

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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February 27, 2017
Start: 1:32 p.m.
Recess: 4:32 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: James G. Van Bramer
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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

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

Tom Finkelpearl
Commissioner of Department of Cultural Affairs

Susana Leval
Mayor's Cultural Commission

Leslie Schultz
BRIC

Doctor Marta Moreno Vega

Kim Savarino
Dance/NYC

Carl Goodman
Cultural Institutions Group

Lisa Robb
Center for Arts Education of NYC

Mark Rossier
New York Foundation for the Arts

David Martinez
AMERINDA

Diane Fraher
AMERINDA

Christine Bruno
Inclusion in the Arts

Sheila Lewandowski
The Chocolate Factory Theater

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

Christopher Carroll
American Federation of Musicians Local 802

Randy Bourscheidt

Sandra Bowie
Ifetayo Cultural Arts Academy

Bessie Edwards
Central Brooklyn Jazz Consortium

Rocky Attieu [sp?]
CCCADI

Rudolph Shaw
Caribbean-American Repertory Theater

Diane Jacobowitz
Dancewave

Luis Laviana [sp?]
Musica de Camara

Juliana Cope
International Studio and Curatorial Program

Jenny Dubnau
Artist Studio Affordability Project

Nicole Reiner
Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora
Institution

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

Robert Lee
Asian American Arts Centre

Patricia Robinson
United African Dance Troop

Christine Whittaker
Athena Fellow

2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good afternoon,
3 everyone, and welcome to this very important
4 committee hearing. I am Jimmy Van Bramer, the Chair
5 of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and
6 International Intergroup Relations. I'm joined by
7 Council Member Helen Rosenthal, an active member of
8 our committee from Manhattan, and I know we have some
9 other members on our way-- on their way. And I will
10 say up front that one of the members who won't be
11 here, of course, is Council Member Steve Levin who
12 had so much to do with what we're going to talk about
13 today, but as I'm sure many of you know he is very,
14 very busy changing diapers and celebrating the birth
15 of his first child. So, I send much love Steve and
16 his wife and their lovely child. So, all of us will
17 just thank in abstentia Council Member Levin for his
18 work on what we're going to discuss today, which of
19 course is the status of CreateNYC, what has come out
20 of the piece of legislation that Council Member Levin
21 and I passed, and that is to have for the first time
22 ever a comprehensive cultural plan for the City of
23 New York, making sure that every community, every
24 person in every neighborhood, has equal access to the
25 amazing wonders and benefits of culture and the arts

2 in the City of New York. And I know that
3 Commissioner Finkelppearl and his Department has been
4 busy at work. By a show of hands, how many of you
5 feel like you've been engaged in the cultural plan at
6 this point in CreateNYC? Which is a good result, but
7 I would say and I think the Commissioner would agree,
8 the ultimate goal was to actual reach also far beyond
9 all the people in this room, all the people who might
10 even be aware that there's a Department of Cultural
11 Affairs, and that there's a Committee on Cultural
12 Affairs and Libraries, and that's what we want to
13 know is how far, how deep, how wide is the Department
14 of Social Affairs going with this plan. Are we
15 reaching all of the people who need to be reached,
16 hearing all of the voices who deserve to be heard?
17 And I know that the Commissioner will share because
18 we've certainly seen it, a list of probably hundreds
19 of meetings and town halls, and if you follow his
20 Instagram account like I do you certainly see lots
21 and lots of meetings that are going on, but maybe
22 hear a little bit more in-depth about what he's
23 hearing, and we in government obviously hear
24 sometimes from people who disagree, who maybe think
25 we're not doing enough, going far enough. And I know

2 that the Commissioner recently had a meeting in
3 Brooklyn, because I was reading your social media,
4 where you said you got some tough questions, and
5 those are important things, important moments for all
6 of us to have happen where we're challenged to do
7 more, and so I'm interested in hearing about that
8 piece as well, and then of course, hearing from
9 everyone here about how you think it's going and
10 who's being reached, how they're being reached and
11 ultimately a little bit about where we go with all of
12 this and what becomes of CreateNYC and how does
13 CreateNYC change the landscape for the better. So,
14 I'm anxious to hear all of is. I know that we have a
15 lot of very exciting events coming up including one
16 in my district on March 1st, this Wednesday, where
17 public housing stakeholders will be brought together
18 at the Museum of the Moving Image in Queens. I am
19 very, very much looking forward to that, and I know
20 there are events like that being held all over the
21 city. So, I want to thank the Commissioner and the
22 Department and all of the folks who are working on
23 this. I know they care deeply about it, and I am
24 very, very anxious to hear, see the presentation, and
25 see what more can be done to achieve the goals of the

2 cultural plan and the so-named CreateNYC plan. And
3 we also are joined by Council Member Elizabeth
4 Crowley very soon, but she has entered the chambers,
5 so I will acknowledge her before we get going and say
6 thank you. And we will begin the testimony with
7 Commissioner Finkelpearl. Swear in, but first
8 because these are going to be very challenging
9 questions we're going to swear you in and so raise
10 your right hand.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Commissioner, do you
12 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing
13 but the truth in your testimony before this Committee
14 and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

15 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I do. Okay?
16 Okay, I'm going to read my testimony. So, good
17 afternoon, Chair Van Bramer and members of the
18 Committee. I am Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom
19 Finkelpearl here to present testimony on today's
20 topic, the CreateNYC Cultural Plan. Thank you for
21 the opportunity to highlight the work being done
22 across the city in the process of developing a plan.
23 I am joined by a number of colleagues here from the
24 Agency. Of course, the Council's collaboration has
25 been critical to the entire process. The cultural

2 plan is the result of legislation sponsored by your
3 Majority Leader Van Bramer and Council Member Levin
4 that the Mayor signed in 2015. Last spring after the
5 law was passed we issued an open RFP. The winning
6 team is led by Hester Street Collaborative. Hester
7 Street has extensive experience in working in
8 communities across the city on projects including
9 East Harlem Neighborhood Plan and the Neighborhoods
10 First Fund. This background has made them an ideal
11 partner for helping us address unprecedented
12 challenges and opportunities presented by developing
13 the City's first-ever cultural plan. Once we secured
14 city funding for the cultural plan in the FY 2017
15 budget, we moved quickly to get Hester Street under
16 contract and get the process up and running. Since
17 the fall, we've had a whirlwind of public engagement
18 of every stripe. It has been exhausting and
19 exhilarating. More importantly, it has reminded us
20 just how important culture is to the lives of New
21 Yorkers. By showing up, posting events, and helping
22 engage constituents in all five boroughs, Council
23 Members have helped make this process a meaningful
24 way for New Yorkers to connect with their government
25 on issues that matter to them the most. Here are

2 just a few of the ways in which you and the Council
3 have participated in our ongoing work. Chair Van
4 Bramer addressed the audience gathered for the launch
5 of the event last October at Hostos Community College
6 in the Bronx. Council Member Ferreras-Copeland
7 welcomed participants to the Queens Borough workshop
8 at New York Hall of Science in Corona. Council
9 Member Cumbo welcomed the crowd at BRIC for the
10 Brooklyn workshop. Council Members Andy King and
11 Annabel Palma joined us at the Bronx Zoo for the
12 Bronx workshop. We also have a number of upcoming
13 meetings involving Council Members which I'll mention
14 later in my testimony. We are currently anticipating
15 the recent release of the plan on scheduled by June
16 30th of this year. Along with Hester Street
17 Collaborative, DCA, DCLA, and CreateNYC team have
18 hosted or participated in more than 182 events or
19 workshops to-date. We've had five borough wide
20 workshops, and by the way, you can follow on the
21 screen. You guys have this and there are some
22 pictures that show and picture is worth a thousand
23 words. We've tabled at 56 events across New York
24 City where we've distributed flyers and conducted
25 interviews and surveys. We've had one-on-one

2 meetings and roundtables with 84 groups. We've had 16
3 focus groups and discussions to examine issues in-
4 depth, and we've attended others' events in order to
5 hear more voices. In the Power Point you're seeing
6 on the screen, and which I'll leave copies for the
7 Council Members, you can see a more complete list of
8 these engagements. Stakeholders from across the city
9 have also used this opportunity to examine their own
10 communities' cultural assets and report to us with
11 feedback that will inform the plan. They have hosted
12 workshops, focus groups, meetings, office hours,
13 consultations, and other events. Youth, seniors,
14 people with disabilities, public housing residents,
15 LGBTQ communities, artists, arts administrators,
16 teaching artists, museum educators, business owners,
17 organized labor, faith-based communities, free-
18 lancers, new immigrants, native communities and
19 communities of color, and residents of neighborhoods
20 across the city will have their voices reflected in
21 the plan thanks to members of these communities who
22 have stepped up and participated. To describe just a
23 few of these in greater detail, we conducted
24 interviews at a NYCHA town hall meeting through
25 partnership with the Brooklyn Borough President's

2 Office at the Park Avenue Armory Youth Summit. We
3 participated in self-organized convenings led by the
4 cultural agenda fund, which is a pooled fund led by
5 New York Community Trust that supports cultural
6 advocacy in New York City. That was on [inaudible].
7 Our leadership team attended an all-afternoon
8 symposium organized by the Disability Arts New York
9 Taskforce, DANT, at the New School discussing issues
10 of diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and equity.
11 We've held focus groups, focus group discussion with
12 artists and cultural organizations, affordable space
13 developers and managers, service providers for
14 seniors in LGBTQ communities, and cultural anchors in
15 neighborhoods across New York City. Digital
16 engagement has also been a core strategy for the
17 cultural plan. Our website's "Question of the Week"
18 have garnered hundreds of responses. These questions
19 such as: How do you find out about New York City arts
20 and cultural events, and where might the increased
21 arts and cultural programs benefit your neighborhood?
22 Provides simple, accessible entry points for people
23 to consider the issues being addressed in the plan.
24 Through our own social media assets and with the help
25 of partners like the Parks Department, NYC and

2 Company, NYC EDC, and others we've reached a vast
3 audience and invited them to participate in a
4 planning process. We've reached over 50,000
5 individuals just through DCLA's CreateNYC activities
6 on Facebook alone. Last week we organized a
7 convening at Google's NYC headquarters with 72
8 cultural organizations that started with a 90-minute
9 discussion of the cultural plan and how technology
10 might be able to contribute to our goals for the
11 plan. Starting today, we're hosting a week-long
12 series of Twitter chats where we'll be discussing
13 equity, arts education, teen and youth cultural
14 participation, LGBTQ programming and queer spaces.
15 Another chat will focus on individual artists. For
16 these conversations we're asking how each issue is
17 important to NYC and how it can be sustained,
18 supported and made more inclusive. To participate in
19 the conversations, follow @nyculture. That's with
20 one "C" not nyculture, nyculture, and tweet using
21 the hashtag "createnyc." I've also brought a stack
22 of flyers that are available here today, and I think
23 they're over on the table over there. We knew from
24 the start that capturing the full breadth of culture
25 at its experience by millions of New Yorkers and

2 visitors would not be an easy task, but in additional
3 to the Council's support, we've had many active
4 partners in spreading the message and getting people
5 engaged. CreateNYC's Citizens Advisory Committee had
6 provided essential guidance-- I think the list of
7 Advisory Committee Members are there-- guidance and
8 support throughout the process. As you remember, the
9 CAC was appointed in November 2015 by the Mayor, City
10 Council and Borough Presidents, Chaired by
11 Rockefeller Brother Fund Ben Rodriguez-Cubenas who is
12 here today, and the CAC. The CAC includes artists,
13 administrators, labor representatives, community
14 organizers, advocates and more. The group's
15 extensive expertise and connections have been
16 instrumental to the programs, the progress we've made
17 to date. They've also been active partners in
18 soliciting input from organizing workshops to writing
19 thoughtful recommendations on behalf of their
20 constituents. The Cultural Affairs Advisory
21 Commission, an oversight body mandated by the City
22 Charter, has also been an essential partner
23 throughout the process led by Chair Susana Leval, who
24 is here as well, former Director of El Museo del
25 Barrio. The Commission includes cultural leaders

