chairman thank you so much for your lifelong fight to improve our Libraries in Queens and throughout the City in helping guide this committee in making sure that we have a voice during this process. Uhm, to Dennis, I really wasn't lying, my mother really does watch the Legislative Channel, she did that all throughout my career in the Assembly and she said to me in Spanish, she said "(SPEAKING SPANISH)", that's in Spanish, saying there is a really elegant man speaking highly of you, where are you? Uhm.

DENNIS WALCOTT: Tell her Gracias. I respect...

FRANCISCO MOYA: I will, I will but I just want to say to you Dennis, thank you for your kind words but more for your dedication and your work for Queens and the Libraries that have really been

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suffering for so long. I grew up in Corona, Corona Library has been my Library for many years. I know, you, you've come to visit, you have seen the struggles but we have also been very proud in the work that you have done to help in the expansion of the surrounding libraries. We see what the beautiful library in Elmhurst that has come up. There is just some fantastic work that is being done but we are now talking about \$25 million in renovations to the Corona Branch, can you provide an update on the renovations and kind of where we are on that?

DENNIS WALCOTT: Sure, so we are looking. Corona is an interesting study in that Corona is just a high demand library as you well know and the number of people who come through their doors is amazing and also as you well know and I imagine the Chair and the Chair of the Queens Delegation knows that we have a house that we have purchased as well, so we have explored a number of designs that incorporate the house that we have purchased on the lot that is somewhat next door to the existing library and how we bridge the two and as you know we are talking to the Borough President and others as far as the funding that goes along with Corona. So Corona is hot on our

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hit parade as far as developing the next steps and we are ready to talk about the commitment of additional money as far as making it work. Uhm, part of what we are looking at is the intersection of the two and so I think the challenge is whether we go up and out or just out across the house and the existing library so we are at the final stages of working on that. Also in your district we have East Elmhurst that is wrapping up as well. And so we are on target as far as completion date with East Elmhurst so that is moving forward and then the other one in your district is Lefrak City and Lefrak City, we just a meeting about Lefrak City and doing total reformation of the Lefrak Library as well and so the next step is we will be placing a call to look for a space as we move forward and Lefrak and talk about alternative space and then deal with the Capital Renovation of Lefrak and shutting that down for a period of time to do the total renovation. So a number of the libraries in your district we are ready to move and I think with Corona in particular, going back to that I think that the demand challenges, the demand on that library and that as you know better than I do how we are basically landlocked there as far as space

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availability and what that means as I think that is
what we are working on right now.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Do you, do you see
a time table for when we would?

DENNIS WALCOTT: Hold on I'm going to
look in the.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: In the audience do
we have a...?

DENNIS WALCOTT: Not yet, not yet.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Okay but let's set
up to meet with you so we can work that that and
then...

DENNIS WALCOTT: That's fine.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: And then go with
that. And uhm, just on your Wi-Fi programs that I
think is a great program, it is program, especially
in communities of, of color where we have limited
access to Wi-Fi, have you found that program to work
and is this something that we can invest more money
in to that program.

DENNIS WALCOTT: So not just work, it has
been an outstanding success and so we have a
relatively new VP of IT who is just outstanding and
he is exploring a variety of different ways to expand

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that but again the challenges as we have all indicated in our respective systems of having more Expense Money which allows us to do those type of programmatic things and not to suck those moneys away into dealing with infrastructure needs as well. So the Wi-Fi program has been an extreme success. We are looking to expand it and build up the bandwidth as far as capacity through all of our different libraries and we have a potential project that we will be announcing shortly that we are doing in joint partnership with someone else to give us additional capacity as well.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: That's great, well thank you Dennis for your dedication to the, to the kids in Queens and the folks that use the libraries. We will be fighting extremely hard and we have our Delegation Chair who will be leading that fight and of course with our Chairman we will do everything possible to make sure that our Libraries are fully funded so that the people of Queens and the great city of New York will have access to having really fully funded libraries throughout the city and thank you for all the great work that you all do.

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DENNIS WALCOTT: And thank you for your
leadership as well, we appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
much. My amazing colleagues and I just want to uhm
let Linda and Tony know that we love them equally.
Even though we are feeling our Queensness right now.
Uhm, and and loving every minute of it. And uhm.

LINDA JOHNSON: In the Bronx.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: There you go. My
father was born in Brooklyn, yeah, there you go. We
love all of you. Uhm, thank you to our three Library
Systems for your testimony, for your passion, for the
service and the work that you do and most importantly
for the people that you serve, we are going to excuse
this panel and welcome the Presidents of our DC37
Locals, John Hyslop, President of Queens Library
Guild, Local 1321, Ron Barber, President of DC37
Local 1482, the Brooklyn Public Library Employees and
Val Calone, President of DC37 Local 1930 Representing
New York Public Library Workers as well and then we
have one last panel of four after that. So Mr.
Paul... Yeah... Alright out Library Local Presidents,
if you would. Have a seat, we are going to begin
this portion of the testimony... Thank you... Thank

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you... and we are running a little late, we have
Department of Cultural Affairs coming in right after
we are going to go a three minute clock. Uhm, and we
are thrilled to have all of you here, all four of you
here, I see Mr. Paul is here as well so I want to
recognize you as well. Uhm, I don't know if you have
determined an order of speaking for the four of you
but I will just say on behalf of the members of the
panel and Francisco Moya I'm sure agrees the DC37 and
the workers of DC37 are incredibly important to the
work of our libraries and to our city. We value
greatly the work of all four locals that are
represented here and most importantly the men and
women of DC37 so with that, whichever order you all
have decided would like to go in. Mr. Barber are you
first? Alright.

RON BARBER: Test, okay, I'm on, so I'm
going to uhm being reading the joint testimony upon
the joint but the joint testimony. All three of the
locals this morning. It was determined, Jimmy Van
Bramer and fellow Committee Members, thank you for
giving us the opportunity to testify before you this
morning. My fellow Presidents will testify this
morning to the Committee of Cultural Affairs,

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herein under three Library System Budget. Val Colon,
President of Local 1930, Leonard Paul, newly
appointed President of Local 274, John Hylop,
President of Local 1321 and I, Ronald Barber,
President at Local 1482 become before you, united in
our request for more Library Funding. This year
requests come from another year of funding stability
and security; however, that funding is still
insufficient of the custodians, librarians, drivers,
ESL, teachers, clerk, IT workers struggle to meet the
ever increasing demands our elected officials and
patrons place on us. In Fiscal Year 2017 and 2018
the City Council and Mayor maintained our Library
Funding allowing us to plan. In Fiscal Year 2019 we
are reassured that Mayor has proposed the same amount
of money as last year. This positive development is
underscore with the one the Unions have repeated that
this year since Fiscal Year 2017. The funding is not
enough. New York City Library Systems are bursting
and our patrons are demanding more from us every day.
I work in Public Library because of the increasing
number of building reopening and additional programs
and services that we provide there is not enough

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staff to maintain the growing demand for safety, cleanliness, and service that the branches in our community provide. There is a great need for more stuff in order to service our community branches such as custodians, special officers in addition to clerical and IT staff. At New York Public Library, inadequate funding has left many branches suffering from staff shortage. Staff shortage have created in some case security issues that need to be addressed. Some branches at times are staffed with two people to open and close. The Bronx Library Center is one location that is understaffed and is not far and over time budget the branch services will have to be cut. The staff at Staton Island, Todt Hill Westerleigh Library invariable must leave the reference desk unstaffed with a sign directing patrons to the circulation desk for help because they do not have enough staff. The hours at the short-staffed Science Industry and Business Library were increased to alleviate some of the strength mid-Manhattan Library Staff were transferred there while mid-Manhattan is closed for renovation. Now, some of those staff members have been removed and the hours stayed the same, exacerbating a short staffing situation even

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more. At the Queens Library there are many examples of why more funds are needed. There are just a few, these are just a few, I'm sorry. Most Library, one of the highest circulating branches in the Nation was newly renovated. The branch added two new floors, expanded Footprint, increased the size of Adult Learning Center and increased hours. The size of the staff remained almost the same as it was before the renovations. Excuse me, Glen Oaks Library expanded, adding more floors and the staff sized remained the same. Hunter Point Library was a brand new location and many floors and a large collection to maintain. Queens Library does not have the extra money to hire more people to staff this brand new building. Our members are contending with all the mandate placed on us since the service large newly renovated or brand new buildings, new programs, more space to clean and maintain, more books, DVDs, newspaper, strong Wi-Fi, laptop, best step scanners, printers, copies, mobile Wi-Fi and more. Our patrons now only appreciate all of this, they demand more. Our members are examples of the Mission of Public Library. They are decided to providing free access to information programs and services. We have proven that the printed word and

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the digital space co-exists and strive. We have proven that our programs and services are vital to our community. We have proven that if a library is renovated or a new one is built the community flocked to us. To meet everyone's demands for more programs, new or larger libraries, more materials, more technologies our elected officials must not only maintain current funding but increase it. Speaking on behalf of the staff who works so hard to make library service a reality, we say please help us maintain and enhance the service we so diligently strive to provide in our communities. With the collaboration of this Mayor, the members of City Council and our New York City Libraries we have done great things. We need your help to maintain the level of service without exhausting our staff. You are agriculturists, expert farmers. You know the libraries are good grounds and when you sow in these fertile ground we provide much fruit for our patrons and staff and the community at large. Thank you.

JIMMY VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much. Well done, Mr. Barber and I gave you extra time so you said the entire full name of my Committee which takes about two minutes just to say the full name of

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my Committee. Thank you so much for representing so well all four of the Locals represented and all of the workers that do such an amazing job and as you know for 11 years, I worked side by side by John at the Queens Library and saw firsthand the work that the Members of DC37 do at all of our Libraries and I agree that you need more and I am going to do everything I can to fight for more as we have had some very good years recently but we still need to finish the work and do more because your members deserve that from your City Governments. So with that I just want to say thank you to all four of you. I don't know if Council Member Moya has anything to add. I think he believes very strongly as I do in the work that all of you do and we deeply appreciate DC37 and all of your Locals. So thank you very much to all four of you. Okay, thank you. And I see the cultural community is gathering in the back like a strong force, a cultural wave coming over us. Uhm, but I do not see Commissioner Finkelpearl right.

KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Let me make sure he knows that we switched rooms, maybe the Commissioner went to the other room.

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CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Alright so we have
a couple of folks from the Public who would like to
testify on libraries. Once we spot the Commissioner
we will hear from the Commissioner and then do Public
but right now since we have some time. Tress
Walker, is Tress Walker here, would you like to come
forward Tress, you were shouted out in Dennis
Walcott's testimony in a big way and now we are going
to have to go to Mom's Kitchen in Jamaica and check
that out. Anna Diaz, is Anna Diaz still here.

DENNIS WALCOTT: Going to be here later.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Okay, great. Joel
Ochoa, did I see Joel, is Joel here? Maybe they are
going to come a little bit later for the public
testimony, Tiffany Johnson as well, Bashir Osmani.
Okay we will hear from them later and we also have?

DENNIS WALCOTT: Folks could you make it
quietly please so people can... Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Is it Ek Williams,
E, K Williams, is EK Williams here. Thank you
LaMeane Isaac would you like to come forward and
Yosinex Lorengo (SP?). Alright so we will hear from
this panel of Library Workers and Activists and
Lovers. We will go to a three minute clock and ask

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everyone to passionate and succinct at the same time
as we await our Commissioner as well. So Ms. Walker
since you got the biggest shout out of the day, tell
us all about your experience at the Queens Library
and Mom's Kitchen.

TRESS WALKER: Good afternoon. It is an
honor for me to be here speaking with you today.
Every journey begins with a single step. Many people
have quoted this. I would like to add my peace.
"Every journey begins with the understanding that
where you are no longer suits you. The journey
begins with the decision that you will no longer stay
in your current situation and you take your first
step."

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Can I just
interrupt for one second? We need your name for the
record.

TRESS WALKER: My name is Tress Walker.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

TRESS WALKER: Should I begin from the
beginning again or just continue?

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Just continue.

TRESS WALKER: My steps led me here
today, to this moment where I have the opportunity to

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share with you while the Queens Central Library is a critical part of the Jamaica Queens Landscape. While the Job and Business Academy is virtually important to its resident and why increased funding is necessary. My journey here began after what could have been considered a life ending accident. On my way to physical therapy, one beautiful morning my phone buzzed as I am locking my door. My brother texted me about a class being offered at the Central Library. As I am reading the information, the tears welled up, my pulse quickened, this was it. This was the missing part of the puzzle. I immediately signed up and the rest is a sweet memory. Jamaica Feasts, Food, Entrepreneurship and Services Training Space under the Job and Business Academy umbrella is vitally important to those who want to start a business and is sometimes overwhelmed by all the paperwork required. The Jamaica Feast Program like many programs at the Queen Library are managed by talented and caring individuals who want to see you success. Staffed by individuals who have the best interest in your success. Mom's Kitchen NYC was fully birthed through the Jamaica Feast Program. This team brings real world knowledge to this amazing

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program. They have very discerning pallets and many programs have been fine tuned through their assistance. Mr. Marco Maldonia can find the tiniest needle and thread it and point me in the right direction. His world knowledge and research skills are undeniable. Ms. Taralel Stanton drives to see what is now the Feast Program move from a thought to a concept to actually changing the lives is a testimony of her commitment to make a difference. Her ideas and insights pointed us in the direction to see her projects in a different light and in depth to a product line. The students are this program are now business partners as we work on building our individual businesses while making a difference in the lives of our children and our family. We also partner with each other when needed as we work to build up our communities. If the Food Industry is a path that you want to explore.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: I know you have one more paragraph to go so go for it.

