



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1038

Resolution calling upon the State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, legislation that would provide tax benefits to individuals working in the creative arts industry and to property owners who construct or lease commercial space to creative artists or creative arts organizations

By Council Member Espinal

Whereas, New York City is the country's cultural arts capital with world-class art, dance, fashion, music, film, and other cultural institutions; and

Whereas, The creative arts industry provides an economic boon to the City; and

Whereas, According to NYC & Company, the City's official marketing and tourism organization, cultural institutions are an enormous draw to visitors, estimating that nearly half of the 52.7 million visitors to the City in 2012 visited a cultural institution; and

Whereas, Creative industries have been among the fastest growing segments of the City's economy between 2003 and 2013, outpacing traditional economic drivers such as finance and insurance and legal services and employing nearly 300,000 people in 2013, according to the Center for an Urban Future; and

Whereas, Moreover, as the number of creative workers in the City grows and their ventures and companies expand, more money is spent on support services, suppliers, and other businesses ancillary to the creative arts; and

Whereas, While the creative arts sector provides these and other economic benefits for the City at large, many of the individual artists who are the driving forces behind this industry are facing an affordability crisis; and

Whereas, Among the challenges faced by these artists are relatively low wages compared to the cost of

living in the City and real estate constraints which make it difficult to find affordable spaces to create and display art; and

Whereas, According to the Center for an Urban Future, the median wage of a creative worker in New York City is 15 percent less than the national average when adjusted for the high cost of housing, food, transportation, and healthcare; and

Whereas, These wage gaps are experienced by both the conventional “struggling artists,” such as writers and painters, and by professional creative workers, such as architects, film editors, and industrial designers; and

Whereas, In addition, historically, the influx of artists into once less expensive neighborhoods such as SoHo, Williamsburg, and Bushwick, has led to a wave of gentrification in those areas that has priced out the very artists who made the area attractive to real estate investors in the first place; and

Whereas, To understand the demand for residential and commercial space for creative workers, it is instructive to look at the example of El Barrio’s Artspace PS109 in East Harlem, which is a community-driven project which transformed an abandoned public school building into an arts facility with affordable live/work housing for artists and their families and complementary space for arts organizations; and

Whereas, When El Barrio’s Artspace PS109 opened its lottery for housing applications in 2014, approximately 53,000 applications were received for the 89 available housing units; and

Whereas, It is in the economic and cultural interest of the City to help creative workers by creating tax incentives for them to be able to flourish within the five boroughs; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, legislation that would provide tax benefits to individuals working in the creative arts industry and to property owners who construct or lease commercial space to creative artists or creative arts organizations.