2 from diverse disciplines and communities across New
3 York. In regular meetings, they've offered guidance,
4 support and feedback that has enhanced the public
5 engagement process. We've also held joint meetings
6 with the CAAC and the plan's Cultural Advisory
7 Committee which provide opportunities to tap the
8 expertise of both groups. We are also pleased that
9 other funders have stepped up to support the efforts
10 of local groups to engage their communities. The New
11 York Cultural Agenda Fund has provided support to 12
12 local organizations specifically to conduct
13 engagement for the cultural plan. Grantees include
14 the Asian American Arts Alliance, the Center for Arts
15 Education along with the Alliance for Quality
16 Education, King Manner Museum, Staten Island Arts,
17 AMERINDA, and the Cultural Equity Coalition. The
18 Rockefeller Brothers Fund has also provided support
19 to Hester Street to expand engagement capacity for
20 the planning process. A number of groups and
21 individuals have submitted formal feedback, lending
22 their deep expertise of various topics for the
23 benefit of the planning process. These include ACRE
24 that is Artists Co-creating Real Equity, Disability
25 Arts Network of New York Taskforce, DANT, the

2 Cultural Equity Group, and members of the City's DIY
3 community. The process itself has been helpful and
4 we have not waited for the finished plan to take some
5 action. For one, we have concluded that we want to
6 provide more opportunities to listen to residents
7 going forward. We've seen an incredible appetite
8 from people across backgrounds to show up and be
9 heard. To provide one example, at the start of the
10 process, we inaugurate a series called "Office Hours
11 with the Commissioner." The idea is that on a
12 regular basis anyone can join me and members of the
13 DCLA staff for face-to-face conversation about issues
14 that are important to them. We've hosted six office
15 hours, so far topics including public art, aging in
16 the art and neighborhood change. One well-attended
17 meeting was with the group of DIY art spaces which we
18 hosted in the wake of the tragic ghost ship fire in
19 Oakland. In anticipation of the meeting, members of
20 the DIY community drew up a list of formal
21 recommendations to submit to me personally. They
22 have continued to organize independently, inspired by
23 the opportunity to come together and have an open
24 dialogue about the unique issues facing them. I look
25 forward to continue to learn more from and work with

2 this vital community of artists and art spaces. We
3 envision these office hours' meetings to be a
4 roundtable with perhaps 20 participants, but they
5 rapidly grew. The last couple have been in the range
6 of a hundred or so New Yorkers. People have a lot to
7 tell us, and we want to listen. These office hours
8 have given us a great platform for this. We're
9 considering in ways to continue these conversations
10 even after the plan is released. We have also
11 committed to a close examination of how CreateNYC can
12 help enhance issues of access and inclusion for
13 people with disabilities. As I mentioned, DANT has
14 been providing feedback pertinent to disability arts
15 and disability access issues, and we've invested in a
16 consultant expert who has helped provide us guidance,
17 and that's Christine Bruno, who is sitting right over
18 here. The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities
19 has also been an essential ally and resource. Last
20 week, I participated in a Facebook Live conversation
21 with Simi Linton, a member of our Advisory Commission
22 and author of the excellent book, "Claiming
23 Disability." The plan is giving us an opportunity to
24 examine our current practice in this regard and to
25 make changes where possible. For instance, our

2 Disability Access Coordinator has already made our
3 public meetings and our RFP process more inclusive.
4 Thanks in large part to conversations we've had in
5 the planning process, we're also creating a new
6 position at the agency who will head Disability Arts
7 and Disability Inclusion as an explicit part of the
8 job description. Another major advancement we've
9 made through the planning process is cementing and
10 growing our connections across other city agencies.
11 We've long had strong partnerships in places like the
12 Department of Education, Sanitation, Design and
13 Construction and Department for the Aging. Recent
14 collaborations have included Veteran's Affairs,
15 Immigrant Affairs, Small Business Services, the
16 Administration for Children's Services and others.
17 CreateNYC has given us the occasion to build new
18 connections with staff from partners like the Center
19 for Health Equity. The Director and Staff of this
20 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene program have
21 a deep appreciation for the role art and culture can
22 play in the overall health of a community. This
23 demonstrates what we mean when we say that the
24 CreateNYC isn't just a plan for the Department of
25 Cultural Affairs. We've been working with residents

2 to build comprehensive vision for how arts and
3 culture can become a vital component of building
4 healthy communities across the City. This means that
5 arts and culture can't be seen as a distinct element.
6 The extra you support once things are-- like safety,
7 health and transportation are taken care of. Culture
8 is interconnected with all of these. While we're
9 still deeply engaged in the listening phase of this
10 process, we have noticed patterns emerge. The topics
11 that were written into the law include: the
12 availability and distribution of cultural activities
13 throughout the City; the relationship between
14 cultural activities and social and economic health;
15 the needs of artists regarding affordable housing and
16 workspace; increasing arts education and cultural
17 programming in schools and afterschool; how cultural
18 activities can be incorporated into community
19 development, economic development and land use
20 planning processes and policies; and how city
21 agencies will coordinate with respect to cultural
22 activities. These topics often serve as a starting
23 point to frame the conversations we have with the
24 public, but in our dialogue with any given group, new
25 ideas, priorities and interests soon emerge. For

2 example, as mentioned earlier, we've heard of the
3 need for more support and safety upgrades for DIY
4 community. We've heard of people's desires for more
5 support in navigating government processes as they
6 create and present art. We've heard the desire for
7 greater investment in cultural organizations that are
8 indigenous to low-income communities. We've heard
9 diverse arts professionals express the desire to have
10 investments focus on their professional advancement
11 and growth. We've listened to the challenges artists
12 face when they're weighed down by the triple burden
13 of student debt, rent and workspace cost. This
14 affordability crisis applies to organizations as well
15 as individuals. We have heard repeatedly that
16 organizations are being priced out of certain areas,
17 and that there are parts of New York that are lacking
18 in culture resources. We also hear that people have
19 trouble accessing the resources that are present, and
20 across the board we have heard strong support for
21 arts education for kids both in and out of school. In
22 addition to frank and open engagement around New
23 Yorker's concerns, ideas and hopes for culture in
24 their communities, we've heard plenty of feedback
25 about the process of developing a plan itself. We've

2 made substantial effort to include groups of diverse
3 sizes, disciplines and geographies, but we know that
4 there is still more we can reach. We've heard from
5 individual artists through the DIY office hours,
6 borough workshops, digital feedback, and so on, but
7 in other forums artists have told us that they feel
8 left out. So we scheduled meetings specifically
9 aimed at artists. We've redoubled our efforts to
10 listen more often and more carefully. We're always
11 looking for ways to connect with additional groups.
12 The good news is we're still deeply engaged in the
13 listening process, and we want to hear from as many
14 people as we can. That is the summary of what we
15 have done so far. Here's what's next. The next big
16 milestone will be releasing draft recommendations in
17 April. We plan to provide an opportunity for people
18 to respond to the drafts through public events and
19 through online portal, and we want to make sure that
20 we connect as broad a spectrum of New Yorkers as we
21 can to inform these recommendations. So, please,
22 help us to reach your constituents however you can.
23 We have tool kits for hosting CreateNYC events,
24 surveys for the general public and the cultural
25 workers, and a range of upcoming events, and ways

2 people can participate in conversations online. Just
3 let us know what will be the most effective and we'll
4 do everything we can to make it happen. We look
5 forward to seeing you at events in the near horizon.
6 Council Member Koo, we're glad-- has he arrived? No.
7 We're glad that you can join us at a discussion with
8 Flushing's Mandarin speaking community at Flushing
9 Town Hall. Council Member Levin, we're grateful that
10 your office is stepping up and hosting a public
11 workshop in Greenpoint, and Chair Van Bramer, we're
12 excited that you're co-hosting an upcoming workshop
13 this week, yes, at the Museum of Moving Image with
14 NYCHA residents in your district. We're lucky to
15 have your insight and support. Additional upcoming
16 engagement includes the following: Through our
17 partnership at the library system, 35 library
18 branches in all five boroughs will have onsite
19 engagement with patrons and cultural program
20 participants using CreateNYC survey materials. These
21 will be available in English, Spanish, Chinese,
22 Bangla, Russian, Arabic, and accessible via screen
23 readers through braille and talking book library.
24 Real abilities will be at Real Abilities Film
25 Festival, Carnegie Hall Neighborhood Concerts at La

2 Guardia Performing Arts Center, Dance NYC 2017
3 Symposium, Council District 36, Bedford-Stuyvesant
4 Working for your Neighborhood Town Hall, CreateNYC
5 Office Hours with the Commissioner-- we have one
6 coming up with Disability and the Cultural Plan--
7 Staten Island Arts Spring Conference, CreateNYC Town
8 Hall Immigrant Artists and Artists of Color, the
9 Share, series with young people who live in NYCHA
10 housing, and many more. For anyone who can't attend
11 upcoming events, as I mentioned, copies of the
12 CreateNYC Public Survey and flyers for this week's
13 series of Twitter chats are available. Visit
14 CreateNYC.org for more ways to participate from
15 sending a tweet to hosting an event. We want
16 everyone to participate, whatever level works for
17 them. We've connected with a huge range of New
18 Yorkers in a short window of time. We also want to
19 talk to many more before we're through. We're
20 committed to working with you to make sure we hear
21 from every-- from enough people to produce a vital
22 living document that can serve as a touch-stone for
23 everyone who cares about art and culture in New York
24 City. Thank you for your support, and I'm happy to
25 answer questions at this time.

2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
3 much, Commissioner. I also want to recognize Council
4 Member Costa Constantinides from Queens, also a
5 member of the committee. So, first question going
6 big, tell us a few of the things that you learned in
7 this process that you didn't know before it began
8 about how better to serve the community that
9 obviously you've spent much of your life working with
10 and for?

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Well, I'll say
12 first of all that as I think you know at the Queens
13 Museum we had something called Art Access, which was
14 a, you know, very good program that actually included
15 very diverse audiences of people with disabilities at
16 the Queens Museum. What I've learned is that
17 disability arts goes beyond audiences, that it means
18 that we need to have artists with disabilities
19 showing and dancing and performing and staff members
20 with disabilities on our staff, and that-- when we
21 did our diversity survey we had very, very poor
22 information when it came to disability. That's 10
23 percent of New York City. So this is a personal
24 journey of mine. I've been helped by amazing people,
25 including Christine and Simi Linton and some other

2 sort of mentors in this area. So that's been big. I
3 mean, I thought coming into this that's a bigger
4 issue than I had personally. And then, I mean, I
5 think that there is some parts of where there's stuff
6 coming to us that we had expected. When we've been
7 borough workshops we've looked at, for example, in
8 Queens people say there's a lot of arts and culture
9 on the seven train [sic] corridor. There's not a lot
10 of arts and culture. There's arts and -- there are
11 artists. There are organizations, but where there's
12 sort of resources in south-- in, you know, off the
13 seven train corridor. In Staten Island it's a
14 north/south divide. That has been interesting, sort
15 of the geographic things that are on people's minds.
16 Same thing in Brooklyn, that kind of north/south
17 divide. It's interesting. It's quite-- borough to
18 borough you hear that a lot. Another thing that's
19 come up a lot is just how do I get to know. And
20 that's sort of-- a lot of that's coming from
21 organizations. From individuals it's like, how do I
22 get to know what's going on? You know, I live in,
23 whatever, Elmhurst. I don't know what's going on in
24 Flushing. Like, those barriers that exist within the
25 City and how can we connect people across those

2 boundaries, like social boundaries, language
3 boundaries, etcetera. That's come up much more than
4 I had expected at all the borough. I've been to-- I
5 haven't been to 182 of these. I've been to probably
6 60 or 70 and all those big borough workshops that
7 came up a lot.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And so obviously
9 there's geographic, political and other subdivisions
10 that you're becoming more familiar with I would
11 imagine by the day. Talk to me about language access
12 and how you're reaching deeper into our immigrant
13 communities and some folks who may not speak English
14 as a first language or who may not speak English at
15 all, but who are very much New Yorkers and deserving
16 of this process.