TRESS WALKER: You need to be in the Jamaica Feast Program. In fact, if you are struggling with life issues, work issues, uncertainty about where you belong the Queen Center Library is a

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source that is sometimes overlooked that can no longer be. Queens Library with an emphasis on the Job and Business Academy is a treasure trough of skilled personnel who need the necessary resources to have a larger reach into the community and make a significant difference in the lives of many. Please help them to help us so we too can help others and in so doing create a legacy we can all be very proud of. Chairman Van Bramer and Members of the Committee, thank you very much for allowing me to testify before you today.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much and congratulations and Francisco Moya and I are going to go on a date to Mom's Kitchen in Jamaica and check out the amazing establishment you've got there. Okay I know Commissioner Finkelpearl has joined us so we are going to hear from him right after we hear from our next two speakers, so, who would like to go first? Flip a coin. There you go.

EK WILLIAMS: First and foremost I would like to thank the Cultural Affairs and Library Committees for giving me the opportunity to testify this afternoon. My name is Ek Williams. I am a Technology Trained Supervisor at the Brooklyn Public

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Library. I have been with the Library for over 12 years. In the past four years I've been working at the New Locks Library in East New York. East New York is a community which has been faced with many adversities, some of them including the addition of numerous homeless shelters, social economic issues that continue to plague individuals and their families. In addition, the neighborhood continues to be burdened by crimes that occurred as a result of the aforementioned issues. In communities like East New York the Library plays a pivotal role in the livelihood of its residents. According to the Social Research Council, East New York, Brooklyn has the second highest rate of youth disconnect, meaning a large number of youth who are not enrolled in school or employed. As a Library Professional I have the opportunity to address this issue when I piloted a New Program called Documentary Photography Bootcamp. My team and I were able to teach new skills, provide a caring and nurturing environment and positivity for youth in East New York. The goal of the program is to provide teams with professional photography skills and serve as a safe and constructive alternative to hanging out on the streets. The program success

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gained national attention just this month when we won the 2018 Innovative Libraries of the Year from Georgia's Gwinnett County Public Library System. Through this Library Based Program we were able to address a big issue which continues to be a problem in East New York. I would like to thank our elected officials for the continued support in our communities. The Generous Digital Inclusion Grant of laptops from Council Member Baron for her for her New Lots, East Flatbush, Cypress Hills and Spring Creek Libraries are greatly appreciated and continue to bridge the gap by providing successful technology education to underserved residents and at a free cost.

LAMEANE ISAAC: Good morning everyone.
Good morning everyone. I would like to thank the Cultural Affairs Committee and the Library Committee for the opportunity to testify. My name is LaMeane Isaac and I am the Branch Manager for the Macon Library in Bedford, Stuyvesant and Brooklyn. I am also a resident of Brownsville which is a few steps away from the branch where I work because I live at the tail end of Brownsville. Nearly 18 years ago, I was a recent college graduate who was unemployed. My job search led me to my local public library, the

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same library I used as a child, as a young adult and worked for as a youth part-time at the school. The branch librarian there in his effort to help me find work suggested I apply to work for the library and I did and I think you can figure out how that turned out. The Library has had a tremendous impact on my life just as it has a tremendous impact on the lives of its many issues. Committee I thank you for your support of libraries which make our ability to help users possible. With your support Macon Library is able to open its doors 53 hours a week, 7 days a week but that is not the case with all libraries. During that time, Macon Library is able to offer a variety of programs to meet the needs of its diverse patronage, every step of their lives. For example, we have Library Lanes for older adults. We have five weekly programs for children birth to five years old. We have kid and teen tech time and legal robotics. We offer career and resume help and computer classes. We are also having an Artisan Residency Program to support our local artists. We have Genealogy Workshops and Independent Writing Workshops. A variety of programs. I can go on but I won't. We were also able to collaborate with many community

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partners because of our hours of service and
available. For example, Divas for Social Justice
they provide an after school program for middle
school problems that focus on steam or Shop Healthy
Brooklyn which have brought together several
organizations to conduct workshops for families to
teach them how to eat well and advocate for healthy
foods in their communities. One NAMI, stands for the
National Alliance for the Mental Ill, we are
conducting programs to see what that community needs
like support groups for people who care for people
with mental illness and/or people who are living with
mental illness. The Library is not only a place for
individuals and groups to come, for programs and
children to come for after school but is also a place
for New York City's most vulnerable, the homeless,
the older adults. They come to the Library for a
cool place in the summer and a warm place in the
winter. Are fortunate at Macon to have 53 public
service hours and we are able to do so much. More
needs to be done. With your continued support and
increased support, the Library will be able to
increase its reach and help the patrons that they
serve and continue to be a place of life-long

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learning, opportunity and discovery. Thank you
Committee for your time and consideration, I
appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you so much,
great job and that is really impressive that all of
that is happening at the Macon Branch Library. I am
sure the Commissioner of Cultural Affairs is thrilled
that you have Artisan Residents and Film makers and
all sort of things and Divas for Social Justice
sounds like a really fierce group of woman, no?

LAMEANE ISAAC: It is indeed.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: We are all going to
have to go out there and meet them. Uhm and of
course you have STEAM which includes the A in STEM,
right so?

LAMEANE ISAAC: Yes.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you so very
much to all of you for being here for the work that
you do and the passion that you have for libraries
which obviously I old as well. So with that, your
panel is excused. Thank you so much for coming to
City Hall today and if the Commissioner for the
Department of Cultural Affairs is ready, we will go
right into the Cultural Affairs portion of this

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hearing. We are going to have more public testimony at around 1 o'clock on both libraries and culture but first we will hear from our Commissioner in the Cultural Affairs Portion of the Culture Affairs Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Committee. Thank you to all the Library supporters who are leaving and the cultural community that is arriving. So we are going to now shift gears and hear from our Commissioner but before we hear his testimony you do have to be sworn in.

LEGAL COUNSEL: Mr. Commissioner if you will please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: Yes I do.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: So Commissioner thank you for joining us, we are thrilled to have Council Member Francisco Moya from Queens also joining. Obviously other Council Members will be coming and going and everyone in the audience who cares about Culture and the Arts in the City of New York knows how hard I have fought with you over the last several years. Uhm, we have had some strong

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gains and some increases in funding that has been desperately needed and we have seen continued support of the Capital Program, a robust Capital Program for our Cultural Organizations and Institutions but it is the increase in Expense Funding that has helped so many, particularly smaller cultural organizations receive much needed infusions towards their budgets. Now it is important to note that the City Council through the great work of the City Council over the last several years has dramatically increased City Council, Cultural Initiatives. The Cultural After School Adventure Program has almost tripled in the last four years alone. We created the Cultural Immigrant Initiative which is now over \$5 million. We created the SUCASA Cultural Initiative bringing artists to senior centers, all of that with other increases as well where the City Council's Cultural Initiatives are at record levels of funding and then we went even further and increased the Operating Support for the Department of Cultural Affairs, added funding for the Cultural Development Fund and have done terrific things towards implementing the cultural plan that I am proud to work with Council Member Levin to support. However, all of the

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increases that are not City Council Cultural Initiatives were not base lined so \$15 million that was increased last year has not been base lined by the Mayor and therefore we are technically looking at a cut of \$15 million right now unless that funding were restored. It is absolutely imperative that the Mayor base line those \$15 million and allow us to then push for even more funding but those gains should not be temporary. Those gains should not simply be reflected in our Budgets in good times when we have the ability but instead they should be permanent markers in terms of how we regard the importance of this funding. So, I am anxious to hear the Commissioner's testimony talking about that effort and obviously we will hear questions after his testimony but welcome Commissioner Finkelpearl and if you would commence your testimony.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: Thank you and let me just say before my testimony, I love libraries, my mother was a librarian and both of her parents are librarians so after Cultural Affairs my heart is with those and it was great, like you said to hear that there is a lot of Artisan residency, etc. going on with libraries, just fantastic. So

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that was the tail end of that. Okay. My testimony,
good afternoon Chair Van Bramer and members of the
committee. I am Cultural Affairs Commissioner, Tom
Finkelpearl here today to testify in regards to the
Mayor's Fiscal 2018 Preliminary Budget Proposal for
the Department of Cultural Affairs. I am joined
today by a number of my staff from the agency. First
I will review the numbers, the Agency Baseline
Expense Budget for 2019 and the Preliminary Budget
Proposal is \$142.1 million. This includes 28.5
million for the Cultural Development Fund, \$106.7
million for the Cultural Institution Group and \$6.9
million for Agency Operations and Other Expenses.
This is the Preliminary Budget Proposal. These
figures do not include any initiatives or other one
time additions typically added at Budgeted Option.
For the current Fiscal Year, our Budget is \$186.4
million. This is DCLA's largest every allocation.
This remarkable investment in Cultural Life of our
Communities is thanks to our strong partnership with
the City Council but by, led by the speaker and Chair
Van Bramer. It also reflects a real commitment to
the goals of Create NYC. I will discuss these in
more detail later in my testimony. I would also like

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to highlight that my Agency's Operating Expenses represent just 3.5% of our overall Budget. This means that 96.5% of funds flow directly to the Cultural Organizations in neighborhoods that make the city a cultural powerhouse. Applications for the Fiscal Year 2019 Cultural Development Fund were due last month. The panel review process starts next week and we will run through June. As always, we appreciate the Council's consistent support and involvement in this important process. For the current year we are providing more than \$40 million to more than 900 cultural groups across the five boroughs. Next to our partnership with the City Council this is the largest ever CDF allocation. Turning to Capital the DCLA's four year Capital Budget currently allocates \$933.84 million to projects for 250 cultural groups city wide. These projects are essential to the cultural organizations and audiences in all five boroughs insuring access to the best and most efficient cultural facilities and equipment. If you are entered the New York Botanical Gardens that has recently opened East Gate or climbed about the gloriously restored Tall Ship Wavertree at the South Street Seaport Museum you've encountered

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City Funded DCLA Capital Projects. Some current highlights from our portfolio include replacing outdated HVAC boiler systems and fire safety systems at the Dance Theatre of Harlem, renovating a new administrative facility for the Louis Armstrong House and Museum in Queens, upgrading the South Wing Atrium at the Bronx Museum including new energy efficient windows, HVAC upgrades and enhancement allowing for all, for improving access and multi-use programming year-round, improving the aquarium at the Staton Island Zoo resulting in both better visitor experience and greater energy efficiency and phase 3 of Brooklyn Botanic Garden South Gate Redevelopment Project which will enhance and guide sustainable operations and improved connections to its surrounding neighborhoods. As you know Create NYC has influenced DCLAs priorities, programs and budget this year. There was a Cultural Plan Oversight Hearing held by this committee in September of 2017. Here is an update on a few recent announcements and markers of progress towards the goals for this far reaching program. In January we announced the winners of the Mayor's Grant for Cultural Impact which provides \$500,000 dollars for seven partnerships

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between city agencies and cultural organizations to fund programs benefiting underserved and vulnerable New Yorkers. These programs respond to create NYC recommendations to better intergrade culture into the City Services. They include partnerships between Artist New York and the New York City Department of Planning to enliven Success Garden, an underutilized community garden in East New York and expanding the partnership between the Carnegie Hall and the Department of Probation. To bring free verse programs and apprenticeship project to neighborhood opportunity networks, that is Neon Centers in Northern Staton Island and Jamaica Queens. DCLA launched public Artisan Residents or PAIR in 2015 which enable artists to work at city agencies where they will work alongside staff and constituents. Create NYC called for more such collaborations so last month we announced New Artist Residencies for four city agencies, the Department of Probation, the Department of Corrections, NYC Commission on Human Rights and the Mayor's Office to combat domestic violence. We are excited to work alongside these four artists and agencies to bring creative practice to help solve from the New York City's most difficult

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and pressing issues. Last month we kicked off Building Community Capacity Program in three new neighborhoods, Morrisania in the Bronx, Far Rockaway in Queens and Bushwick in Brooklyn. We have also started related effort in East Harlem building on the Arts and Culture Chapter of the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan. As I have testified on before in the past, this program provides support to organizations in low-income communities that are engaged in broader planning and development efforts. Through funding and technical assistance, the ECC helps to ensure that local cultural groups and artists are represented as neighborhoods plan their futures. Their previous cohort included East New York, Mount Haven and Jamaica, Jamaica and Endwood. They concluded the run of their two-year program in January. Affordable Real Estate for Artists or AREA, Mayor De Blasio first announced the city's commitment to create 500 affordable artists workspace in his 2015 State of the City Address. Create NYC reinforced the importance of cultivating affordable workspace for artists to maintain NYC's creative vitality. Last month, DCLA and the New York City Economic Development Corporation launched an effort

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to identify new non-profit partners that are
interested in developing or operating affordable
artist workspace in city led development projects.
We also released a survey to proudly assess the
demand for artist workspace citywide. If you want to
learn more about or promote these opportunities among
your constituents, I am happy to connect you with my
appropriate stock members. During the cultural plan,
public engagement we started the Create NYC Officer
Hours with the Commissioner. This series provides an
opportunity for us to listen to residents about what
matters to them in an open audience led format.
Today we have had engaging conversations on topics
including DIY Artist Space, Arts and Disability,
Immigrant Artists and much more. These events have
shaped our understanding of so many critical issues
facing residents and cultural community in
particular. We have also sparked new collaborations
among participants. We promised to continue hosting
these events after the plan was released. The next
one will take place on March 26 at the Whitney Museum
where I will be hosting a conversation about sexual
harassment in the cultural community. Colleagues
from the Mayor's office to combat domestic violence

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and the Commission on Human Rights will join us for this important conversation. More information is available on the DCLA Facebook page. Thanks in particular to our partnership with the Council, Create NYC provided a big boost in funding to individual artists and small organizations in low income communities. Our largest ever CDF allocation included \$6.5 million to support cultural plan objectives including as the Chair mentioned \$4 million boost from the City Council to CDF funding with greater increase allocated to smaller organizations, \$1.5 from the Mayor to support organizations in neighborhoods identified by the Social Impact for the Arts Project and another \$1 million from Council for Individual Artists provided through the local arts councils. We believe that culture is essential to healthy communities and we are so proud and grateful for this increased funding. The Cultural Plan contains over 90 recommendations including eight immediate actions. Of the eight I am glad to say that we have achieved substantial progress on all of them from moving ahead with creating new position in our agency dedicated to promoting greater energy efficiency and Cultural

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Institutions to establishing a Cultural Cabinet of
City Agencies to coordinate our drive, to drive
forward cultural efforts across multiple portfolios.
Another long term commitment identified in Create NYC
and reinforced by the Mayor itself at the release of
the Cultural Plan in July is DCLAs effort to promote
diversity, equity and inclusion in cultural
workforce. Prior to the release of the plan, we
directed millions of dollars towards promoting equity
and diversity in hiring. This included support for
the Cueni Cultural Core which provides paid
internships at cultural institutions for Cueni
students and over \$2 million to the Theatre
Subdistrict Council to fund programs aimed at
diversifying theatre groups. Theatres of Discipline
in our 2016 survey is found to have particularly
touch challenges with regard to diversity on their
staff so we've been excited to see TSC Programs
unfold and hope to report some of the outcomes in the
near future. With the release of the plan, we also
committed to building an emphasis on diversity in our
agencies funding at every level. To this end, the
Cultural Development Fund Applications included new
questions this year about each applicants efforts to

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hire diverse staff and reach diverse audiences. The Cultural Institution Group given their greater share of the funding are being required to produce full diversity plans, set benchmarks, and increase accountability. These will be due next Fiscal year. In the meantime, we have been working with them closely to figure out how to produce plans that translate to concrete improvements that are cultivating more inclusive cultural sector. Another commitment in the Cultural Plan was to look carefully at how we could support engagement and inclusion of people with disabilities in the arts communities as artists, cultural workers and audience members. To this end, we have created a new position at the Agency, Disability Inclusion Associate. We are also planning an announcement about disability focused funding in the near future. There is an amazing innovative work being done by people in the disability community city-wide and we want to be part of making this more visible, better funded and more essential to the ongoing conversation about diversity, equity and inclusion in New York City. This year, we have also implemented far reaching legislation passed by the City Council and signed by

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the Mayor, one piece of legislation pertaining to the Percent for Art Program, adjusted funding formulas that haven't been updated since Mayor Koch signed them into law in 1992. Thanks to the leadership of Chair Van Bramer and Majority Leader Cumbo, this law went in to effect last month, modernizing the formula and providing more funding for individual Public Art Commissions. As the Mayor said when he signed the Legislation the Improvement of the Percent for Art Program strengthens the city's ability to invest in Public Works of Art and local artists who created it. As of today, there are already 15% projects in the pipeline that will benefit from the new Legislation and the first artist selection panels will take place later this year. In January, Mayor De Blasio released the final report of the Mayoral Commission on City Arts, Monuments and Markers. As you know, I co-Chair this Commission along side Darren Walker, President of the Ford Foundation. The Commission was charged with developing recommendation on how the city should address monuments and markers on city property that are a subject of significant public debate. While similar issues have long been relevant in New York the events connected to monuments in

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other cities place new emphasis on ensuring that our public ground is inclusive and welcoming to all. The Commission was comprised of members with expertise in History, Art and Antiquities, Public Art and Public Space, Preservation and Diversity Inclusion. A small number of city agencies with relevant roles and skills provided additional technical and policy expertise. During the public engagement process last fall, New Yorkers spoke up and provided FYIs. Newly 200 offered verbal testimony and on-line survey received more than 3,000 responses. Broadly speaking the Commission laid off process for evaluating city-owned monuments and markers on city property that are subject of significant public debate. The Commission also provided recommendations on four monuments in particular. The Mayor largely embraced the Commissions recommendations for these four monuments. In general, the Commission emphasized additive measures and public dialog. This includes commissioning new permanent artwork honoring histories of people not currently represented in public property starting with indigenous peoples supported by \$10 million in DCLA Capital Funding. The Mayor also committed to relocate the statue of J.

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Marion Sims from its current location at the edge of Central Park to Greenwood Cemetery where Sims is buried. In addition, the city will take steps to inform the public of the origin of the statue and the historical context. The input from members of the committee, the Broader Council and the general public continue to inform our approach to cultivating public space that are welcome to all New Yorkers and representative of the rich histories of the city and the city's residence. Almost there, no review of the activities of the Department of Cultural Affair would be complete without a nod to one of our most popular programs, Materials for the Arts which provided a fitting location for the lease of the Create NYC plan in Chair Van Bramer's District last July. This year we are celebrating 40 years of Materials for the Arts that is #mftaturns40. In each of the last two years we have pushed very close to the \$10 million and the value of materials donated to this Creative Re-Use Program. We are on our way to reaching this milestone during this Fiscal Year. Along with our partners at the Department of Sanitation, the Department of Education, we are providing free materials to 100s of organizations in public schools

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creating great educational opportunities and writing
tons of useful material from our landfields. We
appreciate the opportunity to testify last month at
your hearing on the Role of Cultural Organizations in
the Current Political Climate. We are proud to
support the Tranformity for what our Cultural
Community is doing and we thank you for your
leadership in these issues. I am happy to answer
questions you may have.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
much, Commissioner Finkelpearl, you said almost there
as if the Majority Leader and I didn't want to hear
your testimony anymore but I think we both could have
sat here for hours and listened to a lot more, so.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: Thank you
very much.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: So uhm, no need to
rush through your uhm testimony, it is all really
important stuff and I know that we both enjoy always
hearing from Commissioner Finkelpearl.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: A few things that I
have, uhm, so I mentioned in my, my opening the
failure to baseline the increases that we have seen,

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the \$15 million is really what I am talking about because we worked together uhm, very closely to see those gains and then we worked together very closely in terms of which pieces you would pick up and which pieces we would pick up, uhm but all of it is incredibly important and if we are going to do justice to the Cultural Plan that we worked so hard on and we all talked so much about, not simply being a dusty plan that goes on the shelf and but instead actually effectuating the change that we all know is needed and the \$15 million is really for me, that manifestation of the plan actually changing our Cultural Scene and Community. So talk to me about the importance of that \$15 million in particular and, and what would happen if we did not see that funding restored.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: So look, I broadly agree with a lot of what you are saying, uhm but I want to just, and I hope you don't think I am pushing back but I do want to say that there is a lot of stuff going on with the Cultural Plan that is not within that \$15 million. I will just say that it is Diversity Planning, the energy, the nightlife offices, a lot of great stuff that came out of the

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plan that has actually happened. New laws have been passed, night life office, I look forward to the woman who is going to run that next week. Uhm, so uhm, every Commissioner sits here with the Oversight Committee and we obviously have goals for our agency, we work closely with our partners at OMB to create the best, you know, Budget for the City and this you know, preliminary, we are sitting in a very similar position that we were sitting last year at preliminary looking forward to the Budget's outcome. I obviously said in my testimony that the Budget outcome last year was, was great. That is the biggest Budget in the history of this agency, therefore, the biggest Budget in any city in America because we have the largest Cultural Budget, so I would repeat I guess what I have said in past testimony which is that I look forward to working with you. I understand also that there will be push from the Cultural Community. This is not surprising to baseline the money and I look forward to working with you on the Budget as it unfolds.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: I appreciate that.

So you get to push back a little bit and I get to push back a little bit too. Because in the within

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the \$10 million that the Mayor allocated virtually every dollar in those \$10 million was in fact allocated toward very specific initiatives that came out of the Cultural Plan and so I reiterate that it is imperative that we once again see those \$15 million in the final Adopted Budget but we don't even have to get there. The Mayor has that ability to baseline that funding between right now and the release of the Executive Budget and that should be done and then we can also seek the increases that we all agree are necessary to get us to where we are at. Because I am very pleased that funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs is at an all-time record high. We worked very hard together to make sure that we could say that and that you could put that in your testimony and say it today. Uhm, I am also very proud that the Cultural Development Fund is at a record level. Again the City Council putting in an additional \$4 million last year to make that possible but you are the Mayor's Commissioner at the Department of Cultural Affairs and it is imperative that the Mayor understand how important this is to you and to the community and to this Council and baseline this funding once and for all because we

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cannot risk it year after year after year, allow our economy to get into one of those downward phases which are inevitable as the ebb and flow of the Economy happens and we all know sitting here today that that \$15 million would be among the first that people would propose to take away from our community and so now is the moment for it to be protected and preserved and enhanced. And I see some happy fingers going up.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: You see that in the room.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Uhm, so I think it is, you know, of course a little bit ironic that I used to be the Chair of the Cultural Institution Group where John Calvelli is going to testify, I am sure, supporting that. Uhm and this sort of definition of what a cut is? So I am sitting now where Kate Levin was when I was sitting where John Calvelli. In those days, we were looking at cuts to the Cultural Budget that were quite significant which added up to a big \$65 million gap so the first four years ago I, I reiterate the history here, uhm, there was a baseline, a big baseline increase, the biggest in the history of agency as I understand to baseline

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that money so then when we have successfully been able to add the money then it is defined as a cut if it is not added again. So it's, that's the position I am sitting in. I understand what you are saying, I look forward to working with you, I appreciate the collaborative work that we have all done together on behalf of this and we are going to work together in the coming months. So I understand your situation, but it would be good to hear you at least say that base-lining this funding is better than not base-lining this funding. Increasing funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs is not better than not increasing the Budget for the Department of Cultural Affairs and that all of the organizations, the nearly 1,000 that rely on this funding and then all of the groups that received additional funding or additional grants as a result that the \$10 million that the Mayor was put in that was really specifically geared towards making sure that the Cultural Plan is a living, breathing document, I think it would, it would be good to know that you are in there fighting with your Deputy Mayor and I don't mean fighting against them but fighting with them to, to make sure that we are getting increases that we need.

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COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: I can say with great confidence that the money was well spent, that the \$15 million was extremely good thing for the Cultural Community and for the Life of New York City. I can say that every Commissioner that comes up here, has a role in the Budget and that the role of working with our friends at OMB, some of whom are here. Uhm to create the best Budget for the people of New York City, it has to be a balanced Budget so I can say that I am an advocate for its culture and that I am proud of the Budget that we have been able to collaboratively create and proud of that I can say.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Can we, can we agree that it would be a very bad thing if this lack of base-lining lead to a \$15 million cut to the Department of Cultural Affairs Budget.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: I mean I think what I can say as Commissioner is that adding that money has been great thing for the Cultural Life of New York City. You know, I can't get up here and make a comment that says anything that is clear about base-lining that money because that is part of the Budget process, I think we all know that Budget process is what it is. I am proud of the money that

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you and I and other advocates and people in this room have added to the Budget in the last years. When I say you and I, when I say I, I mean the Mayor, right, that's who added the money, not Tom Finkelpearl, let's be clear about that. Uhm so I mean I think that is what I'm, what I can say and I think you understand the limitations on what I can say are I am proud of the Budgets that have been created, I am 100% certain it has been good for New York City to spend that money and I look forward to the Budget process.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: And I look forward to the Mayor base-lining this funding for.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: I understand that.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: The Cultural Community and we just got to get of this, this, uhm, annual fight and we've got to affirmatively assert that funding for Culture and the Arts is critical. It is not a luxury it is not fluff. It is absolutely essential and if a Budget is a reflection of our values then we've got to put our money where our mouths are in terms of the value that we place on Culture and the Arts. Uhm, I wanted to ask a

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specific question about the Percent for Art Program and the, the works that you are talking about that are in the pipeline that will benefit from the increase. How, how are you breaking those out by borough, those projects in particular because obviously you would not be shocked to learn that I would be particularly interested in knowing that all of the boroughs are receiving an equal amount of attention when it comes to the absolute need for public art.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: Uhm, so actually I don't have the borough breakdown but just to be clear the law, remember when the law was passed there was a year from that date was when the numbers were going to go up so that just happened last week so all subsequent Percent for Art are based on the new allocation which is again much more then, more than twice as much money. So the way the Percent for Art Program works is not that we seek out you know, let's do a project in Queens and let's do a project in the Bronx. We sit down with the agencies and we find out where there are Capital Projects that are, that are eligible for Percent for Art. We look at the most publically accessible so I can get back to

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you with Kendall Henry and our, my Percent for Art
Director and try to figure out exactly or not try to,
we can tell you where those works are being done.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: I hear what you are
saying but it's pretty obvious that Percent for Art
Eligible Projects are happening all over the city.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: They are,
yep. Yep.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: And in every
borough and therefore you do have some ability to
determine that there is equity and that you aren't
just putting them all in one neighborhood.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: No, no and
I.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Or one borough and
so there is some discretion here when it comes to all
the projects because just in my district alone I
could point you to numerous projects that are Percent
for Art eligible and of course that is probably for
just about every district in the city.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: Yeah, so I
mean there definitely is an effort to do city-wide
and it has been through, I believe the Percent for
Art really is a city-wide project. It is in all

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boroughs but again I can get back to you and say
which ones are at this point going forward and we can
look at that list and see if, how it stands.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: I would appreciate
that a great deal. Maybe that is a good topic for
another hearing of this committee going forward. So
Cheers for the Arts, obviously is a city-wide program
but because it is based in my district we are
absolutely thrilled with it and the \$10 million
marketing materials is that also a record, and...