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So we've had
18 events in Spanish and Mandarin. We have actually
19 Spanish and Mandarin-speaking staff members. We've
20 translated live into ASL, and we've created materials
21 that are in Spanish, Mandarin and other languages.
22 It's been interesting because just to have let's say
23 translation service available at a meeting doesn't
24 mean you have a diverse group. So, for example,
25 actually at the hall of science we had a pretty good

2 turn-out. I think we had three or four tables which
3 are exclusively Spanish-speaking. So translation
4 services were much better used at that. We've had
5 the ASL services at all of our big borough meetings.
6 Sometimes that's been highly useful-- best use in
7 Brooklyn. So, it's interesting that, you know, sort
8 of opening doors is one thing. Getting people to
9 walk through the doors is another question. So we do
10 have another Mandarin-speaking town-- not town hall,
11 but meeting coming up in Flushing town hall in a
12 couple weeks, Monday. So, and we have had also focus
13 groups that have taken place in different languages.
14 So, it's a big part of New York City. We have made a
15 lot of efforts to do it. We've been relatively
16 successful.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, talk to me a
18 little bit about the criticism that the process has
19 sustained. I've certainly seen some of it--

20 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
21 Yeah.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: on social media
23 as well, some of it about Hester, some of it about
24 you. Speak to some of the things that-- maybe you

2 heard at that one town hall that I was talking about
3 where I saw you actually referenced on social media--

4 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

5 Yeah, no that was actually in-- it was at [inaudible]
6 block [sic], I think the one that you're talking
7 about.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, that's

9 right.

10 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, yeah.

11 So, actually I think some of the critics from that
12 are actually here today. So maybe they can tell you
13 in their testimony.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I bet they will.

15 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, I think
16 so.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: But I'm
18 interested to hear your take--

19 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

20 So, no--

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: on it first.

22 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: And the thing
23 is about it, you know, as a public official you have
24 to listen. You have to take it in and see whether
25 there are, you know-- you can't just-- you can't get

2 defensive. So, I mean, one of the criticisms that
3 was brought up was, you know, the question of whether
4 we actually hired racial equity consultants,
5 specifically for the cultural plan. And so we have
6 hired a consultant that's part of the diversity
7 initiative. We've done focus groups, etcetera. So
8 we're in that process. So we have done that. So, some
9 of the questions, like for example with artists, and
10 there was some article that said, you know, people
11 were not listening to artists. So we actually
12 specifically contacted even specifically the artists
13 who are in that, said come on in. Let's have a-- we
14 have a meeting coming up with some of those artists,
15 and we have other individual artists meetings coming
16 forward. So what we're saying is-- I mean, what will
17 be a terrible moment is when the plan's out and
18 people say I wasn't heard. If people say they're not
19 heard right now today, it's the right time to do it.
20 We're still doing it. We're still in the engagement
21 process. So if people like they're not being heard,
22 we are really trying to reach out, and if people feel
23 again that they are still not being heard, we are
24 open and please contact us. So, we've had, you know,
25 in-depth conversations with many, many thousands of

2 people already and we expect to have more. We've got
3 a couple of more months of the engagement process.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Have-- so did
5 you get anything constructive from those artists?
6 Because I too have heard from some individual artists
7 including at least one member of some of these
8 advisory committees, that that person too was hearing
9 from individual artists.

10 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes, yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: They weren't
12 being--

13 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

14 So, I mean--

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: included. So,--

16 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, some of it
17 is--

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I guess I would
19 just say what specifically? Because obviously those
20 artists found a way to that particular forum to voice
21 that on behalf of artists everywhere. What changes
22 then are you making in response to that to reach not
23 just those folks who showed up at BRIC or whatever,
24 or FAB, but where all those artists who they're
25 speaking for?

2 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, so I
3 mean, so by the way there's two parts of what artists
4 are saying that keep coming up, and one is just the
5 straight up affordability problem, and we've had lots
6 of discussions about affordability issues. We've
7 had, you know, convenings around affordable workspace
8 and affordable, you know, live/workspace for artists
9 etcetera. The other has to do with the role of
10 artists or both as kind of perpetrators of and
11 victims of gentrification. So that's something where
12 people are saying, you know, we want to make sure
13 that whatever happens in this plan doesn't lead to
14 more displacement of communities, and that, you know,
15 could mean that you're an artist living in a
16 particular community and that other artists coming in
17 are actually spurring the upward, you know, spiral of
18 real estate prices, etcetera. So that idea of how
19 can we allow artists to thrive in place, both thrive
20 and thrive in place and not be displaced? So, these
21 are some of the issues that keep coming up, and these
22 are issues that were actually discussed in the law
23 which was understood like artists-- affordability for
24 artists, but affordability for artists and weaving
25 that into the whole question about displacement is

2 something that's come up. So we have had-- so then
3 one of the discussion was about that there was Fourth
4 Art [sic] Spot [sic] really did talk in some depth
5 about that, but that's not the last one. We have
6 some individual artists. When is our next individual
7 artist-- So we have both online stuff? So there's
8 one of the Twitter chats this week is going to be
9 about artists and their roles and all these same
10 issues. What was the second one? We have the
11 Twitter-- oh we have it. So we have-- we're doing
12 surveys, and one of the surveys is specifically for
13 artists and art workers. So you saw that the surveys
14 that we've been doing to the general public are very
15 general. Like how do you come across cultural
16 resources? People who are artists where that's their
17 life, and art workers, and by the way that's a lot of
18 the same people. A lot of artists are also working
19 at museums as arts educators and all that kind of
20 stuff. So there's a special survey also going out to
21 them.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, how is the
23 online organizing going, right? Because if you're
24 talking about how you're actually going to really
25 reach out and dig deeper in terms of reaching

2 individual artists, and you know, I've been thinking
3 a lot about the-- you know, something really big
4 happened in November 8th, in the middle of this
5 process, right? And there's been a lot of organizing
6 around that event. I think all of you know which
7 event I'm talking about, right? There's a dreadful
8 event, let me be very clear. But there's been this
9 explosion of grassroots organizing, right, that I
10 think is the only good thing that's actually come out
11 of November 8th. And so you've got people mobilized,
12 organized. You know, you put something about
13 resistance and indivisible online and you get
14 thousands of responses. Are you tapping into that?
15 Now, I understand obviously there's a non-partisan
16 and non-political. Well, I wouldn't say non-
17 political, but it's a non-partisan--

18 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

19 Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There's a lot of
21 politics in arts, right? There's a lot of politics
22 in art, but you know, are doing stuff like that? Are
23 you finding those people because, you know, 400,000
24 people march in New York City, you know, and another
25

2 500,000 in D.C., but I was one, obviously a lot of
3 folks come from New York.

4 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There are a lot
6 of artists in there. People are fired up, and are
7 you reaching those folks? Are you trying to reach
8 those folks, and is your online organizing, if you
9 will, are you finding success with that?

10 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay, so
11 there's in a way two parts of that. One is we got a
12 very in-depth letter from the Design Trust for Public
13 Space about the use of public space for public
14 expression, which was absolutely created in the wake
15 of the election and the mass mobilization, and so
16 that wasn't particularly about artists. It was just
17 about the use of public space, but one of the things
18 that we are, you know, thinking deeply about is the
19 use of public space and how it-- so that's being fed
20 into-- that document is being fed into the plan. And
21 then so the what in terms of reaching artists, we
22 haven't been reaching artists in specifically in
23 relationship to the activism that's in the artist
24 community right now, but that always comes up. So,
25 we have, you know-- whenever we have artists in a

2 room, I think that the level of activism and the
3 level of understanding their roles in sort of public
4 spaces changed completely. So we have-- isn't NYFA
5 [sic]-- we're going to have a NYFA-- yeah, so New
6 York Foundation for the Arts is also organizing an
7 individual artist forum. And the other question I
8 think also which has come up also even with the
9 famous artwork in your district is the line between
10 political speech that's allowable by nonprofit
11 organizations. This is different from individual
12 artists, and that was a non-partisan work of art, but
13 it, you know, treaded a line of what is allowable not
14 by nonprofit. And so having--

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing] So
16 funny, at first I thought you were talking about the
17 sunbather, and--

18 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
19 No, no. I'm talking about what happened with--

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
21 Then I realized what you're--

22 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay, so, but
23 the-- we're also considering having some sort of
24 forum to discuss what is possible and legal and make

2 sure people don't get in trouble in their activism
3 that's occurring right now.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, no, I
5 think all that makes sense. I think all that makes
6 sense. I think though more of what I was getting at,
7 though, was somehow tapping into all of these folks
8 who are just incredibly mobilized right now, and
9 there's so much that's so exciting, and you might
10 find in that group, artists, those who care very much
11 about this, but were not plugged into us broader in
12 any more derecious [sic] way.

13 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Alright, I
14 mean, that's a very interesting suggestion. I think
15 we should talk about that. In other words, there are
16 artists, mobilized artist groups right now.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure.

18 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I will say also
19 that, you know, I said for example our open office
20 hours we're expecting 15 or 20 people sitting around
21 a table. The fact that 100 people are showing up for
22 those things now, I think people are activated in
23 general, right? People are showing up for stuff,
24 including the cultural plan stuff, a lot.

2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I think if you
3 just call a meeting in a phone booth, you'd get 100
4 people at this point. People are so fired up right
5 now.

6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's certainly
8 been our experience too as we're organizing these
9 town halls and whatnot. It's an amazing time,
10 difficult in many ways, but it's an amazing time to
11 be here and to be so active and mobilized. Community
12 Boards, are you going to every single Community Board
13 in the City of New York pitching this and trying to
14 get it out to everyone? We have been communicating
15 through the borough boards, but we haven't been
16 individually to every Community Board, not yet.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I would just
18 make that recommendation as someone who when I was a
19 community organizer for the Queens Library one of my
20 jobs was to go to all 14 Community Boards in Queens
21 and talk about the library and seek support for our
22 funding initiatives and whatnot, and I think the
23 Community Boards are actually more representative of
24 the grassroots and the people who are in the
25 communities and also many of them are leaders of

2 other organizations, and most are not specifically
3 maybe culturally related, but I think that's actually
4 part of who you want to get to are folks who are not
5 necessarily in the industry, but people who may--

6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

7 Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: have really
9 important things to say about this. So, does that--
10 so, can I take from that that you will endeavor to
11 have someone speak at all of our Community Boards?