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: So we've
had, we've approached \$10 million in the last two
years, we are hoping to get to that threshold this
year, that would be a record. The last two years
have been the highest ever, right around \$9.5 million
of materials. We also measured in tons and they have
been the highest so we are, it has been improving its
efficient and reach and amount of money saved, so we
are hoping for a record. The last two years have
been highest we have ever had. I can show you those
stats also.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Right.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: I can
share them with you.

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CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Yeah, that would be terrified, and, and turning to Capital, with respect to our Cultural Institutions and Organizations, uhm, I think you completely agree with, with me, that when we make those investments we are really investing in the City of New York and the future of the City of New York and it's absolutely essential that we continue to increase the Capital Program for the Department and for all of these amazing projects that are going all over the City of New York, increasing our footprint is so incredibly important so uhm, talk to me about the Capital Budget and where we are at now and where we need to be?

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: So, the, the last year or this Fiscal Year's Capital Budget for the Department of Cultural Affairs was about \$175 million, that included a very robust partnership with the Council and we are looking forward to that. We are hoping for that really great partnership going forward. We are looking at the statistics and the \$175 million mark is a very robust Capital Budget, adjusted for inflation that is about where uhm it was during the last administration. Uhm, the last couple of years of Bloomberg were extremely high but the

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average years. So we don't have a number yet and you don't have a number yet on Capital but we are hoping uhm that our investment has been very consistent from the City side of \$60 or \$70 million a year coming from the Administration in the terms of Capital, similar coming from the Council, last year was extremely good year, the borough Presidents threw in maybe \$20 million. I can get the st, st, st, exact statistics to you but it has been a very robust set of investments. We have the Capital Applications are just coming in. There is a lot to look at. We are beginning to look at that, there is a lot of big requests coming from our brothers and sisters in the audience here today. Uhm, so look it has been very robust. I'm, I'm glad you brought it up. It's about at least half of what we do as Capital in terms of funding and we are looking forward to another robust year this year.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Yes, who here would like more Capital Funding. Yeah, I think that's and in terms of actually being able to spend the money and get those projects built in timely and efficient ways, obviously there is a lot of concern about the Department of Design and Construction and various

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issues that some organizations and institutions face,
how, talk to us a little bit about all of the Capital
Program and there is a lot in there, hundreds of
millions of dollars being spent in a way and those
projects being built in a way that are efficient for
the taxpayers.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: Uhm, so
first of all in the way that we spend our Capital
money, a lot of the larger institutions do either
what is called a Funding Agreement through the
Economic Development Corporation or a Cultural
Capital Grant, thank you very much, CCG through DDC.
So a lot of the money is actually managed by the
Cultural Institutions usually that own Capital
Projects and that is do only really for the bigger
institutions where there is a lot of private
fundraising so I think that is a very efficient use.
That is something uhm that we do a lot of. We have
been working very closely with the Council to look at
efficiencies, to sit down with some very lengthy
meetings to talk about how the money is spent.
Obviously, we are not the Capital Agency, we are the
Funding Agency but there are some experiments that
have to do with something called pre-scoping which is

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to work especially with small Cultural Institutions,
one of the problems has been that scoping in other
words to try and figure out how much money you need
to do the Capital Project that you need to do is very
hard for small cultural institutions to get to the
finish line with a Budget that is realistic to
present to us and to the Council to ask for funding.
Right, so we have all seen this. They, you are not
quite sure, because this is not a small cultural
institution, even including something like the Queens
Museum didn't have a Capital Division it had some
people who worked on the Capital Projects. So we
have been working on some experiments like that,
working with pre-scoping with DDC, you know,
obviously this is something we would like to get done
more quickly, so we are working very much on that but
we are not the Capital Agency.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Right, uhm, so the
commitment rate, is 27.2%, uhm, now there are other
agencies that are even significantly lower than that
but there are significant agencies that are
significantly higher than that, so what is the plan
to increase your commitment rate, because I also
serve on the Transportation Committee and

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Commissioner Trottenberg has come before the
Committee in past years and I commemorate was for
that agency was significantly lower. Commissioner
Trottenberg has been very successful in getting that
commitment rate up at the DOT and she talked about it
just a couple of weeks ago here, right in your very
same spot. So, for your department and for this
community what is the plan to get?

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: So there
base proposal is on the table, not necessarily been
accepted yet, but I'll just mention to you and I
already mentioned the pre-scoping so we believe that
before, if enough research is done that you really,
that the organization has the right exact idea of how
to create the scope at the beginning of the process,
these are for the smaller organizations working with
DDC that that is going to make it much more efficient
so by the time you actually get the money in hand you
understand the Budget, understand the scope and then
the other, we've had slowdowns in relationship to
Equipment Purchases so there is a proposal on the
table, again not, it's under discussion, but has been
openly discussed with the Council, I'm not breaking
any confidentiality rules to do alternate year

equipment purchase so that to say every equipment purchase needs to be completed within a certain period of time, it creates a beginning, a middle and an end. You start over every two years. You only apply every two years. Again, it hasn't been approved. We think that is something, we again have been working with our friends at OMB about that kind of procurement which we think, you know, there is a lot of what we do is equipment purchases and those things have been taking longer than they should, so those are two proposals on the table, we are absolutely actively pursuing it. Uhm, this is something that has been in high priority for the administration.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Well I may come back and ask some more questions, uhm, but I want wrap up my statement by saying once again Commissioner I am enormously proud of the work that we have done together and to find so many instances in your testimony where you talk about being at record levels of funding, you and I both know more than just about anyone else in the city just how hard we have had to work to be able to say those things. Uhm, it shouldn't have to be that hard but it

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sometimes is when it comes to uhm, Culture and the Arts but we have been able to do it and we need to do more and we should see even more increases for this community and then we need base-lining. We absolutely need to have this funding base-lined and this community deserves it and we can't leave the community vulnerable to those who have a less, a lesser appreciation for this community when times get tough in the City of New York.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: And I can say on the record that I appreciate your advocacy and support.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you I am determined and very, very dogged when it comes to the things that I care about and we just saw our Library Systems talk about their base-lining and their increases and I fight equally hard for both of the things that I care about most in the world which are Libraries and the Cultural Community, so it's, I look forward to the fight again this year, Commissioner Finkelpearl with you and now I believe Majority Leader Cumbo has some questions.

MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: Thank you Chair Van Bramer, thank you Commissioner Finkelpearl

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for being here. I wanted to start off with questions about resources and money out the door and the time frame in which organizations receive funding. So there were a lot of challenges with CASA Funding, SUCASA as well as the Cultural Immigration Fund and organizations receiving those resources, uhm, throughout the years that has always been an issue but it was particularly an issue last year when many organizations had to front a great deal of money before they got reimbursed. I want this to be the year that it all changes, I want this to be a revolutionary year where people refer back to 2018 and say that's when they fixed it. What are we going to do this year to make sure that organizations get the funding in a timely fashion because not in theory, in reality these are suppose to be yearlong programs so what happens with programs like CASA and others is that the money comes in late, the organizations then start the programs late, the students have already selected afterschool programs and then enrollment in these programs is typically very low because we never got a chance to get the resources out the door in a fashion that would allow it. What are we going to do differently?

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COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: So first
of all I will say there is some good news. Which is
the money actually for CASA, Immigrant Initiative,
SUCASA, did go out quicker this year, significantly,
we had a hearing on that last year. I said we will
work together, we are going to do everything we can,
promised to get it out and we did get it out sooner.
Last year was I think the high watermark on lateness
and it was very difficult to get those Council
Initiative money out the door. This year, with
SUCASA was delayed for a variety of reasons. Look,
the thing we would love to do and to work together
with y'all on this committee to work together with
the new speaker, to get designations right up front
as much as we can at adoption. If we could get the
designations from the Council early enough we will
work like crazy to get the money out of the door as
quickly as possible. Again, the results were much,
much better this year. I remember last year in
December, things were, very, very stalled. This year
much of that money, much of the designations were
completed and things were going on ea... much
earlier. So you know from our side, we are hoping
and praying that we can get to the point, which we

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really did make a lot of progress this year. I don't know if the groups feel it, but it really was. We have the statistics to back it up saying it was much better this year than last year but let's make it even better next year, create a system that gets all the designations done in a very timely manner. We would love to have a very hard deadline, working together with Council Finance of you know the end of the summer for all of the designations. We will work together with y'all to make that happen.

MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: I hear you, I don't see why when we actually vote on the Budget why those allocations can't be included in the Budget at that time and when we vote those organizations are already part of the decision making process so that July 1 we are already working towards having that money going to the hands of the organizations.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: Well that would be a dream come true. I will say that there are plenty of Council Members who do make those designations right at the very beginning of the Fiscal Year.

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MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: And they make designations for tons of things in other areas, street cleanup, Parks Initiatives, all of these different types of programming those decisions are made. We have to buckle down and make sure that those decisions are made at adoption.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: To be fair, many Council Member do initially make those designations at adoption. We are always working to have more Council Members make those designations at adoption and as soon as possible. I will also say that the totality of the issue is not simply about member designation and there is a piece of that the Department of Cultural Affairs owns as well, so your point is very well taken but uhm, we, we have had many Council Members designate at adoption but, but some still choose to take a little more time to get that done but even when they are all done or virtually all done I think there is some other issues at the, at the other end to be fair.

MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: Thank you. I also want to move into security. So we are living in another time, uhm, going into a Cultural Institution, particularly a lot our Performing Arts

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Venues, particularly on the larger scale are experiencing greater needs for security. What is DCLAs plan around security for our Cultural Institutions, uhm, requests that have gone in, in terms of increased security and allowing organizations the opportunity to not have to have the need to utilize their Operating Budgets to take on additional security costs that obviously takes away from Programming and Events, staff, utilities and so in and so forth. What is DCLAs plan as it pertains to security moving forward?

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: So I personally have not gotten an avalanche of requests related specifically to security. I would be interested to hear what you have heard? Obviously a lot of the money that goes to the Cultural Institution Group goes to Maintenance and Security so those security guards at institutions, so there is a lot of money being allocated towards security at institutions already. So it is not something that has come up as a major issue. I mean, I know what you are talking about, things like the security issues at schools, etc. I haven't heard from a large number of Cultural Institutions that there is, you

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know, but I would be interested in hear if you have heard that and if Cultural Organizations do see a huge uptick in the amount of money being spent on security. I just haven't seen it.

MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: We have more so heard from Cultural Institutions but I think that many of them that are outside of the CIGs as well don't even think that that is an option for them. So I think that it is a conversation that we have to have in terms of how DCLA is going to be looking at security moving forward in this new era. Another aspect is in Traveling. I am always very excited when I see brochures, events translated into different languages. Where are we with allowing organizations or providing resources for organizations to translate materials into other languages so that we can capitalize on the amount of tourism that many of our institutions enjoy and would like to enjoy more of?

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: So we did allocate some money through the Cultural Plan, specifically for translation services. Uhm, that was money that was added essentially to organizations Budgets and but we were actually thinking of it more

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in terms of access for New Yorkers who speak many different languages. I think a lot of the folks who are going to the tourist destinations, like if you go, you know big Cultural Institutions that have lots of tourists there, there is often translation already there for some of those languages that tourists are speaking.

MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: I wanted to go into the diversity work that you are doing. So there is obviously been a huge push in order to make our Cultural Institutions, staffs, boards, etc., more diverse. Do you have numbers in terms of where we have been able to move the needle and how that is working? And what are the, what are the things that are working? What are the areas that we need to do more as far as diversity throughout our institutions and have we thought of adding more partners to assisting with that effort, particularly some of our smaller institutions of color that could also be considered training grounds for diversifying staff?

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: So we did the initial. When I say we, there was an initial survey done by an outside non-profit which is Dorsey Activity Inclusion Survey of the Cultural World in

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New York City. So everybody who got a grant from us was required to fill out this survey and it, it created results for 37,000 employees, I think 11,000 board members. The next step, so we don't, that was sort of a baseline survey. The next step is going to be a new survey that is going to be done in the coming months working with CDP, the Cultural Data Project and one of the things about surveying is that the goal standard of surveying is self-reporting and that, that is what this will be, involved, and it will be the CIG plus a sample of Program Groups. So since we have done the baseline survey we have not done another survey so we can't say what the progress is until we do the next survey. But we are very interested in that, obviously, I think doing the survey at periodic times to see whether the needle is changing or whether the needle is being moved is important to us.

MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: Have you thought about any uhm, other ways to include more partners to add to that desire.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: So I mean, there are for example Cunei Cultural Cores.

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MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: I was just
going to ask.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: Yeah, so
that's been, I think really successful. We have our
second cohort, I think we have had 200 Cunei students
participate. I know many of the organizations out
there have had those. You guys, have you done it?
Yes, some of you yeah, so that's paid internships
where it doesn't cost the institution money, we are
paying for the internships and it's a super diverse
group of Cunei students. Anybody is eligible that
who is a Cunei student but it's just, that's how
diverse Cunei is. We've also worked with their 11
theatre programs, theatre diversity programs underway
with funding from Theatre Subdistrict Council. It is
an amazing program diversifying work force at
theatres so there is a series of uhm diversity
funding that we have been doing which includes many
different partners, not just Cunei but 11 theatre
organizations and the entire you know sort of
cultural field is in discussion about that.

MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: As it
pertains to Capital, where do you stand in terms of,
where does the Department stand in terms of

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exhibitions being included in your Capital Budget,
because many organizations are different from let's
say a Fine Art Institution with Moama. There are
institutions that their exhibitions can last five,
ten years because it is almost a part of the, the
construction of the institution but it needs upkeep,
it needs general change and care, many historical
centers will be similar to that, Children's Museums,
exhibitions, spaces such as that. How do you look at
and view exhibitions in your Capital Budget?

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: So it's not
just us, there is something called Directive Ten
which has to do with the use of Capital money. This
Directive Ten is essentially a legal definition of
what is Capitally eligible. So that is something
that we work with the Office of Management and Budget
on that. Often exhibitions are not considered to be
Capitally eligible, so you know, if you think what
happens is people buy bonds and there is a period of
time of that bond. There has to be a fixed asset
that is bought with those bonds and the fixed asset
has to last as long as the bonds, at least, right, so
if you are building a building those are often 30
year bonds. So the people of New York City are

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1 paying back those bonds or the people of whoever buy
2 the bonds. They don't have to be from New York City
3 but these are, you know, bonds that have a life span
4 and there is a very strict set of laws around what is
5 Capitally eligible. It is not something I as
6 Commissioner of Cultural Affairs could simply say an
7 exhibition is now eligible. We work with our
8 partners at Office of Management and Budget to
9 determine what is Capitally eligible. So that, I
10 mean it is very strict in New York State and it has
11 been getting stricter.

12
13 MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: Could a,
14 because an exhibitions as well as like certain forms
15 of technology, it's an extremely difficult space
16 because we are moving, we are in the technology era
17 and age and everything is moving in that way. The
18 way in which we fund and support technology doesn't
19 go along with the bonding process as you would say.
20 Nor do exhibitions because people want to see new
21 things but the construction of an exhibition is a
22 costly one and one that often cannot be covered by
23 Programmatic or Expense Funding. So what would you
24 say would be the life of an exhibition that DCLA
25 could support?

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COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: So I mean this would have to be very specific but I think it is technology. There are different lengths of different bonds, right so, when we are buying for an organization a complete system. It has to be a complete system, it can't just be a computer. If it is lighting system or something that is technological there are again restrictions on that. For example, there are restrictions on buying software as opposed to hardware and I am actually not the expert. I have seen these get approved or disapproved depending upon the organization, but in general, you know, if you would like to sit down, we can have an in depth meeting to talk about Capital eligibility.

MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: We can do that.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: It is, I am happy to do it with the actual experts in my Capital Unit. Absolutely, look the restrictions are clear, they are defending you know those bond buyers and the interest of you know of New York City in creating permanent long-term assets.

MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: I just have two more questions, uhm, on the Federal level do

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we have an understanding at this point, what Federal cuts have taken place and how they are impacting New York City Cultural Institutions or what is forecasted moving forward? I know Chair Van Bramer had a hearing on that recently and I just wanted to reiterate those numbers?

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: Right, so there haven't been cuts in Arts and Cultural Fundings so and that's because partially of advocacy. There was a national movement. The current Proposed Federal Budget which was sort of in the same phase, does eliminate entirely agencies including NEH, NEA, IMLS and Public Radio, I believe, have been zeroed out. What I have heard from advocates on those fronts is you know the really terrible scenario is if these agencies are zeroed out and disbanded, it is much worse than a 10% cut or whatever, we don't want there to be cuts, we think there should be increases but so far you know there haven't been cuts, in fact, there was a slight increase, I think, seem to remember in NEA funding. A bunch of New York City Organization, I think just a couple of weeks ago, \$6 million of funding was announced for New York City Organizations from the NEA alone. So there haven't

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been cuts and we want to fight against them and you know it has been successful in the first. We can't be, you know we have to be diligent and fight against the cuts happening in the future.

MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: Is there a reserve that has been discussed or talked about in the event that these proposed wipe-outs of agencies happen because unfortunately this President seems to act on what he says.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: No, I mean so the city does not have reserves in anticipation of the cuts. Our feeling is we should be fighting the cuts.

MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: Correct.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: And along with the people of America to keep Cultural Funding in place.

MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: Uh-huh, and my final question uhm pertains to during the Cultural Plan. Was there a study or an understanding of what do the Cultural Institutions of the City of New York. So when we talk about, let's just say the \$28 million for the Cultural Development Fund, the \$106 million for Cultural Institute Groups

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and the \$6.9 for Agency plus Capital. Do we have an understanding at this time as to what is the City of New York's Economic Revenue Generator for the City at this time? So have we done like an analysis to say the city spends this much on Culture, either through Expense or Capital and as a result it yields X, Y and Z?

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: So there have been numerous, you know, analysis of the economic impact of Arts and Culture in New York City. The thing that we have done under this administration is the social impact of the Arts Studies. That was different and by the way we 100% agree with and believe in the idea that there is a big economic impact but there are other kinds of impact and we wanted to do that study, so the social impact of the arts study said aside from Economic impact, Arts and Cultural Activities in communities are good for educational outcomes, safety and other social outcomes, health as well. So it is actually, there are correlations between Arts and Cultural Activities believe it or not and lower instances of high blood pressure and diabetes in communities. These are other kinds of outcomes that are extremely important

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so that's the uhm, the study that we felt was
important to do, the other studies having already
been done that we support. So we think of the Art as
an economic impact but there is also a Social Impact
of the Arts. And have you seen that study? I am
happy to share that with you.

MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: I would
love to see that. I would love to see it on an
economic level, educational level, social level
because we would have a greater understanding of how
much we should allocate based off of where we are
saving just by allocating resources in those areas,
so if we find that Culture in an area brings down
crime then we know that that is a better way of
spending money than maybe putting in an entire police
force to do that same type of work. So I mean, it's
different but.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: So just be
a clear. I have a little bit of technical, there is
a correlation between Arts and Cultural Activities
and lower crime. It doesn't mean it is a direct
relation. This study is saying that it is part of a
healthy community. So I am happy to share that study
with you.

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MAJORITY LEADER LAURIE CUMBO: And then
this is my last one, uhm, we discussed a lot in
regards to this and in my district the 35th District,
Fort Greene, Clinton Hill, Prospect Heights, Crown
Heights, part of Bedford-Stuyvesant, it is something
that I am so frustrated by, that there is so much
development happening, there are so many
corporations, Apple, Whole Foods, Target, H&M, all of
these different corporations that are thriving in my
district. Whereas like a Target's number 1 selling
store in my district uhm and then they just opened up
a second one, #2, but not the Not for Profit and
Cultural Community is simply not benefiting from the
philanthropy that could be garnered from either the
development or the corporations that are moving into
our city. How can we leverage this investment into
our Not for Profit Community because I just feel like
I am going to scream the next ad that I see moving to
the Cultural Community in Downtown Brooklyn, near the
subway, near this and all of this but there is no
investment in all that they are advertising and it is
actually going to in many ways not allow those very
institutions and artists and organizations to thrive
in the same way and I know we have had this

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discussion a lot and I have brought it up a lot
during the Cultural Plan.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: So I will
say that I don't know if there is a comprehensive
answer to exactly the question that you are way, it
is quite broad but I will say that actually inspired
by some of the things that you said at some of the
meetings. We have been meeting with a group of
corporations and corporate philanthropies to
understand how they can better invest in communities
where they are doing business. So I don't want to,
maybe we could talk off line. Uhm, we have taken
that seriously and we have had some meetings inspired
by that very set of issues you are bringing up.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you I just
want to let everyone know we have the room only until
2 o'clock because we have another important hearing
coming. What's that? Okay, thank you Council
Member. Commissioner I want to thank you for your
testimony. We have another 15 or so people who would
like to testify so we are going to uhm, try and move
a little bit more swiftly. Uhm going forward and but
I want to thank you for your testimony. I want to
thank you for being here and I want to thank you in

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advance for your advocacy to baseline the funding and
to increase the funding for your department and for
this community because we both know that you and I
agree that our city is better off when this funding
is there and it is there permanently and it is
increased and New York City is thriving because these
folks make it thrive.

COMMISSIONER TOM FINKELPEARL: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
much. Uhm, now we will hear our first panel, John
Calvelli, representing the Cultural Institutions
Group, Christopher Carroll representing local 802 the
American Federation of Musicians. We have Sheila
Lewandowski representing the Chocolate Factory and I
know that we have a young man from the library
portion of our panel who has been waiting for hours.
Would you like to testify now? Yes, so we are going
to hear from Yosenix Orango (SP?), that is great name
so why don't you join us and if it is okay with our
cultural folks we are going to allow Yosenix (SP?) to
close out our library portion with some heartfelt
testimony I am sure about Libraries and uhm have a
Yosenix (SP?) next to Sheila and Chris and John. So
we have been at this since 9:30 this morning and we

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are in hour four or something like this it's, it's
great to see everyone here. So we are going to go to
a three minute timer. I will ask everyone to be as
succinct as possible. I will be a little bit more
aggressive than I usually am and in pursuing this
through just because we uhm want to hear from
everybody who has come to City Hall today and we want
to make sure that we also give over the room to the
next Committee who would like to have their hearing.
So uhm, to close out the Library portion of the day
why don't we hear from Mr. Orango (SP?) first.

YOSENIX ORANGO: Good afternoon.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Why don't you press
the little light in front of you.

YOSENIX ORANGO: Alright got it. Good
afternoon members of the Cultural Affairs and Library
Committees. I would like to begin by thanking you
all the opportunity to speak before you today. My
name is Yosenix Orango (SP?) and I am the Young Adult
Librarian at Brooklyn Public Library Stone Avenue
Branch in Brownsville, Brooklyn which is also the
area where I reside. Uhm, in two months I will be
celebrating my one year anniversary with BPL. As a
young adult librarian I provide programs and services

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primarily to teens. Some of my programs include Japanese Language Instruction, STEM Activities such as Game Design and Robotics and Recreational Programs including board games and video games. Growing up in Brownsville myself and sharing similar interest in technologies and all things Japanese with our teens who reside in our community has allowed me to make our branch a desirable place to be for our youth. The library is an important pillar of our community, especially in an area like Brownsville which is many low income households. It provides a safe environment for individuals of all ages and backgrounds to take part in. We help bridge the digital divide in our community by providing access to desktop computers, laptops, tablets and of course Wi-Fi. Our library provides many services beyond books and library cards. We are actively involved in recreational programs for adult with special needs, provide computer lessons for seniors and our go to place for people seeking employment, housing and task resources. On a weekly basis, I assist adults of all ages who are trying to pursue a high school equivalence diploma and it has become my favorite question to answer every week because often those

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patrons leave with a smile, it gives them hope to
broaden their career options. Uhm I would like to
personally thank you all for the support that the
libraries have received from you. It really goes a
long way toward serving our community and I would
like to request that you continue to provide
financial support to all three library systems in New
York City to better serve or dense population.
Additionally I would like to ask for this financial
support to be increased further for the upcoming
Fiscal Year so that our resources can continue to
remain up to date in our ever evolving society.
Thank you one again for taking the time to listen to
my testimony.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you so much
for being here and uhm, thank you also for doing it
in about two minutes times.

YOSENIX ORANGO: I timed it.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: And but uhm,
Brooklyn Public Library always does such a great job
of having staff and library workers come and testify
and it is always so powerful and, and customers as
well, so thank you for your passion for Libraries and
for sharing that story and uhm and I love my

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Committee for so many reasons but one of them is that sort of my two worlds collide so I we have all of these great big Cultural Leaders and they are listening to your testimony on Libraries and you know, we are all sort of one big family, right, looking to make sure really good things happen for the people who need them in so many ways and so thank you for being here and for testifying and for your love of libraries and I want one of those shirts by the way. I haven't said that today but I totally need to score one of those shirts. So uhm, you are welcome to stay and listen to all of these August Cultural Icons in the City of New York speak about Culture and the Arts but if you need to get back to uhm, to work or need to take off. I'll take the shirt, Matt, you can bring it up to me. Wow. How cool is that. Do you see that? And it's a small. That's awesome. I will wear that to the gym, absolutely. So thank you and I will leave it up to the Cultural Team to decide which order you are going to speak in.

JOHN CALVELLI: I'll go, we'll go, I guess we will go in this order from right to left if that is okay. Exactly the best for last. Good

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afternoon Chairman Van Bramer and Members of
Committee, Council Member Cumbo, I am John Calvelli
the Executive Vice-President for Public Affairs at
the Wildlife Conversation Society and I am honored to
serve as the Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group
and co-Chair of New Yorkers for Cultures and Arts.

Can I ask my colleagues from the CIG to just kind of
give a little hand, we don't have shirts but we have
people here so it is good. Maybe next year we will
have shirts too. We will do that too.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Dude, you need
shirts. You need shirts.