12 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I will say
13 that's a great suggestion and going to Community
14 Boards is a good idea. I spent lots of time in
15 Community Boards in my adult life.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I will
17 follow up with you on that, and hope that you take
18 that on. Obviously, you have a little bit of time
19 left here before we do that. Obviously, one of the
20 things that we've all talked about is equity. Part
21 of that is about funding. Part of that is about
22 access to the funding. Part of it is about sort of
23 the pipeline and getting into the pipeline. How is
24 that coming up so far? Obviously, you're not even
25 yet at the point of having the draft, but can you

2 give us a little bit of a window into how you might
3 speak to that issue which I'm assuming is coming up
4 in lots--

5 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

6 Absolutely, no, it's absolutely coming up, and I
7 think it, you know, you're right, we're still in the
8 listening phase. We don't have draft recommendations
9 yet, but equity, lots of different kinds of equity
10 have been discussed, absolutely. It's geographic.
11 It's racial. It's age. It's disability. There's a
12 lot of equity issues that keep coming up, but I
13 don't-- like, I'm not going to, you know, present
14 recommendations right now, but absolutely. I think
15 at every meeting we've had pretty much that
16 discussion topic.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And you know,
18 without revealing your draft report, though, what are
19 you hearing in terms of the barriers to even being
20 aware that there is such a thing as a cultural
21 development fund or a cultural immigrant initiative
22 or other kinds of ways to draw down funding?

23 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Well, I mean,
24 I think one of the things that has come up repeatedly
25 in our workshops, or at least not-- not as repeatedly

2 as the ones that I just said before, is this idea
3 that the-- what is in every community as is a library
4 community library, and that those are organizations
5 that pretty much-- you know, that the-- as I
6 understand it, and I have to get these better
7 numbers. If you take the total attendance of the
8 cultural institution group and the CDF together, so
9 the total attendance of the cultural organizations
10 that we have contact with at the Department of
11 Cultural Affairs is a little over 40 million people,
12 which is very similar to all three library systems
13 put together. The big difference being the library
14 systems are almost all New Yorkers, you know, aside
15 from a small number of people coming for research
16 grants or something to go to the research libraries,
17 those 40 million or so visits are by people that live
18 in New York City. So there's this huge connection to
19 the library system in community after community. I
20 don't have to convince you of that as your long-term.
21 The idea of connecting with those systems that are
22 already in every community, and there is arts and
23 culture in every community as well. These are some
24 of the ideas that have come forward have been things
25 like how could you, you know, work with the libraries

2 and the cultures that are in every community to
3 spread the word, and I've met with personally with
4 each of the heads of the library systems to talk
5 about this, not that again that we have
6 recommendations yet, but that those-- that using that
7 system of communication, those are cultural
8 organizations each of those libraries, and they do a
9 lot of artistic programs. We're trying to research
10 that. That's one of the ideas that's--

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So no one
12 believes in the power of community libraries more
13 than myself, and meeting with the heads of the three
14 libraries is great, but if what we're talking about
15 is going to every single corner, every single
16 community, there are few institutions like the
17 library and so-- and obviously resources and time are
18 limited, but you know, it's-- it would be going out
19 to the Baisley Park Library or having some kind of
20 resources or information about this process in every
21 single community library and getting that kind of
22 buy-in so that anyone walking in to Rochdale Village
23 or, you know, Fordham, every Staten Island on Staten
24 Island, there's where you're going to get people
25 walking in the door who weren't thinking about

2 CreateNYC, weren't thinking about the cultural plan,
3 but who's upon seeing that are like, "Oh, I actually
4 have something to say about that."

5 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, we do
6 have-- not every library. I know there's 200 and--

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing] Two
8 hundred plus.

9 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Two hundred
10 and ten, whatever it is. Okay. We do have right now
11 there are 35 libraries in all boroughs that where
12 we're going to be gathering information. So we have--
13 - we do already have that. Not at all 210 or
14 whatever, but we are very conscious of the capacity
15 of the library system to reach into communities.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I'm going to turn
17 it over to Council Member Cumbo soon, but if you're
18 at 35 libraries, why wouldn't you be at every single
19 one?

20 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I mean, I
21 think it just has to do with the, you know, what
22 we've been able to talk to library system into-- you
23 know, there's some labor involved in this, and that's
24 where we came to. We can, you know, go back to them
25 and try to get them to expand it further, but it--

2 that's where we said okay, we want to use the library
3 system as a communication system to the people of New
4 York, let's do it, and that was a-- that's where we
5 ended up so far.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, just explain
7 to me then what is that level? Because obviously as
8 the person who used to do--

9 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
10 Yeah.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: government
12 affairs and community affairs and external affairs to
13 the library system, I would often interface with
14 other agencies or organizations, and sometimes it's
15 just putting a flyer up, you know, at the circulation
16 desk. Sometimes it might be staffing a table for a
17 few hours. Sometimes it's something much more
18 elaborate or labor intensive. But if it's just
19 having flyers or an information kiosk of some kind, I
20 would imagine that would be relatively simple to
21 achieve and get buy-in for, no?

22 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, you know
23 something, let me get back to you on that.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah.
25

2 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Because I mean,
3 you are an expert, an absolute expert in this, and
4 maybe you can help us with some suggestions. I, you
5 know, what I have in my testimony here which is you
6 know, reaching out-- I'll have to get back with you
7 with more information.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Look forward to
9 following up on Community Boards and libraries as
10 ways--

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
12 Yeah.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: of reaching out
14 in any other concerns that they may have. I have a
15 few more questions, but I want to get to Council
16 Member Cumbo before we hear from one of a number of
17 citizen testifiers today.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you,
19 Majority Leader Van Bramer. Wanted to focus in on
20 your testimony, Commissioner, where you say we are
21 currently anticipating releasing the plan on schedule
22 by June 30th of this year. So, we're basically in
23 March now, and so that's going to be here like that.
24 Will there be some sort of pre kind of discussion
25 about this? Because if it were to just come out just

2 June 30th and this is it, and how are you going to go
3 about the process of coming up with what you will be
4 comfortable releasing to the public, the community,
5 the elected officials? How will that actually
6 happen? And then my part two to that is the cultural
7 plan is based on what several cities across the
8 country have done, what city do you think this
9 cultural plan will most mirror so that we can start
10 to prepare ourselves? Is it going to be Chicago? Is
11 it going to be Houston?

12 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Where are we
14 basically looking at?

15 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Alright. So,
16 the first, to answer the first part of your question,
17 yes, we're going to give the City of New York the
18 opportunity to respond to the draft recommendations.
19 So it's not just going to come out and that's it.
20 There's going to be draft, excuse me, draft
21 recommendations are going to come out in April, which
22 is going to give people a period of time to respond.
23 We're going to have an online portal where people are
24 going to be able to express their opinions about
25 which parts of these are the most popular, the least

2 popular, what's been left out, etcetera. So, what
3 happened in Boston, apparently, I heard this second
4 hand, was that there was a draft circulating that
5 they hadn't shared with the public. It got leaked
6 out and everybody freaked out and that was
7 unfortunate. So we're going to intentionally send
8 out a draft plan, draft recommendations to see what
9 people think. In terms of which plan is-- I mean, I
10 actually quite-- I think Denver is a pretty good
11 plan. I like the way that it was structured. Chicago
12 might be the closest one to us, but the difference
13 between us and these other cities is that for the
14 most part they're writing these draft plans. Chicago
15 had-- virtually doesn't have a Cultural Affairs
16 Department. Boston literally didn't have a Cultural
17 Affairs Department. In 20 years they hadn't had a
18 commissioner. So we're coming in a different
19 situation which is we actually have a Department of
20 Cultural Affairs, and we're talking about how to do
21 the job better. So there's were kind of advocacy
22 documents with no backbone behind it. I think what
23 happened in Chicago was arts education ended up being
24 the number one priority of the people of Chicago,
25 which by the way is a huge issue here in New York

2 City. Lots of people keep talking about it at the
3 meetings. But you know, we already have that. The
4 Administration's already agreed that that's a huge
5 issue and has put a lot of money into it. So, I
6 don't think that there's a model exactly that we're
7 working from, but those, if you want to look at plans
8 we can send them to you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I would like that.

10 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Chicago and
11 Denver might be two to look at.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I would love that.

13 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay, and
14 Boston. Actually, Boston, Chicago and Denver, yeah.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: My other question
16 goes to the plans going to be ready June 30th--

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
18 Yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: which is
20 approximately the same day in theory that we close
21 the budget.

22 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Right.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I'm not sure if
24 this was brought up already. I apologize if it was.
25 Are you going to be utilizing some of these

2 recommendations concurrently with this current
3 budget, or are you going to be looking at starting
4 fresh in the new budget year? I just want to couple
5 that with the huge battle that we had around trying
6 to increase the budget by 10 million dollars for
7 programmatic funding for the agency. If that was
8 such a battle, is the agency, the Administration,
9 prepared to know there's going to be this cultural
10 plan that's coming up, we're going to have to get
11 ready to restructure our budget to encompass all of
12 these dynamic and incredible recommendations that
13 were brought forward, or do you think from the
14 struggle of the 10 million it's going to be a,
15 'figure out how to work within the parameters that
16 you're already in, restructure, re-look at, re-
17 evaluate, cut back and see,' or do you believe that
18 there is going to be an expansion?

19 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Wow, I mean
20 that-- first of all, thank you for bringing that up,
21 and I think it's extremely good points, and we're
22 going to have a budget hearing in a couple weeks,
23 right? So we're get into more depth than that. But
24 I think what you're saying, you know, absolutely,
25 June 30th the budget will have been adopted by the

2 time, the day we actually present the cultural plan,
3 and believe me, we're not presenting it any earlier
4 that. I can't imagine us being able to. I mean,
5 this is a mammoth undertaking for the agency. I've
6 never seen such a big project at the agency. So, I
7 think that part of it is going to have to be, and
8 we've always said there are going to be short, medium
9 and long-term recommendations. Some of the
10 recommendations might take years to enact, that we
11 want to get to x, y and z goal depending on what it
12 is, over the period of years. It's going to be-- you
13 know, the other big question, and again this is not
14 way above my pay scale to even consider, is what does
15 the city budget look like this year, right? And
16 we're going to know more from the federal government
17 in the next month or so. That's definitely not my
18 bailiwick to be talking about that. But the question
19 of when things get to be enacted is fundamental, and
20 I think that we shouldn't be, you know, putting all
21 our eggs in one basket, that all of the
22 recommendations for the plan can be enacted in this
23 budget year, given the fact that the budget rule had
24 been passed already.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: We did with the
3 girls' initiative, the girls' initiative that was
4 spearheaded by Speaker Mark-Viverito involved city
5 funding towards that initiative but also to be
6 matched by corporate philanthropy and that sort of
7 thing. Has there been a push so far or discussion and
8 we've discussed this, in order to bring additional
9 partners outside of just the city in order to enact
10 and realize these large goals?

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes, I mean,
12 actually this is something that you brought up at the
13 meeting in Brooklyn as a--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] Yes,
15 very passionate about that.

16 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, yeah,
17 yeah. So, the answer is, you know, there have been
18 discussions within the agency since that time. The
19 hay-day of corporate philanthropy in New York City is
20 not now. This is something-- I mean, for the arts. A
21 lot of organizations, and I see people nodding their
22 heads in the audience, have seen corporations turning
23 away from the arts. Now, there are certain ways I
24 think that we can argue for the arts as being
25 fundamental to community health, for example, that

2 might turn people back to it, and I think we're
3 planning to understand better some of those arguments
4 in the coming weeks and months, but there isn't-- so
5 what's happening is it's the pie is if corporate
6 plan-- I saw this at the Queens Museum while it was
7 just going-- getting smaller and smaller. And again,
8 some of these corporations are turning in the
9 direction of absolutely how can you argue with it
10 fantastic other initiatives that have to do with, you
11 know, social services, etcetera, but I'm-- so anyway,
12 in one of the questions that maybe we can talk about
13 further with is also how do we change the mindset
14 within corporations even to stay where they are and
15 not turn further away from the cultural field.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I think that this
17 would be a task and that way for the Department of
18 Cultural Affairs and the Administration on a larger
19 scale to put forward that goal and idea and
20 understanding that doing business in New York City
21 comes with a commitment to its cultural community,
22 and so many of the not-for-profits just don't have
23 the access or the entre or the time or the effort or
24 even knowing where to begin, and if we put forward
25 the strong demand that because it looks like a bait

2 and switch in a way in that so many corporations came
3 in, were supporting the arts, then all of the sudden
4 they've changed their interest to who knows what.
5 And so it was like the arts were the attractive thing
6 to do and they changed midstream as far as their
7 funding, and I think it's more than a coincidence
8 that they all decided that they were-- not all, but
9 the vast majority decided that they were going to
10 fund something else.

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, I-- yeah,
12 I mean agree with you, and I've seen it happen. I've
13 experienced it myself with certain funders. So, oen
14 of the questions would be what is an effective
15 campaign on behalf of corporate philanthropy for the
16 nonprofit arts sector that's been done elsewhere, or
17 what would the structure of a campaign be like that,
18 and should it be, or it most effective the government
19 runs that? So, I don't know the answer to that. I'd
20 be really interested I knowing if there are models
21 like that, and maybe somebody in the room knows a
22 model like that where a city has made an intentional
23 effort to try to get corporations to see part of
24 their citizenship be arts philanthropy. But yeah,
25 it's a tough one, and it's a hole. Like you know, we

2 always used to say, you know, any funding needs to be
3 a balance between corporations, foundations,
4 individuals, and government, right, and government is
5 only one part of that and so the other three
6 corporations-- I mean, foundations I think have
7 stayed very solidly in the arts sector. I haven't
8 seen foundations really in large sector move away
9 from it, but the corporations is the problem. So, I-
10 - so we could further investigate that. I would say
11 that I haven't seen in the-- we'll send you the
12 cultural plan-- major initiatives on behalf of
13 corporate philanthropy that have been part of those
14 plans. How can we do it? That's the question.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: And I want to add
16 with the corporations, this is probably more of
17 meeting discussion, but--

18 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
19 Yeah.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I also want to add
21 the development world into that discussion as well,
22 because in my district in the 35th Council District,
23 all of the development touts, "Move to the downtown
24 Brooklyn Cultural District. Move to the downtown
25

2 Brooklyn Cultural District. Buy your condo here.
3 Buy your luxury this here.”

4 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: But they're
6 utilizing the arts as a platform to attract people
7 but then do not invest in it in a way that would
8 allow the very thing that they're marketing to
9 sustain itself, and I think that that's a very
10 dangerous trend that the arts are being utilized to
11 bring development into communities, and then it's not
12 invested in. But wanted to just ask one more
13 question, and this one goes into the diversity
14 initiative in terms of having more of our cultural
15 institutions reflective of the diversity of the City
16 of New York. I'm sure that a portion of that is
17 going to be a part of the cultural plan, but this was
18 created outside of the cultural plan before it was or
19 going to be released. So where are we with that?

20 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, you're
21 right. It was a separate initiative that started
22 first before the cultural pan had been put into law.
23 We activated four million dollars this year of
24 funding on behalf of the diversity initiative. There
25 was the theater sub district council, 2.2 million

2 dollars of funding for diversity efforts in theater
3 which turned out to be because we knew from the
4 diversity survey that theater jobs were even less
5 diverse than the less-- as opposed to what's on
6 stage. There was a million dollars of diversity
7 efforts at CIG Institutions, half a million dollars
8 matched from us and half a million dollars from the
9 Rockefeller Foundation for the CUNY Cultural Corps.
10 So there were four different or three different
11 initiatives. We have conducted a series of focus
12 groups around diversity which we're going to analyze
13 and then make recommendations for trainings. So
14 that's all moving forward, but that's also feeding
15 into that knowledge. We have been taking action
16 already, but that knowledge will also be feeding into
17 the recommendations for the cultural plan. By the
18 way, also I just would like to say I was actually
19 walking around your district yesterday, and I went to
20 actually your old place Mocada [sic] and brick, and
21 to see the en--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] I
23 must have mixed the text message.

24 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: What's that?
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I must have mixed
3 the text. Just walking in my district. I'm just--

4 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

5 Did not text you. But I went. No, no, but so then
6 there is all that energy there and there are lots of
7 cultural organizations which will be already there
8 and which will be moving into certain parts, but
9 there is just this-- I mean, I go to your district on
10 a regular basis. Almost every time I'm there I'm
11 amazed at the crazy speed of development there. So,
12 I very much feel that.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay. That's just
14 my last question, but just comment to close. I
15 believe that in terms of the diversity initiative
16 throughout our institutions, one of the things that I
17 was disappointed by is that many of the local
18 community-based organizations were not really
19 utilized or figured or strategized in terms of how do
20 we utilize these smaller cultural not-for-profit
21 organizations, particularly in the outer boroughs, as
22 part of a training ground not only to enter into the
23 large institutions, but also how to strengthen their
24 existing staff and their board membership, and how do
25 we do that by utilizing a combination of all of those

2 different elements versus only looking or exclusively
3 looking at the large institutions. So, everybody can
4 benefit from everybody. The larger can benefit from
5 the smaller. The smaller can benefit from the mid-
6 size. The mid-size-- it's a whole process, and I'd
7 like to see that in the cultural plan, but would like
8 to see that in this initiative as it's already been
9 set up.

10 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Right. So, I'd
11 just say two things to that, and I agree with that.
12 So, first of all, the CUNY Cultural Corps which we
13 launched this year with 80, 75 or 80, CUNY students
14 getting paid internships at CIG Institutions will be
15 spreading to the non-CIG Institutions in the next
16 phase, and that'll be--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing]
18 That's good.

19 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes. I'll just
20 leave it at that there. I have another point, but
21 I've lost it.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. I
24 wanted to follow up on something that Council Member
25 Cumbo said. You met with hundreds of groups and

2 thousands of people. how about the Department of
3 City Planning itself, because they are the folks who
4 come up with rezonings and lots of big plans for
5 districts including my own, maybe Council Member
6 Cumbo's as well, and what kind of conversations are
7 you having with the Department of City Planning about
8 how we're including culture, our artists, at the
9 beginning and if and when possible mandating support
10 for the arts for culture-- for the artists that could
11 include affordable workspaces? Seems to me like
12 there's got to be early buy-in from the Department of
13 City Planning, and I'm assuming they're part of this
14 as well.

15 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes, yes.
16 Absolutely. No, they're in fact required by law to
17 be part of it, part of the-- one of the sections said
18 that, you know, how arts and culture could be
19 integrated in planning or something like that. So
20 we've been, yeah, actively talking to Planning, and
21 one of the ways that we found to be effective is this
22 idea of the Building Community Capacity Program,
23 which builds coalitions, community coalitions, which
24 actually then hire their own with our funding
25 organizer to create those horizontal connections, not

2 just between arts and culture and artists but also
3 other nonprofits like bookstores, etcetera, within
4 communities, and we're working in sort of East New
5 York, Brownsville, Jamaica, Queens, up in Washington
6 Heights, Inwood, and South Bronx. So there are four
7 different places in the city where we're doing that,
8 and that has integrated. A lot of these are rezoning
9 or communities that are in the process of community
10 change that we think to be ineffective. It's very
11 labor intensive, lots of meetings, way to connect
12 people around changing communities, and that's been
13 quite, let's say, welcomed by Planning as well. So,
14 something like that which creates coalitions in these
15 communities.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So that's work
17 you're already doing with the Department of City
18 Planning--

19 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
20 Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: as it relates to
22 those communities.

23 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Right.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Why is Long
25 Island City not in that mix?

2 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: We only have
3 so far four-- funding to do four of them, but we,
4 believe me, think is an effective program, and we'd
5 like to expand it to other communities. One of the
6 questions is, how does that play into the cultural
7 plan or not?

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: But shouldn't
9 every rezoning, or wouldn't it be good if out of this
10 process came a recommendation, and therefore an
11 implementation [sic] that every rezoning in the City
12 of New York had such a culturally driven approach or
13 at least aspect to it?

14 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes. It would
15 be good.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I'm making
17 that recommendation right now--

18 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
19 To the cultural plan--

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: and--

21 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
22 okay, we have a recommendation [sic].

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, let's--

24 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing] I
25 have the Building Community Capacity, some of the

2 team members are here, and they're nodding and
3 smiling.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's great. I
5 also, I think as we're kind of going down that road
6 with Long Island City potentially with the
7 Administration proposing a rezoning.

8 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And a few of
10 yours [sic] have been driven by culture but then also
11 suffered as a result of the hotness of the market.

12 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Right.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Like Long Island
14 City. So, I would certainly hope that you would
15 include that as well. And I want to recognize that
16 we've been joined by Council Member Peter Koo from
17 Queens and we have lots of people who are scheduled
18 to testify. We will go to a clock for those
19 testimonies so we can hear from as many people as
20 possible, but I think this was a helpful check-in, if
21 you will. There's certainly a lot of outstanding
22 question. I also just want to point out that as this
23 committee compiled an annual report that's on every
24 Council Members' desk and I've also given to you, and
25 we'll try and make this available online, but the

2 Committee's Report shows just how much we have
3 accomplished together and while we certainly and I
4 believe we should push for more funding, and out of
5 this process should come a mandate for more funding
6 for the arts, I want to say that we have had some
7 really good successes working together, both this
8 council and the Administration, and we just want more
9 of that, and then we want to make sure that access
10 and equity are a part of that. So, I'll say thank
11 you to the Commissioner and his team for now, and
12 then I'm going to call the first panel of four.

13 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Can I just say
14 also--

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
16 Yes.

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: thank you
18 because I mean, look, we're spending-- we've go to
19 into 182 meetings. Doesn't mean we're not working on
20 all this other stuff simultaneously.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I'm sorry.

22 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, to Council
23 Member Cumbo and Van Bramer and everybody that worked
24 on that percent for art update, fantastic. That's a

2 big victory for arts and culture in New York City,
3 and thank you so much.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, no, there
5 are a number of victories in this report that
6 everyone should feel really good about across the
7 City. So, again, we just released this today, my
8 office and the committee staff, Amenta Killawan [sp?]
9 to my right and Chloe Rivera [sp?] to my left and my
10 staff, Matt Wallace and Andres Bija [sp?], and others
11 have put it together, and it's certainly something
12 worth reading in terms of where we're at in funding
13 legislation and in the arts in general in the City of
14 New York, something we're very proud of. So, thank
15 you. We will be in constant contact, and-- I thought
16 you were raising your hand. So, thank you all very
17 much, and folks can feel free to message me as well
18 and checking my Twitter as often as I can on the
19 hearing. So, we will go to our first panel, Susana
20 Leval from the Mayor's Cultural Commission, Leslie
21 Schultz from BRIC, Doctor Marta Moreno Vega, and Lane
22 Harwell. Those will be the first four presenters.
23 We'll go to a clock. We'll try and do this as
24 meaningfully and expeditiously as possible so
25 everyone who is signed up, and there are a lot, will

2 have an opportunity to testify, and I hope the
3 Department of Cultural Affairs staff will be hanging
4 along. In fact, the Commissioner's still in the back
5 of the room, but certainly there are lots of folks
6 from his team who are here to hear this testimony to
7 hear from all of you about this process and how it's
8 going so far and how it can be done better going
9 forward. So, why don't we start with you always on
10 the left to the right? When the Sergeant at Arms are
11 ready they'll let us know. Go ahead.