JOHN CALVELLI: I'm, trust, Daisy
Rodriguez, where are you, did you hear that we need
shirts.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: It's not real if
you don't have shirts and buttons.

JOHN CALVELLI: Let me begin by saying
how grateful we are for the Councils vital support
for Culture and the Arts in New York City throughout
the years. Your support yields a monumental return
on investment for all New Yorkers regardless of age,
background or status and I also want to thank
Commissioner Finkelpearl for his leadership and as a

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former Chair of the CIG I think he understands the complexities of the roles and responsibilities that our institutions have. I also want to acknowledge our non-CIG colleagues with whom we have worked alongside several years to increase our resources for Culture and Arts, Andrea Louie is here my fellow co-Chair of the New Yorkers for Culture and Arts and I think you are going to be hearing from Lucy Sexton our new Executive Director but of course to my right you will be hearing soon from the head of the Chocolate Factory Theatre and I just want to let you know that we are all working collaboratively to make sure that we work as a community not just as CIGs or Program Groups, we are one culture community needing to work together. This sector is a unique ecosystem that is vibrant, creates a healthy network for communities as well as engages, inspires all New Yorkers including the 63 million visitors that take part in various aspects of CIG offerings each year. When I became chair of the CIG one of my immediate actions was to visit each borough and meet with each CIG to familiarize myself with the needs of the organizations and the challenges they face. Each CIG inherently is aware of their responsibilities to

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serve the people of New York and integrate the communities in which they live and work. They are fully aware that they provide safe places for youth and families, serve as examples of accessibility and remain the go-to organizations that the city calls upon to pilot programs like Plan NYC and IDNYC which I believe have been major successes. While we are aware of the services that we provide and the Culture Plan affirms the necessity of our work, we still need to continue making the argument for support and I thank you so much today to the Chairman and to Council Member Cumbo for leading that charge, I love the words determined and dogged. I am going to remember that. Due to the historical relationship that we share with the City we are expected to meet certain standards and restricted by others, such as, for examples, limitations on raising our admission prices, we need approval from the City of New York. May I, at some point I do have something for you that I would like to give you and you are going to laugh when I give it to you but.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: As long as it is worth less than \$50.

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JOHN CALVELLI: These are less than \$5,
uhm these are roach socks, one of the projects that
we worked on this year to raise money and we named,
you could name a roach for a loved one on Valentine's
Day so this is one of the things.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Can I see that.

JOHN CALVELLI: It's not a shirt.

LAURIE CUMBO: I was going to say that I
wanted one too until I.

JOHN CALVELLI: There is one for
everybody and for staff, as a former staffer, make
sure you get one too. I, I will tell you that my
time is up but I wanted to share with each of you.
Yes, these are the lengths that we go to Mr.
Chairman, name a roach.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Amazing. Uhm,
thank you.

JOHN CALVELLI: And I just want to say
that you are welcome. Let me just, let me just, uhm,
go to the punch line, we are obviously very much in
support of base-lining the \$10 million. We look at
uhm, we are requesting a \$30 million increase in the
DCLA Budget, again evenly split between the Program
Groups and CIG. We feel it is important that we make

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a down payment to the Cultural Plan. There is a great deal more that needs to be done. This is just the beginning. Enjoy the socks.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you uhm, so first I have a pretty good sock game. I have a pretty good sock game but mostly it is because my husband buys the socks and I just wear his uhm but I'm going to bring this home and see what he thinks about it.

JOHN CALVELLI: We hear from you.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: And see, uhm if we both wear it at various times. Uhm, and now seriously I want to thank you obviously the Culture Institutions Groups Members are vital to the success to the City of New York. Literally New York wouldn't be the city that it is if we didn't have the CIGs doing the work that they do and so I am grateful. Also that you are partnering with the Program Groups who are equally important to the effort and to the City's efforts and so I agree that we need to baseline to funding and then we need to go for the \$30 million and I believe very much in that happening and thank you to Commissioner Finkelpearl for continuing to stay and hear the testimony. Both of the

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libraries and of the Culturals. And thank you for
your love of Libraries Commissioner Finkelpearl as
well.

CHRISTOPHER CARROLL: Good afternoon
everybody, uhm, Chairman Van Bramer thank you for you
for the opportunity to be testifying here today and
the entire City Council has been very supportive of
the Arts over the years and we are very appreciative
of that and it needs to be acknowledged as often as
possible. My name is Christopher Carroll, I am the
Chief of Staff for the Associated Musicians of
Greater New York 802 and we are here because we
believe that the City Budget should be expanded \$30
million and that \$10 million should be base-lined.
Uhm you know I want to be the first to say that you
know as the largest local Union of Professional
Musicians in the World we have seen firsthand how the
Arts and Music can have a profound economic impact in
the city but we also need to acknowledge the role
that the Arts play in our Social and Cultural Health
that our neighborhood, our districts, our boroughs
cannot be overstated. In their Social Impact of the
Arts Project, researches from the University of
Pennsylvania School, right at the critical resource,

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the people who use as part of that Quest for Life or value of the Arts. The Arts can provide tools for making the sense of the world. The Arts can provide opportunities to develop lanes of abilities to forge connections with people like themselves and not like themselves. Additionally the team from UPenn found that controlling for our communities economic well-being, race and ethnicity we could actually statistically find relationship between culture asset index and their indexes for health, personal security school effectiveness. Obviously the Arts have a profound impact on our communities and our city. I think it also needs to be said that the city has an incredible Arts Agenda, a sense of priorities. That Agenda was expanded upon in a great deal in the Create NYC Project. That Create NYC Project is our first comprehensive Cultural Plan and it laid out an impressive set of priorities, an impressive agenda for the city to be taking moving forward along with the City Council and thank you for your work on that plan. These priorities included and I will start actually quoting from the Plan itself, determining how to provide sufficient compensation to Artists and Cultural Workers and what those compensation levels

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are need to allow Artists to make a living,
preserving and development long-term affordable
workspaces with their Cultural Community to advance
the Area Initiative, increasing the development of
affordable, accessible housing for Artists that
allows them to thrive, creating new supports for Arts
and Cultural Organizations with a primary mission of
serving historically underrepresented or underserved
communities and continuing to invest in city young
Cultural Assets and the Community Institution Groups.
All of these things are in great, great work that
needed to be done but they also needed to be
supported adequately by the city and to do that we
really need to make sure that the city has all of the
tools in its tool belt including the funding that it
needs to move forward so thank you.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you uhm for
all of the work that you do on behalf of your members
and obviously we would be no where without all of the
talent that you represent and you Chris and also Tina
you have just been everywhere when it comes to these
issues and advocating with us and strengthening our
message by having you behind us so thank you.

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CHRISTOPHER CARROLL: Thank you for your
partnership.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: And thank you for
your talking about the Cultural Plan so much in
Create NYC which obviously Council Member Levin and I
are really, really proud of having pushed through
and, and made happen in the City of New York.
Sheila.

SHEILA LEWANDOWSKI: Good afternoon
Chairman Van Bramer and Council Member Cumbo, thank
you both for the opportunity to testify. My name is
Sheila Lewandowski, I am Founder and Executive
Director of the Chocolate Factory Theatre. I did
not, I am sorry I missed part of your testimony. I
was at a Women's History Month Breakfast with regents
of the State who also one of them, a single mother
spoke about spending time in Museums and in Cultural
Places while her mother worked two jobs. That is
what her mother did for them so they would learn more
about different people and themselves and Culture.
I'm sorry, I apologize for missing some of that. I
don't have a fully written testimony but two very
important things that I brought with me because I
think they speak to the future one is from the

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Portrait of Michelle Obama with the young woman
seeing herself and her future because this is our
future. Another is a photo I took at Moama PSI last
year by chance of a young child looking at an
Experimental Artist statue. This is our future and
this is what culture does. Our libraries are
Cultural Destinations as well and their shelves are
filled with Culture and Poetry and Literature so we
need to be fully supporting our Libraries, we need to
be fully supporting culture throughout the city for
all New Yorkers and Arts Education. And one thing, I
want to, oh I'm going much faster than I thought I
was because I did want to say something that I don't
know of it was said about the Cultural Plan which is
critically important and needs to be supported if
DCLA is really going to deliver the service they are
promising to give to the city. The monument is a big
deal that is being discussed right now and that is
such an opportunity but it needs support. We have an
opportunity to really create things and re-define
things based on all of our people and all of the
history and be honest about it but that needs funding
and support so in addition to our unions within our
Cultures and our Libraries what is on shelves at the

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libraries, what is in the zoos and the gardens, we need, we need to be doing more to bring the identity of the city up to reflect all New Yorkers and that will affect our economy too. There are lots of study on economy, I am glad there is on social impact. So the one other thing I had was about data. Data is only so good when it comes to Culture. Because if you look at it, Department of Health, there is culture in there, there is mental health services that are impacted by role playing, by scripts, by performance, by dance. There are senior citizens, the Senior Shakers at Resettlement House who they, they are healthier physically and mentally because of participating in performance and dance on a regular basis. If I looked at every agency of the city I could pull out what is Cultural but maybe we are not thinking of it as direct data but if we don't fund it all of that is going to suffer and every New Yorker will suffer so please baseline, increase the support, it will impact all of us.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you, you got a lot in there in 2 minutes 21 seconds Sheila. Uhm, so I want to assure you that the monuments question is something that we take very seriously and in fact

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it was a very big and important meeting at the
Department of Cultural Affairs with myself and
Council Member Cumbo and Council Member Lander and
this very topic was the thrust of the conversation so
we are all talking about it and an initial \$10
million has been allocated for the creation of new
monuments that will hopefully tell a more accurate
story of our history, but you are right, there needs
to be even more done beyond that, so we are working
on it and I, and I expect that we will, we will get
there. Uhm, thank you also for talking about
Libraries and your support there as well. Uhm so I
want to thank all of you for coming together. The
panel for being here. For your passion and we will
fight together for what we so rightfully deserve.
The next panel I am going to call is Lucy Sexton,
John O'Reilly, Mark Rossier and Ellen Leszynski and I
know we, do we still have library folks in the house?
Okay so then the next panel we will go back to the,
the Queens Library team with the great shirts and
with Joel Ochoa who looks at the Great Woodside
Library so big shout out to my Woodside Library over
there. I haven't forgotten you but we are going to

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go back and forth between Culture and Libraries.

Uhm, whoever wants to go first.

LUCY SEXTON: Hi my name is Lucy Sexton.

I am pleased to introduce myself as the New Executive
Director for New Yorkers for Culture and Arts, the
new city-wide advocacy organization formed by the
merger of New York City Arts Coalition and One
Percent for Culture. I am no stranger to Culture and
Arts here in New York City. I work as a
choreographer and also run the New York Dance and
Performance Awards The Bessies. I know firsthand the
profound impact of Publicly supported Culture in this
city. My first dance training was at John Dewey High
School in Coney Island. My kids first dance training
was in their kindergarten at PS3, training and dance
and art classes that need to be available in every
kindergarten across this city. My Dance Company has
used Materials for the Arts for 35 years for our
props and costumes and I am current a SUCOSA teaching
artist at the open center in Chinatown. In my new
position at New Yorkers for Culture and the Arts, it
is my honor and my passion to work for a city in
which every New Yorker has their life transformed by
a flourishing and vital culture, regardless of

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background, borough or economic status. We will work for sustainable government resources and strong public policy to advance equitable public support for Culture Organizations for Artists and for the Cultural Workforce in every community. New Yorkers for Culture and Arts seeks to address long-standing patterns of funding that have marginalized cultural organizations serving communities and artists of color. Thereby limiting the city's ability to fully appreciate and celebrate the value of our rich diversity. Committee Chair Van Bramer, Council Majority Leader Cumbo, Members of the Committee, we urge you to support Culture and Arts in the FY19 New York City Budget but robustly supporting the Department of Cultural Affairs. We stand with the CIGs in expressing our gratitude for the increases in FY18, particularly the additional support to the borough Arts Councils and the funding of individual Artists, the \$1 million in utility support to those non-CIG organizations and city properties and the increase to the Cultural Immigrant Initiative but the need as you know remains great. New Yorkers for Culture and Arts joins our Culture Colleagues to request a baseline of the \$10 which you have so

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advocated for, thank you, an additional \$30 million in funding for FY19 to be equally shared by the CIGs and the program groups to support the successful implementation of the city's first ever Cultural Plan. In particular, New Yorkers for Culture and Arts is deeply invested in issues related to equity and lowering the barriers to access to City Funding. Finally, you may recall last fall New Yorkers for Culture and Arts planned a forum for candidates for City Council Speaker. More than 600 New Yorkers RSVPed to attend demonstrating the enormous interest and concern that city residents have for Culture and Arts. Council Member Van Bramer we at New York for Culture and Arts are grateful for your commitment to planned forum and we look forward to working closer with you and the entire City Council to ensure that Culture and Arts can fully thrive in New York in all the neighborhoods.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you so much, welcome aboard, well done and we will go to John next.