12 SUSANA LEVAL: Good afternoon. I am
13 Susana Torruella Leval, and honored to function as
14 Chair of the Mayor's Cultural Advisory Commission.
15 Thank you for the opportunity to testify. During the
16 past year I have been privileged to observe the
17 process of drafting a cultural plan for the City of
18 New York. It is the most ambitious cultural
19 initiative I've observed during my 40 years' work in
20 this city's art world. The cultural plan's
21 priorities, equity, access and diversity have emerged
22 from hundreds of community meetings convened over the
23 past six months. The Department of Cultural Affairs,
24 DCLA, a national leader among cultural agencies, has
25 gathered the City's artists, its cultural

2 organizations, art experts, community leaders,
3 cultural leaders, activists, and residents, and
4 included other New York City agencies as potential
5 partners. The process is intended to produce a
6 living blueprint for the availability and
7 distribution of cultural activity throughout the five
8 boroughs. Now in its final stage of information
9 gathering, the final plan will prioritize cultural
10 activity issues repeatedly voiced at community
11 gatherings in all boroughs, equity, access,
12 affordability, education, all importantly within
13 parameters that prevent displacement of local culture
14 and community through sensitive planning and
15 development. Affordable housing and workplaces for
16 artists are a high priority. I have never seen such
17 a wide net cast, nor have I experienced listening and
18 participation at such an intense level. The cultural
19 plan will next go to the editing stage, calling the
20 research of the past months. In April, communities
21 will again have input into the processes, into the
22 process. It is particularly important that
23 individuals and groups who feel the plan has omission
24 or problems give us clear input about their
25 objections at this point.

2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: If you could just
3 summarize the remaining portion.

4 SUSANA LEVAL: Upon its release in July,
5 the cultural plan is projected to function as a
6 blueprint for action, and the real work will begin,
7 helping communities implement solutions to the
8 concerns and issues they identified, finding
9 solutions, funding to implement those solutions, and
10 intense analysis and evaluation of what's working and
11 what isn't as implementation goes forward. Over time
12 I am certain that the cultural plan will be
13 internalized into the complex workings of the New
14 York City's machinery. Why do I believe this?
15 Because we New Yorkers profoundly believe the arts of
16 the lifeblood of this city. When this integration
17 happens, I hope all New York City residents, and
18 especially artists, will believe that the cultural
19 plan was drafted with them in mind, and that it can
20 work. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Doctor Vega?

22 DOCTOR MARTA MORENO VEGA: [speaking
23 Spanish] Good afternoon. I entitled my presentation
24 "The Process of Continued Inequity," and this is
25 informed by a series of meetings we've had entitled,

2 "The Art of Justice." It is informed by series of
3 panels with experts in the field, students,
4 community. So the input has been diverse. In the
5 era of intolerance, the national climate continues to
6 heighten the attack on those of us who have been
7 historically marginalized based on race, culture,
8 aesthetic grounding, immigration, religious belief,
9 and fluid identities. We are on the frontal attack.
10 In the process we must insist and make clear that
11 systems that continue to marginalize and culturally
12 oppress our communities be uncovered, challenged and
13 deconstructed. To date, the process of the New York
14 Cultural Plan is designed to silence the inequity and
15 continues to exist in a vacuum, not addressing the
16 distribution of funds, the equitable distribution of
17 funds by the New York Department of Cultural Affairs.
18 The framing of issues don't address the inequitable
19 destruction of our communities. The citywide
20 meetings do not necessarily include working families,
21 because they happen at a time where people have the
22 necessity of working and do not have the privilege of
23 coming to meetings like this. The Caribbean Cultural
24 Center African Diaspora Institute's position is that
25 the lobbying and lobbyist employed by the Cultural

2 Institutions Group sustained an inequity process.

3 The relationship of CIG's with the New York

4 Department of Cultural Affairs access to foundations

5 and corporations place us in a disadvantaged

6 position. We know that the CIG groups and others are

7 requesting 40 million dollars. My position, the

8 Caribbean Cultural Center's position, our

9 fellowships, the broader audiences that we're dealing

10 with are in fact saying that the 40 million dollars

11 should go to the most vulnerable in this city. CIG

12 is asking-- CCCDAI is asking that 40 million be

13 allocated to community-based cultural organizations

14 that are not on city property and those who have

15 budgets of less than 10 million dollars and are in

16 communities that are on the front line.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: If you could

18 summarize the remainder. I'm reading through your

19 testimony, and that is certainly--

20 DOCTOR MARTA MORENO VEGA: [interposing]

21 Again I know I will--

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

23 Yep.

24 DOCTOR MARTA MORENO VEGA: Again, I note

25 that the community-based cultural organizations with

2 budgets that with less than 10 million dollars
3 grounded in communities during this period of
4 national crisis are essential, that the funding
5 awarded to our organizations provide not only
6 programmatic funds, but administrative and
7 operational support to assure the essential cultural
8 art spaces we represent to our communities of safe
9 spaces, sanctuary locations that protect our
10 communities. The objective is to assure that the
11 cultural art life is in line with the New York as a
12 Sanctuary City. The cultural plan must address
13 equity for all.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

15 Leslie?

16 LESLIE SCHULTZ: Good afternoon and thank
17 you-- am I on? Okay, sorry. Good afternoon and
18 thank you for the opportunity to testify, and
19 Chairman Van Bramer, thank you for the vision and
20 leadership in making the New York City Cultural Plan
21 a reality. I'm Leslie Schultz, President of BRIC.
22 BRIC has had three significant opportunities to
23 engage in the CreateNYC process, the process
24 developed by Commissioner Finkelpearl and his team at
25 the Department of Cultural Affairs along with Hester

2 C. Collaborative has been remarkably open so far.

3 First we are privileged to host the Brooklyn Borough-
4 wide CreateNYC workshop at BRIC House in December.

5 Our BRIC House Ballroom was filled with more 200

6 people eager to share their ideas in how New York

7 City can better support arts and culture, and we were

8 thrilled that Council Member Cumbo addressed the

9 group at that event. Second, through generous

10 support of the New York City Cultural Agenda Fund,

11 BRIC and the Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance surveyed

12 well over 200 downtown Brooklyn stakeholders about

13 their cultural needs. We also convened a lively

14 community conversation about how we can keep arts and

15 culture vibrant in downtown Brooklyn. And third, as

16 a member of the New Coalition of Culturals and City

17 Buildings, BRIC met with the DCLA and CreateNYC team

18 to share input and help inform the development of the

19 cultural plan and submitted a set of policy

20 recommendations to the team after that. Through this

21 rich engagement in the vital process, BRIC believes

22 that the process has successfully catalyzed new

23 conversations across the field and across the City.

24 We understand that there have been a good deal of

25 open meetings, and we have seen directly engagement

2 by young people, seniors, educators, small business
3 owners, community organizer, disability rights
4 activists and health providers among others. This
5 broad engagement will help ensure that the needs and
6 priorities of all New Yorkers are reflected in the
7 cultural plan. Our recommendations moving forward is
8 that the plan should have thriving cultural
9 organizations at its core and particularly community-
10 based organizations. Second, the plan should seek to
11 increase engagement of nontraditional audiences with
12 cultural organization by leveraging partnerships
13 between arts organizations and community-based
14 organizations and businesses by activating public
15 gathering spaces to meet people where they are by
16 supporting emerging curators from traditionally
17 unrepresented cultures and by diversifying the
18 workforce of cultural organizations. And finally,
19 the city should invest in artists and youth by
20 prioritizing programs that directly support artists'
21 fees and incentivize youth participation. We draw
22 your attention to the federal CETA [sic] Program as a
23 great model, as well as you to consider an expansion
24 of the city's summer youth employment program to pay
25 teens a stipend to participate in classes at local

2 arts organizations. Thank you for your time and
3 consideration.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
5 much, Leslie, and for the recommendations. I want to
6 recognize we've been joined by Council Member Julissa
7 Ferreras-Copeland, also on the committee. And we'll
8 hear the next testimony.

9 KIM SAVARINO: Alright. Lane sends his
10 apologies. He had to run out. Good afternoon. I'm
11 Kim Savarino. I'm the Vice Chair of The Dance/NYC
12 Junior Committee. On behalf of the service
13 organization Dance/NYC, I am pleased to submit these
14 five specific priorities for advancing the art form
15 of dance through the City of New York's cultural
16 planning and implementation that have emerged through
17 field research, programming, and workshop discussions
18 with our board and advisors: One, strengthened and
19 equitable City funding for dance. Recent trend
20 analyses of 89 DCA-funded dance groups show their
21 aggregate City support declined 31 percent over six
22 years, from Fiscal Year 2008 to Fiscal Year 2014.
23 Two, dance education for every child in every public
24 school and increased dance education activity by DCLA
25 grantees. Dance/NYC joins the movement PS Dance!, a

2 fiscally sponsored project of Dance/NYC, in
3 advocating for the City's continued leadership as
4 both a dance and dance education capital. Three, the
5 development and protection of affordable workspace
6 for dance artists. The challenge of affordability in
7 dance has gained urgency following a spate of
8 rehearsal space closures in an increasingly
9 competitive real estate market. Four, increased
10 ethnic and racial diversity and the meaningful
11 integration of disabled people in the dance
12 workforce. Complementing recent demographic research
13 by Ithaca S&R on DCLA grantees, Dance/NYC's State of
14 NYC Dance and Workforce Demographics research
15 underscores entrenched patterns of exclusion of
16 African, Latina/o/x, Asian, Arab, and Native American
17 populations and disabled people by dance
18 organizations. Dance/NYC joins a new
19 Disability/Arts/NYC Task Force in advocating for the
20 disability arts and offers specific planning
21 recommendations in its Disability Dance Artistry
22 Report. And finally five, new policy, programs, and
23 funding for dance artists who work outside of the
24 nonprofit structure and are currently ineligible for
25 direct funding by DCLA. Finally, Dance/NYC advocates

2 a city budget increase to realizing planning goals
3 only through a bold and boldly funded plan will the
4 city be able to address inequities that exist in the
5 field and harness the urgent opportunity for national
6 leadership in public support. We also invite the
7 City Council to join Dance/NYC for our annual
8 symposium this coming Sunday, March 5th, which will
9 use cultural planning as an organizing device to
10 gather critical dance community input. Dance/NYC
11 thanks the City Council, DCLA, and CreateNYC Planning
12 team for their leadership and willingness to receive
13 testimony and act on our recommendations.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
15 much. So, I just want to delve right into it and I
16 wanted Doctor Moreno Vega on this panel, because I
17 knew she would have some challenging things to say,
18 and I wanted to give you that voice, but I wanted to
19 say obviously your position on the funding and the
20 distribution on funding very clearly stated, but the
21 other question for me is in some ways more
22 fundamental to the plan which is are you being
23 invited in? Are others being invited in, and I
24 wanted to ask you about that question. Has the
25 Department of Cultural Affairs reached out to you?

2 Are they seeking your input, and because it's a--
3 it's an important charge if we're saying that certain
4 folks, people of color, are not being invited into
5 this process. So, I wanted to ask you that
6 particular question, because if the Department of
7 Cultural Affairs doesn't want to hear from you or
8 certain people, that's a big charge, right? So, I
9 wanted to ask you that specific question. How we
10 handle the money is a big, big question, and I get
11 that, and we can all debate that, but I think the
12 nature of the outreach that's being done, what you
13 said, you know, sort of obviously flies in the face
14 of what the Commissioner said and even some of your
15 fellow panelists have said. So, how do you square
16 that? How do we square that?

17 DOCTOR MARTA MORENO VEGA: Well, I go to
18 your point before that when we're dealing with issues
19 of policy and change it requires funding, and if
20 we're going to frame this in an equitable manner, in
21 a just manner, we have to address funding. And the
22 historic inequality that groups of color have had,
23 racial groups, ethnic groups have had historically,
24 that goes beyond time. That's our history. How do
25 we correct that is the issue, and the cultural plan

2 has to address that, especially in a period where
3 intolerance is raising its face. At the frontlines
4 of the community groups that are safe havens for our
5 communities, which include immigrants, which include
6 fluid gender, which include voices that have not been
7 heard before, and therefore, our institutions are the
8 least funded.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So--

10 DOCTOR MARTA MORENO VEGA: [interposing]

11 And when we're funded-- let me finish.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, yeah.

13 DOCTOR MARTA MORENO VEGA: When we're
14 funded, we don't get support for administration and
15 operations. We only get monies for program. So, the
16 issue is that the communities that are the most
17 vulnerable under attack, under this present national
18 climate, our underserved and underfunded. So, the
19 issue is not talking to Tom, the issue is how does
20 that get reconstructed in a way that is equitable?