JOHN O'REILLY: Good afternoon my name is John O'Reilly. It is good to see you again Council Member Van Bramer and thank you for the opportunity

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to address the committee. I am here really as sort
of a last resort. I think I am going to be the odd
duck in this proceeding. I am here to talk about the
Activities of the Queens Museum and in particular the
politicization of that Museum by the former director
and by the board which is tolerated a course of
political conduct which is blatantly in violation of
the law and in fitsco to what I think we want our
Cultural Institutions to be. I reference in
particular a well publicized event two months ago
when the museum cancelled the Commemoration of the
70th Anniversary of the State of Israel and was
revealed that the museum had used taxpayer resources
to fund the book about the divestiture the BDSM
movement I think it is called, divestiture, boycott
that vestment and sanctions movement and there was
great uproar about that the board commissioned a law
firm, paid a lot of money to find out that it had
been deceived but the reality is the board was well
aware that the former director was engaging in
political activity and tolerated it. On January 20,
2017 the museum closed its doors in solidarity with
those who were protesting the Inauguration of Donald
Trump as President and in solidarity in their words

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with the J20 General Strike Movement. Now regardless of what you think about Donald Trump being President, the museum should not be using taxpayer resources to engage in those activities. I have communicated repeated with the museum about what it is doing about that? What actions is it taking and I get silence? I have communicated with the Department of Investigation with the City of New York about this because this is, it is illegal for the museum to engage in political activities, nothing. So I am here to ask that this committee consider defunding use of taxpayer resources for the Queens Museum until the board either is replaced or comes to you and a public hearing is conducted and come to you to see what it is doing about preventing this from happening again. As a matter of fact, notwithstanding my constant protest, you can go on the museum website today and there is still literature on the website expressing support for the J20 General Strike Movement and against Donald Trump as being President. And I suspect there is not to many people in here that believe in Donald and support Donald Trump's Presidency but nobody, the museum should not be allowed to engage in activity. I don't know if

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anybody in here remembers when the Brooklyn Museum a
number of years ago was doing this time of thing at
the direction of the then Mayor and nobody liked that
and it was stopped and so I appeal to you on behalf
of people of whom I have discussed this with to do
something about this. To either call them to account
to come in here answering what they doing to stop
this? And/or requiring that the board quit and get
somebody else who will follow the law, thank you.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Wow, uhm, so you
said a lot there and I will uhm, uhm address a few
things John. And obviously we know either other a
little bit from your Sunnyside Days. So as you know,
the, the board has taken an action and there have
been changes made in the Executive Leadership at the
Queens Museum. There was that report done and I, I
believe that the board has required the former
executive director, for example, to reimburse the
museum for the book related expenses and the board
has also put into effect some other changes as a
result of some of the things that they feel went on
at the museum that were inappropriate. So as Chair of
the Committee I certainly have been kept up to date
on all of what has been happening at the Queens

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Museum and uhm, and I will say that you know the one thing that I will say is the, the J20 Movement and what happened there I think is an expression of, of Art and Free Speech and Freedom of Expression and whether you uhm, feel very, very strongly about some of Lower's work or some of what happened and look I was very clear, I disagreed with the decision firmly to not allow Israel to have its 70th Anniversary Celebration and I was very clear about that. That was a mistake in my opinion but the fact that Art, Art Institutions, Executives, Artists would not engage in political discourse even very challenging and controversial discourse in many ways that is sort of the very definition of Art and Art is about pushing the envelope, it is about making us uncomfortable sometimes and, and it is about taking stands and I, and I certainly hear what you are saying. I think that uhm, something happened there that shouldn't have happened clearly. The board has responded and made changes and there may be other changes that take place at the Queens Museum. I will say that I think that the Queens Museum is a great institution, I love the Queens Museum. It was the first museum I ever went to as a kid growing up in

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Astoria and I am sorry that all of this has happened to the museum because it is a great institution with great people who work in it but it will recover and the Queens Museum will be greater than ever and, and we will have a new leader chosen at the, at the Queens museum and we will continue to support the Queens museum because it is, it is a really good institution that does a lot of great work and brings a lot of different cultures together in the borough and in the neighborhood that is so incredibly diverse. They do a lot of good work. They will do a lot of great work. I appreciate you coming and testifying. I appreciate the things that you said uhm and I you know, I, I, think that we will continue to move forward at the Queens Museum.

JOHN O'REILLY: Council Member I appreciate every you say but just one thing. If something can be done to make sure that Cultural Institutions don't close their doors, they close their doors so people like me who wanted to go to the museum that day couldn't go to the museum because of their expression of a political activity, that was wrong. Thank you.

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CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you, I
appreciate you coming to testify John. Sharing your
thoughts on all of these topics. Next.

ELLEN LESZYNSKI: Hi, thank you for the
opportunity to testify. My name is Ellen Leszynski I
am here today on behalf of the Brooklyn Academy of
Music which is a member of the Cultural Institutions
Group. At BAM we collaborate with neighbor
organizations on partnerships and programs. We are a
proud founding member of the downtown Brooklyn Arts
Alliance a coalition of more than 35 cultural groups,
organized to work for the best interest of the
cultural sector in downtown Brooklyn and we are
committed to bringing world class Artistic
Programming and Community Events to our Brooklyn
Community. At a time of national turmoil and change
it is more important than ever for New York City to
be a beacon of creativity and culture and for
Cultural Institutions to work with the city to
promote equity, access and diversity in Arts and
Culture. BAM respectfully requests that the city
baseline the Cultural Funding that was allocated in
FY18 as well as additional funding this year to be
divided equally among the CIGs and the program groups

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in order to support the work that we will do under
the new Cultural Plan. BAM currently serves its
community by addressing many of the priorities of the
plan. Of a particular note is the fellowships and
stagecraft in production program which BAM launched
through a grant from the New York City Theatre
Subdistrict Council. This programs aims to securely
place individuals from underrepresented communities
on a career path in the stagehand and production
management fields. Through intensive training and
hands-on work experience participants are able to
establish themselves within a professional network
while also helping to increase diversity in the
field. The Fellow Program offers a much needed entry
point for youth from underrepresented communities
such as LGBTQ and low-income people as well African-
American, Latinex and female participants. The
program teaches them to become Freelance in-house
stagehands a field that traditionally struggles with
recruiting a diverse workforce. This kind of rigorous
training can lead to positions in production
management. The program will expend the pool of
qualified stagehands in the short-term and over time
as graduates gain experience increase diversity in

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production positions. For example, one cycle one graduate has secured a job as a lighting board operator at the Jerry Orbach Theatre and another has been working as a stage manager at 5th Floor Theatre Company. This is the kind of programming that BAM hopes to expand upon with additional funding. BAM is excited to work with the Department of Cultural Affairs in the City to be a Cultural Leader. By presenting world-class international performances and programming in the heart of Brooklyn we are able to have a major Cultural and Economic impact in our local community. As the largest institution, we are poised to bring more outstanding programming and services to more neighborhoods and communities and to help our fellow Cultural Organizations and local Artists build capacity and navigate a change in landscape. We hope that you will consider BAMs history an enormous potential when finalizing the Cultural Budget and recognize that with your continued and increased support. We are ready to serve our community even beyond what we are currently doing. Thank you to the Committee and the City for your ongoing support.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Mark.

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MARK ROSSIER: Uhm, thank you Chair Van
Bramer for the opportunity to testify at the hearing
and advocate for the highest possible level of
funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs and
the New York City Cultural Plan. I am Mark Rossier,
Director of Grants at the New York Foundation for the
Arts. NYFA is one of the few organizations in the
country to support individual Artists in all, at all
stages of their careers. We work with Artists in
every borough, in every artistic discipline. We
provide unrestricted grants of \$7000 to approximately
75 New York City Artists each year including in the
past Ms. Sexton. We have a website with among other
things lists over 800 new jobs and opportunities
every month. We provide physical sponsorship that
enabled 700 Artists and organizations to raise \$4.5
million last year. We provide entrepreneurial
training to over 500 Artists and Administrators
annually and the Amelia Program to serve Immigrant
Artists from nearly 100 countries including
programming in Mandarin and Spanish. We are able to
do all of this and more because of the support we
receive from the Department of Cultural Affairs. It
is not just NYFA. To say the totality of New York's

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Cultural Sector is dependent on DCLA is no
exaggeration. The value of their support and
organizations ability to leverage it for additional
funds cannot be overstated. We hope you will
consider a baseline increase of \$10 million along
with an additional \$20 million to be split between
the programs group and the CIGs. Additionally during
testimony before this Committee regarding the
Cultural Plan many of us spoke of the need for DCLA
to receive separate additional support to ensure the
plan is adequately funded so that its allocable
goals, particularly with regard to equity and
community-based organizations are achieved. New York
City's Arts and Cultural Communities are thriving and
driving jobs, tourism and increased understandings
within and among the city's diverse communities. The
Budget of the Department of Cultural Affairs must
receive maximum funding to support his growth. Thank
you for your steadfast invisionary support of the
Cultural Community and the City we all call home.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much
for all of you for being here today and for your
passion for the Arts. I appreciate it. Thank you.
Uhm, next panel, uhm so we have like two more panels,

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so I want to thank in advance everyone for being so patient and diligent and I want to uhm, hear from all of you although we are up against a tight timeframe so we are going to go to a two minute time limit on the following two panels. We have the Queens Library who has been waiting for hours. We are going to allow that panel to come together and I believe they are going to even possibly even condense their testimony and then we have a Cultural Panel as well so uhm, whoever is testifying, please come up, jump right in to it. Thank you so much for being here. Go head. Yep, press the button right in front of you.

JOVAL OCHALLA (SP?) Got it, okay. Thank you. Good afternoon my name is Joval Ochalla (SP?), I am currently a customer service specialist at the Woodside Community Library and I help customers with the public computers which is part of my job description. I had also put on an inflatable T-Rex costume as part of our Halloween Carnival and I had dressed up as a Chinese Groom as part of our Chinese Lunar New Year Celebration but that is just the tip of the iceberg and I have pictures to prove it. As a Queens Library Employee I had many experiences that I

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never expected to have. I realize how valuable Queens library is to the communities it serves. Everyday we provide an inclusive and a safe environment to the customers for all walks of life including children, seniors, the disabled and the homeless. Our Motto is Queens Library is for everyone and everyone comes through our doors. Our customers have access to free information, programs and services regardless of who they are or where they came from. For instance, at the Woodside Community Library in just like many of the libraries across Queens we provide English classes, computer classes, Arts and Craft programs, story time, exercise programs, heritage celebrations and various reading programs, coding classes, homework help, assistance to resume writing, job searching and the navigation of the internet and so much more. But honestly, do you know what is most fascinating to me, it is our children, our teens and tweens that come in at 3 o'clock in the afternoon through our doors smiling and greeting me with a big smile and telling me and curious to find out what program I will be doing next. Or that one customer that comes in the next day and tells me thank you I got the job or the

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students that come in the next day and they see that they speak better English because of the classes that they had taken but I do not only see the positive impact that we have, I realize that we need so much work in order to maintain and keep improving on our programs and services and that is the reason why I am here today.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you uhm first of all I am enormously proud of you, obviously you represent my library and you do great work and that was a very, very powerful testimony as well.

JOVAL OCHALLA: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Next.

BASHIR OSMANI (SP?): Uhm, good afternoon Mr. Van Bramer and the Committee Members, my name is Bashir Osmani (SP?) I'm from queens. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify at New York City Council's Preliminary Budget Hearing on Community Libraries. I am greatly humbled to be here in your presence today. As newcomers we do not earn enough to cover our living expense, nor do we get a decent job because of the language barrier. For decade, pre-English learning programs have been offered at New York City's Three Library Systems to this community.

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America is built by the Americans and peoples come from all over the world including non-English speaking countries. In America, English is the official language and therefore it is very important for immigrants to learn English. As we all know, knowledge is the power and the backbone of civilized nation. Language is the key to obtain the knowledge and for expanding educations. America is a great nation. To keep our pride, we immigrants need to contribute out thoughts, ideas and create a friendly work environment to take this country forward. Without effective communications, none of this is possible. The Queens Library at East Flushing is where I came to know of the free English language program. I was motivated to enroll myself in the intuitive class of ESL Program. They taught me a better way of expressing myself through reading and writing. They taught me many valuable things. The ESL program enlightened me and made me feel like I am not alone. I felt that I am part of this diverse and multi-cultural city. It changed my life positively in many ways, now I am able to contribute my talent and experience at my workplace.

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CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Mr. Osmani I uhm
read through the rest of your testimony. I want to
thank you. I am really, really proud of the Queens
Library and proud of it because it makes a difference
in so many people's lives just like it has in yours.
So I want to thank you for bringing your experience
here to us today and allowing us to hear your voice.
So thank you.

BASHIR OSMANI (SP?): Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Next.

ANA DIAZ (SP?) Good afternoon, my name is
Ana Diaz and I am a student at Queens Library's
English for Speakers of other Languages Class. To
find a location where I could access free and quality
English language class was difficult. I needed a
group where I felt accepted and could express myself
in a safe and trusted environment. When I discovered
that Queens Library offers ESOL classes it was a
dream come true. I immediately registered for the
class and I am proud to announce that I am currently
enrolled in the intermediate ESOL classes at the
Community Library. It is my great pleasure to be a
party of the ESOL group. This is a program with a
high level of responsibility and commitment to the

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participants. I feel privileged to learn English by the highly qualified professional who teach the class and have methodology. Because of the Queens Library and their excellent teachers I am able to give this testimony today. It is very important for more and more people to get this amazing opportunity to learn. People, specifically new immigrants rely on this free service to interact with neighbors, find a job, access resources and more. With every class, I become more independent and self-relying individual. I truly believe this program changes lives for the better and we need to keep providing similar services. People trust their local library to access crucial materials. This is why Queens Library needs more funding to be able to keep offering classes for newly arrived immigrants improving their international language collections, renovating the buildings and more. Their programs and services improve lives. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you so much.
Can I ask where you came from? And how long?