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I get that. What
22 I want to know though and be sure though is that the
23 Department of Cultural Affairs and you are talking
24 and that you're not feeling excluded from this
25 cultural plan in terms of the dialogue.

2 DOCTOR MARTA MORENO VEGA: That's not
3 against-- Jimmy, that's not the issue. The issue is
4 that the cultural plan has to be framed in a way, and
5 the meetings have to be framed in a way that equity
6 is at the center of it, and if it isn't, right, that
7 I talk to Tom or that I talk to Eddie or that I talk
8 to you doesn't change the reality of the groups on
9 the ground.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I hear what
11 you're saying, and I know that they hear what you're
12 saying because they're here in the room, and but I
13 again, I just want to make sure, and I believe you
14 have confirmed, that the Department of Cultural
15 Affairs has reached out and is engaged in dialogue. I
16 understand that how it's framed and what comes out of
17 it, that's your concern, and I get that, but I get
18 the--

19 DOCTOR MARTA MORENO VEGA: [interposing]
20 No, it's your concern, because you mentioned this
21 before that this has to deal with money.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely.

23 DOCTOR MARTA MORENO VEGA: And
24 Councilwoman Cumbo also mentioned the same thing, so
25 that if we don't talk about the redistribution or the

2 additional presence of money, then we're at the same
3 place. So that the issue here is that since there is
4 obvious a lobbyist and lobbying for 40 million
5 dollars to go to primarily organizations that have
6 access, your words, that have influence with the
7 Department of Cultural Affairs as well as with
8 foundations and corporation, then monies have to be
9 distributed to those that don't.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Your voice has
11 been heard.

12 DOCTOR MARTA MORENO VEGA: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Would you like
14 to add something?

15 SUSANA LEVAL: I would like to add
16 something, because many of you in the room might know
17 that Marta and I have a profound connection in that
18 she was part of the founding community of El Museo
19 del Barrio which I directed many years later. I was
20 a director of El Museo del Barrio, the founding
21 director. And this is-- anyone who has been part of
22 a smaller cultural institution, even though the Museo
23 since the 70's [sic] was part of the CIGs,
24 understands that there are major inequities in the
25 funding, even within the CIGs.

2 DOCTOR MARTA MORENO VEGA: Exactly.

3 SUSANA LEVAL: And so that is something
4 and a subject that's a long history and needs to be
5 over time addressed, but where I part ways with you,
6 Marta, is that I think the cultural plan is an
7 important initiative, and it is-- it can't be
8 paralyzed. The funding is-- the funding question has
9 to be dealt with, absolutely, but it will take many
10 years to untangle it, and we shouldn't paralyze the
11 work of the plan, because the plan has other ways of
12 addressing inequity, and that's all I have to say.

13 DOCTOR MARTA MORENO VEGA: No one has
14 used the word 'paralyzed.' You used the word
15 'paralyzed.' What we have to address is the fact that
16 certain things are not being said, and when certain
17 things are not said, they're not addressed.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay.

19 DOCTOR MARTA MORENO VEGA: And we need to
20 address the reality of El Museo del Barrio as one of
21 the major institutions in the City--

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

23 Doctor Vega, I--

24 DOCTOR MARTA MORENO VEGA: [interposing]
25 and it has to be funded equitably, and it's not.

2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I appreciate the
3 dialogue, but we are going to I think wrap this panel
4 up. Just-- yep. But I appreciate both the exchange
5 between the two of you and the history, and of course
6 all of your perspectives. So, I want to thank this
7 panel for being here and ask the second panel, Carl
8 Goodman representing the Cultural Institutions Group,
9 if Carl is here, Lisa Robb from the Center for Arts
10 Education, Mark Rossier from the New York Foundation
11 for the Arts, and David Martinez, the American Indian
12 Artist, AMERINDA, if all four of you are here. Thank
13 you very much. And I think there's also a second
14 person from AMERINDA, Diane Fraher. I don't know,
15 but one of you will testify if both of you are here.
16 We'll work that out, right? Okay. Yes, you can
17 certainly sit together. Maybe we'll pull up a chair
18 right there, and but we'll still have the same time
19 limit applying to all of the panels. So-- we're
20 going to hear from some other folks testifying, so if
21 we could take the conversations outside of the
22 chambers so they can be heard appropriately and
23 respectfully, I would appreciate that. Thank you
24 very much. So, are you going to testify together or?
25 Alright. Why don't you as a tag team begin?

2 DIANE FRAHER: Okay, thank you. Alright.
3 I'm here to represent the Tribalians [sic] rule.
4 David and I are the Tribalians ruled Native American
5 community in New York City, and the subject of our
6 paper is New York City should live up to the promise
7 of equality for all by providing cultural equity to
8 Native Americans as well as all the other groups, and
9 our ideas in this paper set forth, the theme that the
10 New York City Native American Federally recognized
11 artists exist within a context of the indigenous
12 peoples of the world, specifically within the
13 government to government legal framework as it
14 currently exists in the United States. We have two
15 legal methods of recourse to receive our rights in
16 this country. One is-- actually there's three: the
17 Code of Indian Law, the United States Federal
18 Government, the UN Declaration on the Rights of the
19 Indigenous Peoples, adopted in 2007 by every country
20 on the earth, and the Indian, Federal Indian Arts and
21 Crafts Act of 1990 as well as to understand the
22 doctrine-- the legacy of the doctrine of discovery
23 and what it has done to our people. There are four
24 articles from the Declaration of the Rights of the
25 Indigenous People that directly affect us. Article

2 Eight refers to Indigenous Peoples having the rights
3 against forced assimilation as a distinct people.
4 The next one is Article Eleven which implies that the
5 New York City Indigenous Peoples art community has
6 the right to maintain and strengthen their visual and
7 performing arts and literature and that redress
8 should be forthcoming. Article Thirteen implies New
9 York City's lack of recognition in support of native
10 arts inhibits the individual native artist and our
11 communities' organizations to express and therefore
12 diminishes us a people and our right to transmit our
13 legacy to future generations. And Article Fifteen
14 can be taken to mean that New York City's lack of
15 artistic recognition and support and lack of
16 consultation with communities denies us dignity and
17 so-called diversity. Mr. David has just a few points
18 for just one minute to add in here.

19 DAVID MARTINEZ: We have-- I'm Dave
20 Martin [sp?]. I'm Chairperson of the Board. We have
21 some recommendations and needs because our community
22 has historically always been heavily stereotyped and
23 marginalized, and it continues to be so in the city
24 even though we've been here for thousands of years.
25 We've never been displaced. Culture continues, and

2 we are very much at the forefront of contemporary
3 Native American art today. We have some very
4 important recommendations we want to put forward,
5 that a new paradigm through targeted approach be
6 established by the city and a much stronger amount of
7 collaboration be established between our community
8 and New York City. That you take the Indian Arts and
9 Crafts Act of 1990 as a good way of establishing
10 criteria for a Native American support with public
11 funds in New York City because there's a lot of--
12 well, it would just help you in guiding in
13 collaboration with our organization as to supporting
14 our endeavors in the city. Prohibit-- require
15 equitable percentage of Native New York City
16 residents be used in Native programming presented by
17 institutions and organizations receiving city funds.
18 Assist AMERINDA in locating it with the donation of a
19 city-owned property for a dollar as they've done so
20 for many European American Arts organizations, in
21 particular, for an AMERINDA multi-arts center which
22 would include space for presentation of traditional
23 and contemporary arts affordable housing. This city
24 has the only native contemporary arts movement of
25 substantial character outside Santa Fe, New Mexico.

2 We represent a national constituency. Create
3 cultural capital for individual Native artists
4 through fellowship program and multiple disciplines
5 similar to the Urban Artist Initiative 2009-11 for
6 all artists of color with the Native American
7 component to be administered as a re-grant program
8 through AMERINDA, and provide direct support for
9 community-based arts-related micro-businesses.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: If you can wrap
11 up. You've already now had two, two-minute
12 opportunities, whereas every other group is getting
13 one. So, I think that's unfair. So, if you can--
14 and I don't believe we have a copy of your testimony.

15 DIANE FRAHER: We'll leave it with you.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, if you can
17 make sure that I have a copy of your testimony, and
18 then we can have all of your recommendations here and
19 on the record, but I really do want to try and get to
20 as many people as possible and be as equitable as
21 possible. So, thank you very much, and now we'll go
22 to Mark.

23 MARK ROSSIER: I will try and go quickly.
24 Thank you, Chair Van Bramer and the members of the
25 committee, for holding this hearing. New York

2 Foundation of the Arts is thrilled that this city has
3 embarked on this cultural plan, and we've been
4 actively involved in a number of ways. We've
5 distributed announcements of town halls and other
6 information session to our mailing lists. We've
7 worked with partner organizations such as Dance/NYC
8 on their initiatives, and on March 27th we will host
9 an Office Hours with the Commissioner specifically
10 for immigrant artists. In January we held seven
11 discipline-specific focus groups with individual
12 artists in three boroughs and two-thirds of those
13 participants were artists of color. The two concerns
14 voiced most frequently were financial stability,
15 specifically the difficulty many artists have in
16 remaining in the city due to real estate and other
17 issues, and the need for a greater investment in arts
18 and education. I've attached a copy of our full
19 report which details-- which provides details on both
20 of those subjects. I also wanted to mention two
21 other ideas which might be of interest, particularly
22 to this body. One was that every City Council Member
23 have a dedicated Arts Ambassador. This would be a
24 person who knows and understands the artists and the
25 venues in the district, who understands the needs of

2 the community and can help with match-making and
3 creative programming to ensure that cultural
4 activities in each district are created organically
5 by and for the people who live there. I know that
6 some members already have such ambassadors, but it
7 would be wonderful if every member did. The second
8 concerns artist compensation. Artists spoke of their
9 frustration of being paid widely different fees from
10 third-party sources for doing the same work. They
11 wondered if the city could contract with individual
12 artists for services either directly or through a
13 fiscal sponsor or create salary bands which could be
14 used for any organization contracted by the city to
15 hire artists. This would ensure then a uniformed
16 salary, some control over their lives and careers,
17 and make it easier for them to support themselves.
18 As for the planning process, I've been impressed with
19 DCLA's openness and willingness to engage with new
20 partners to accept invitations to talk about the plan
21 and to hear New Yorkers' feelings about arts and
22 culture. Obviously, we don't know-- we don't yet
23 know the plan's recommendations, but I hope the
24 Council will remain committed to supporting the
25 initiatives by granting additional funds to DCLA or

2 other agencies if appropriate to ensure the
3 recommendations are fully realized on a timely basis.