ANA DIAZ: From Brazil.

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CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: From Brazil. And
how long are you in Queens?

ANA DIAZ: Two years, yes.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Two years and you
are testifying here at the City Hall.

ANA DIAZ: Yes.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: That's amazing.
What a great journey. Congratulations. It is very,
very powerful. I know we are late in the hearing and
it feels like we are moving quickly but I want you to
know, all of you, uhm, this is very valuable and
meaningful to me and it is meaningful to all of us
and it makes me, very, very proud of the Queens
Library for the work that they are doing and making a
difference in your lives, so thank you so much.

ANA DIAZ: Thank you, I appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: And next we are
going to hear from Jeffrey Omara, Stephanie
Wilchfort, is Tiffany Bryant still here from the
Public, uhm Jamie Burkart, is Jamie Burkart still
here? Great and David Johnston is definitely still
here and then is Tiffany Geigel still here? You are
the last person so come and join this panel, we will
just throw the six of you all together and we will

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uhm make it work. And Jeffery why don't you start us
off. Yes.

JEFFREY OMARA (SP?) : My name is Jeffery
Omara, I am an actor in the organization.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Great, one more
time.

JEFFREY OMARA: My name is Jeffrey Omara
and I am an actor and a member of the Organization
Fair Wage on Stage and we are fighting to improve
wages for the 19,000 union stage managers and actors
who live in all five boroughs. Theatre is New York
City's biggest tourist attraction. Off Broadway
sells more tickets every year than the Statute of
Liberty, The Empire State Building and Coney Island
and it contributes ½ Billion dollars to the City's
economy. You are all familiar with the troupe of the
struggling out of work actor but the truth is we
struggle even when we are employed full time. I am
currently starring in an off Broadway show on 42nd
street and Times Square. My union negotiated is \$550
a week after taxes and agent commission my take home
pay is \$380 a week. By the time I finish this 8-week
contract I will be \$5000 poorer than when I started.
I can't afford to continue working Off Broadway. I

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can't afford to continue subsidizing these theatre
with my savings and that is the sad truth for most of
the actors in this city. Actors are falling behind
on rent and bills everytime they accept a job from
one of these Off Broadway Theatre Companies. We
started a movement Fair Wage on Stage and created a
Campaign to pressure our Union Actor's Equity to
demand higher wages in our contract negotiation but
the fact is a lot of these theatre companies are
struggling to keep up with the escalating cost of New
York City. Meanwhile the Federal Tax Bill that was
just passed is going to devastate these theatre
companies in terms of charitable giving and also
Actors personally who will no longer be able to
deduct most of the things that we were used to
deducting. This is where you come in. Because
theatre is vital to New York City's Economy and
Culture, the Artists make up this community are in
crisis and we are asking for your help. We propose a
\$10 million annual fund dedicated to helping off
Broadway institutions pay us stage managers and
actors and the part of the theatre company, any not
for profit theatre company that employs stage
managers and actors under our union contract would

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qualify to apply for a grant from this fund to
subsidize their actors wages. These grants would
fill in the gap between the union negotiated minimum
salary and the necessary weekly gross salary. After
surveying our members, we determined \$1300 a week
gross is the magic number we need to make ends meat,
after taxes that is a net of about \$813 a week. Art
belongs to all of us and we need to make sure that we
are all able to participate in it.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you Jeffrey,
I'm glad you came to the committee and stuck it out
and and because you are an accomplished Actor you
were able to deliver that testimony in almost exact
time and it is an important issue you and your group
came to see me in my office and we need to fight this
fight so I am really glad you are taking it here to
City Hall.

JEFFERY OMARA (SP?): Thank you very
much.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Stephanie you want
to go next.

STEPHANIE WILCHFORT: Sure, hi I'm
Stephanie Wilchfort. Oh, hello I'm Stephanie
Wilchfort, I am President and CEO of Brooklyn

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Children's Museum, one of the 33 members of the City Cultural Institutions Group located in Crown Heights and we provide early childhood cultural experiences for 275,000 children and caregivers annually. More than half of whom come from Central Brooklyn, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brownsville, Crown Heights, East New York and Prospect, and when culture in New York City is strong or institutions like Brooklyn Children's Museum can think really big about serving our communities and meeting the issues and strategies identified in the Cultural Plan and I am here just to share one example of this that speaks to preserving the character of our neighborhoods and ensuring that neighborhood organizations are not pushed out of changing communities. Two years ago our friends at Brooklyn Public Library shared a challenged at the Brower Park Branch Library which is just a block and a half from Brooklyn Children's Museum. That library is housed in a leased space. It was built as a low-rise building and it is in a rapidly developing area. It is a very small library but one with enormous passion, relevance and meaning to our neighbors many of whom fought to see it created in 1963, have volunteered in the library, have raised their

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children in that space and like many branches the
Borough Park Library provides free literacy programs,
after school homework help, services to seniors and
critical access to books, media and information for
our community but because the space the leased it is
insecure. It is subject to the interest of private
development and equally challenging leased buildings
are not eligible for significant Capital Funding from
the City so this Library Systems and infrastructure
are deteriorating. At the same time, there is little
large scale spaced to be leased or purchased at a
reasonable price in Crown Heights. Brooklyn
Children's Museum however is owned by the City and
because the Department of Cultural Affairs and the
Department of Design and Construction had the
foresight to build our museum with expansion space in
2008, today we can offer our community's public
library a permanent home in our building of the same
size as its current lease space and in 2020 the
Brower Park Branch will move to Brooklyn Children's
Museum and it will be there safely and
inproportunity, that is what support for culture can
do. It can fund our communities. It help our

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community. Thank you all so much. Thank you Chair
Van Bramer who have been immensely supportive of us.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you that is
really, really cool. I love the idea of museums
housing libraries and obviously the Queens museum
hopes to do that one day too but that is really
exciting news. Thank you. Who would like to go
next.

TIFFANY BRYANT: I will. Hello I am
Tiffany Bryant from the Public Theatre. Thank you
Councilman Van Bramer for holding today's hearing.
Conceived nearly 60 years ago as one of the nations
first nonprofit theatres the Public engages one of
the largest and diverse audiences in New York City.
Last year, through all of our programs we offered
more than 1600 performances and welcomed over 350,000
people, many of whom acquired tickets through our
free or low cost ticket initiatives. When Joe Pap
articulated the proposition of Free Shakespeare in
the Park he began with the idea that just as the city
offers free Libraries, free access to literature and
knowledge, the city should also offer free theatre.
Since 1962 the Delacorte Theatre, a city owned
structure in Central Park has been home to Free

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Shakespeare in the Park. Since then, over 5 million people have attended performances for free. Each year we welcome over 100,000 attendees and in 2017 we welcomed audiences from every zip code in New York City. I am running out of time. The Public Theatre is proud to partner with the New York Public Library, the Brooklyn Public Library and Queens Public Library systems as Free Shakespeare in the Park Ticket Distribution Venue and sites for our mobile unit performances. We choose branches in neighborhoods identified by New York City's Cultural Plan as Civic Clusters, Neighborhoods in the City that are identified as high priority for Cultural Investment and Cross Agency Partnerships. Let's see, in closing I will just say that as a cultural organization we are dedicated to serving the people, all people, we have the responsibility to serve as broad an audience as possible. We have long recognized that Free Shakespeare in the Park is not enough to fully achieve our mission. We are confident; however, that our other programs will be able to get us much closer.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

Perfect. And everyone brought their A game today

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with Library and Cultural Testimonies. So thank you
very much, obviously we are big fans of you all.
Uhm, so we will go to David next and then we will end
with the New York Artist Coalition.

DAVID JOHNSTON: Hi my name is David
Johnston I am the Executive Director of Exploring the
Metropolis. I would like to thank Council Member
Jimmy Van Bramer and the Cultural Affairs Committee
for the opportunity to testify today. Since 1982 ETM
has focused on solving the work space needs of New
York City's Performing Artists. Currently we
administer the ETM Conversant Composer Residencies,
the Choreographer and Con Edison Composer Residency
and partnership with the Jamaica Center for Arts and
Learning and the ETM Ridgewood Bushwick Composer
Residency. Since 2009, the ETM has supported more
than 80 composers, choreographers and performing
artists. By mid-2019 ETM will have provided over \$1
million worth of no cost rehearsal space and cash
awards to New York City Artists. In the past nine
years our artists and residents have gone on to win
recognition from the Jerome Foundation, the Kleban
Foundation, Guggenheim, Baryshnikov Arts Center, Cage
Cunningham Award, New Music/USA, MacDowell Colony,

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Larson Foundation and the Doris Duke Charity
Foundation. Chris Cerrone who was a 2013-2014
composer and resident was named a Pulitzer finalist
for invisible cities work he developed during his ETM
residency, Jen Shyu developed Song of Silver Geese
with Satoshi Haga while in residence in Jamaica. The
recording of this work was named one of the New York
Times Best Albums of 2017. Artists at all career
stages in New York City need the support, workspace
can be prohibitively expensive even for those at a
more advanced level. Now last year, we were very
happy to receive an increase in Cultural Development
Fund Awards from the New York City Department of
Cultural Affairs. I am here today to ask for CDF and
CIG funding to held level to be base-lined at FY18
levels for FY19. I would just like to point out that
with the increase in funding last year for the first
time we were back at the pre-crash funding levels
from 2008. It has taken us a decade to get there.
We really hope that the FY18 is where we build from
rather than a one year.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you. I'm
really glad we got there. Next.

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TIFFANY GEIGEL: My name is Tiffany Geigel and I'm here on behalf of Dance NYC. On behalf of more than 1200 New York City based dance-maker and companies the service entity DanceNYC joined New Yorkers for Culture and Arts and colleagues and advocates to request the city baseline the \$10 million in new funding awarded in Fiscal Year 2018 and the City award an additional \$20 million in funding in Fiscal Year 2019. The need and opportunity for funding is urgent. This is a moment when our Presidential Administration is threatening the Rights to Creativity and Free Expression proposing the elimination of our Federal Cultural Agency and implementing a Tax Code that as an disincentive to charitable giving. New York City's increasing in Culture and the Arts now will have both symbolic and tangible significance. It will strengthen the city as a beacon for Artists and audiences around the globe and ensure New York Artist and Culture groups have the resources they need to advocate to advance or other resistant state in Trump's America. The powerful topic of a recent Committee Hearing. Locally the increased funding is needed to ensure the Department of Cultural Affairs

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and our City's Arts and Cultural Institutions are positioned to respond to the pressing recommendations of Create NYC the City's new Cultural Plan. For Dance NYC and its constituents the most urgent four parties are increase grantee volume and funding levels, including funding of individual Artists as recommended by the advancing physically sponsored Artists and Art Project support published by Dance NYC with 9 physical sponsor partners, an expanded diversity, equity and inclusion agenda that expressively adversities, disability rights as called for by Dance NYC's Disability Dance Artistry. Researching partners such as the Disability Arts NYC Task Force and Immigrants Rights as called for by our recent New York City's Foreign Born Dance Workforce Demographics report, part of a new immigrant artist initiative that we launched last month. The development for Dance NYC the Cultural Plan is a significant monster and a launching pad for strengthening new advocacy.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you so much, I appreciate, as you can see the next hearing is about ready to go but after four and a half hours, the last person to testify is Jamie Burkart.

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JAMIE BURKART: Alright, thank you.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

JAMIE BURART: I am a member of the New York City Artist Coalition and an Artist Safety Advocate. I am here to support the Department of Cultural Affairs and ask for increased funding to implement the Create NYC Cultural Plan. The Create NYC office hours events with Tom Finkelpearl bring together artists, nonprofits, public officials for conversations where vital information is shared, unprecedented connections are formed and bridges of trust are build between Creative Communities and the City. These types of office hours are crucial for helping underground Artists get access to life saving safety services and for the City of New York to better understand how Artists lives work. My life as a safety advocate began with the loss of another. My friend Nick Gomez Hall who was among the 36 Artists killed in Oakland Tragic Ghost Ship Fire at the end of 2016. I committed myself to organizing for safety and the preservation of community driven spaces. Early on I attended the Department of Cultural Affairs Create NYC office hours event and soon found myself in league with long-time safety experts in the

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arts. We conducted pre-inspection fire code walk
throughs, we helped artists become Fire Department,
New York Certified Fire Guards. We organized
independently as a coalition to understand issues
that impact artists the most and to fight for the
safety and preservation of community-driven spaces.
The Coalitions top priorities are to prevent
criminalization of community spaces, get access to
support and stop displacement. Forming a diverse
city-wide coalition, we engaged to create NYC
process. We called for the repeal of NYC's
discriminatory 1926 no dancing cabaret law. We
called for the creation of a task force of
confidential cultural case workers to help community-
driven cultural spaces get access to code compliance,
safety and liability help. Versions of these
recommendations were included in the Create NYC plan
and we were pleased in 2017 when the Mayoral
Administration joined the City Council's work by
after 91 years signing the historic cabaret law
repeal and by creating New York City's First Ever
Office of Night Life.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you, I regret
to end the testimony as compelling as it was but I

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want to thank you for all being here for as long as
you have today and for everything you do for Arts and
Culture in the City of New York and obviously we have
a big ahead of us but we are going to fight it. We
have been doing well. We need to continue the
progress so thank you all very, very much and with
that we are adjourned.

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date April 15, 2018