4 Thank you.

5 LISA ROBB: Thank you. I'm Lisa Robb.
6 I'm the Executive Director at the Center for Arts
7 Education. I join our staff, our teaching artists and
8 our Board in thanking you for the opportunity to
9 address the City Council during the development of
10 the cultural plan. The people who live, work, visit,
11 and play in New York City deserve such a document.
12 The hundreds of meetings and workshops and hearings
13 about the plan should, if realizing the full promise
14 of public input, recommend a rigorous review and
15 careful and intentional disruptions and overall
16 strengthening of the current systems and processes to
17 deliver arts and culture programs to people and
18 visitors in New York City. The plan must as it's
19 promised address the systematic inequity in access
20 and experience that is the experience of too many
21 residents. My comments today are going to focus on
22 one aspect of the plan, how its recommendations and
23 goals for arts education will best serve New York
24 City's 1.1 million public school students and their
25 families, teachers and the school leaders. It's

2 really important for us to remember that in New York
3 City and New York State and in every other village
4 and city and state in America, the most powerful and
5 comprehensive set of laws and regulations that are
6 already established for arts and cultural policy and
7 therefore for cultural enfranchisement are related to
8 arts education in our public schools. Arts education
9 is a strong component of a well-rounded education and
10 it prepares students for college, the 21st century
11 job market and for citizenship. Arts learning is a
12 required curriculum subject in first through 12th
13 grade and is required for high school graduation.
14 This is the case in every public school in America,
15 including the 1,800 public schools in New York.
16 Therefore, above all, we support a cultural plan that
17 holds this as a core recommendation. Every year in
18 every school every student receives the arts
19 instruction they are entitled to by law. To
20 implement the goal, we recommend funds be made for a
21 comprehensive cost and implementation study on what
22 art education compliance would cost and how over five
23 years that goal could be achieved. We do not want to
24 have full compliance dismissed as, "Oh, it's just
25 impossible. It's too hard. It costs too much.

2 There are just too many nuances." We know that
3 careful planning makes a difference. We also
4 recommend that 2014's bold four-year initiative of 92
5 million in new funding for arts education be renewed
6 and increased. We already see powerful data to
7 support that this new funding is closing some of the
8 gaps. Finally, a recommendation would be that the
9 plan establish immediately goals and a process for
10 every school to have a cultural partnership with an
11 arts organization here in our cultural capital of the
12 globe. Only 87 percent of schools have such a
13 partnership. We recommend that the 200 schools that
14 do not have cultural partners that we work borough by
15 borough to make those matches. We have many more
16 granular detailed suggestions and we'll make those
17 through the plan. We would like to compliment Hester
18 Street and their team as well DCLA on the portal
19 that's out there on the web. It makes it very easy
20 to interact and give feedback to the planning
21 process. Thank you again for the opportunity to
22 speak to you today.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, Lisa,
24 and I know Eddie and the entire team are here, and I
25 endorse everything that Lisa just said in her

2 testimony be incorporated into the plan as someone
3 who fought hard for that first 92 million dollars in
4 arts and Ed in that first budget under this current
5 Administration. Last on this panel, Carl Goodman.

6 CARL GOODMAN: Thank you. Just be really
7 fast, because not only am I Executive Director of the
8 Museum of the Moving Image, but I'm here to try to
9 attempt to speak on behalf of the CIG member
10 organizations, and we are each our own institutions,
11 and we're all in schools, and we're in libraries, and
12 we're in community centers, and we're in public
13 housing, and I urge people not to think
14 monolithically about this group, because we all have
15 our own distinct, direct relationships with all of
16 you and other partners, and we're part of the
17 process. We commend the Council and the
18 Administration for this great plan, and the
19 Department of Cultural Affairs, Hester Street
20 Collaborative, been great to work with you. I see
21 you popping up everywhere, which is wonderful, and
22 our staff has been very excited about participating
23 in workshops and in the information sessions. The
24 most valuable cultural plan will be one that ensures
25 the voices and experiences of all New Yorkers are

2 represented as well as the full range of cultural
3 organizations in every borough, in every size, in
4 every type, and that includes historical societies
5 and gardens and natural living history museums and
6 zoos that make up this great city. And finally, we
7 need to make sure the plan represents the needs and
8 voices of artists themselves. So here are a couple
9 of things we're doing on the planning front in terms
10 of participating with those in the cultural plan.
11 First of all, of course the CIG institutions
12 individually and staff are attending but also
13 convening and hosting workshops and focus groups. I
14 heard that one museum is hosting on Wednesday already
15 mentioned with NYCHA residents and also those
16 associated with our programs with the NYCHA
17 communities. Very excited about that. And then we
18 use the fact that we gather a huge amount of data,
19 partially because we have to, partially because we
20 want to about our audiences, about our services.
21 That's quantitative and qualitative data that we have
22 offered up to and are providing to the city as well
23 as Hester Street to be used in their data gathering
24 process, and that's extremely important. The CIG
25 organizations, we have 37,200 and something onsite

2 programs with four million participants. We offer
3 opportunities for lifelong learning and work very
4 closely with the schools visited by 2.5 million plus
5 children per year, at least 1.1 million or less
6 coming from public schools-- that's how many students
7 there are-- 13,700 full and part time jobs, 4,500
8 union employees, average salary of about 50,000. We
9 support artists through various employment
10 opportunities and programs providing space,
11 professional support, teaching artists opportunities,
12 and of course the opportunity to present and promote
13 their work to the rest of the world and to this city.
14 And we are affordable. Even before IDNYC free
15 memberships, 35 percent of visitors attended our
16 institutions for free. Finally, we have a strong and
17 direct impact on the city economy. We spend over 364
18 million dollars on local vendors and good and
19 services, and that's a drop in the bucket compared to
20 what our visitors spend with small businesses located
21 around us. I will finish, but I do want to say that
22 this year we are asking the city working with the
23 program groups for a 40 million dollar increase to
24 the DCLA budget, half of which go to the program
25 groups, and we are very pleased to be working with

2 One Percent for Culture, New York City Arts

3 Coalition, and all of our colleagues with whom we

4 partner individually on this process. We are

5 lobbying together, and I want to make sure that

6 that's something, another process that involves the

7 voices of all cultural institutions in the city.

8 Finally, we think this plan will surface and

9 articulate and allow us to expand and strengthen a

10 productive ecology that exists right now, but it's

11 complicated, one in which is CIG's in addition to

12 being destinations and cultural hubs, provide

13 services in all neighborhoods of New York working in

14 partnership with schools, community-based

15 organizations, libraries, smaller artist-run

16 organizations, and of course all of our city

17 agencies, and the wonderful legislative bodies that

18 we have here including of course our Council Member

19 who represents our district and hopefully one day

20 will be once again proud that he represents us. And

21 this plan, we would really love to see it used to

22 leverage additional support, not just for the city's,

23 but as Council Member Cumbo said, from corporations

24 and foundations to use that bully pulpit, to use the

25 fact that the city issues licenses and tax breaks and

2 all sorts of things to entities that should and must
3 support the arts to a greater degree so you're not
4 all in this by yourselves. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
6 much, Carl. Let me just say there's not ever been
7 one minute when I wasn't proud to have the Museum of
8 the Moving Image in my district. It's going to take
9 a greater man than Shia LaBeouf to come between the
10 two of us.

11 CARL GOODMAN: We have him in a cage in
12 the basement with duct tape around him if you'd like
13 to speak.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: We'll walk
15 through fire together if we need to. But I want to
16 thank you on behalf of all of the CIGs. It's not
17 easy to bring together and represent all of those
18 fine institutions, but I understand the value and the
19 commitment of all of the institution groups and
20 obviously support the 40 million dollar request. So,
21 I want to thank all five of you and call up the next
22 panel. We're doing in fives. Christine Bruno,
23 individual artist and disability advocate, Inclusion
24 in the Arts, Sheila Lewandowski from the Chocolate
25 Factory, Randy Bourscheidt, Arch [sic] of New York

2 City Policy [sic], Sandra Bowie from Ifetayo, and
3 Christopher Carroll from Local 802, American
4 Federation of Musicians, the five of you are next if
5 you will take the stage. Then we have a few more
6 panels to go. Thank you all for hanging in there.
7 All of your voices are important and are being heard.
8 Thank you to Council Member Cumbo for listening as
9 well to all these important voices. Why don't we
10 start with you, Christine, and-- Chris, you took the
11 outermost chair, but that's alright, we'll go back to
12 you. We'll come back to you, Chris. No worries.

13 CHRISTINE BRUNO: Okay, thank you. Good
14 afternoon. Thank you so much for the opportunity to
15 testify at today's hearing. My name is Christine
16 Bruno, and I'm speaking today on behalf of myself as
17 a disabled artist and an advocate. I have lived and
18 worked in the City of New York for the past 21 years.
19 For the past 11 years I've also served as Disability
20 Advocate for Inclusion in the Arts, which is the
21 nation's leading service organization for disabled
22 actors and actors of color. Full disclosure, as you
23 heard earlier I am also honored to be working with
24 the DCLA and Hester Street Collaborative as the
25 Disability Consultant on the development and

2 execution of the cultural plan. Disability affects
3 all populations regardless of race, ethnicity,
4 gender, sexual orientation, gender ID, socioeconomic
5 status, and education. Disabled artists and
6 audiences have experienced a long history of
7 exclusion by New York City's cultural institutions
8 and the agencies as evidenced by the conspicuous
9 absence of disability data in the Diversity in New
10 York City Department of Cultural Affairs Community
11 Study. This, despite the fact that more than 56
12 million people, that's approximately 20 percent of
13 the US population, identify as having a disability.
14 More than 800,000 of us live in the City of New York
15 alone. The DCLA and current city Administration's
16 commitment to rectifying this systematic exclusion in
17 a meaningful and substantive way so as to affect
18 lasting change in the way our city engages its
19 underrepresented and underserved communities in arts
20 and culture is encouraging. But as I hope we can all
21 acknowledge, there's still much work to be done
22 especially with respect to the inclusion and support
23 of disabled artists, disabled culture workers,
24 disabled students, disabled arts, and disabled
25 audiences. Central to my understanding of equity and

2 inclusion-- I'm just going to jump and say here's a
3 brief summary of a list of few of the disability arts
4 communities' recommendations with regard to creating
5 a truly inclusive and equitable cultural plan and
6 beyond: Commitment to the intentional inclusion of
7 disability woven throughout the cultural plan;
8 commitment to the perspective of disability
9 articulated by a disabled person present and
10 represented in every conversation and in every
11 environment whether or not the conversation is
12 disability-specific, attention to intersectionality
13 with respect to race, ethnicity, gender, gender ID,
14 socioeconomic status, education across disability
15 communities; commitment to the ongoing intentional
16 inclusion of disability within the DCLA staff
17 programs, initiatives and all funding opportunities;
18 commitment to funding specifically earmarked for
19 disabled artists and disability arts; commitment
20 requiring that all DCLA grantee plans for the
21 intentional inclusion of disability in order to
22 receive funding. These plans would be required to
23 extend beyond ADA compliance to include programming,
24 artistic and administrative staffing and board
25 composition. Support by the DCLA and other city

2 agencies for the establishment of a disability arts
3 taskforce and a center for disability arts and
4 culture. I also wholeheartedly support the testimony
5 of my colleagues from DANT and Dance/NYC. I look
6 forward to New York City earning its place as the
7 center of truly inclusive arts and culture, one that
8 encourages and equitably supports artists, culture
9 workers and audiences from all communities. Thank
10 you so much for your time and consideration.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
12 much for being here. Why don't we go to Sheila and
13 then we'll conclude with Christopher there on the
14 end.

15 SHEILA LEWANDOWSKI: Good afternoon. My
16 name is Sheila Lewandowski. I'm an Executive
17 Director and Founder of the Chocolate Factory Theater
18 in Long Island City. We are very proud to have you
19 as our Council Member and all us very lucky that
20 you're still our Chair of Culture. I'm not going to
21 read this because you have it and some of the points
22 have been made, but I would like to as a member of my
23 Community Board say thank you for brining that up,
24 because I know from my own experience many of the
25 people on the Community Board who are very active in

2 many ways don't necessarily understand the impact of
3 arts and culture on their daily lives. So it was a
4 great idea. And I wanted to touch on what Council
5 Member Cumbo and you both touched on on the City
6 Planning. It's something that's come up in testimony
7 before. It's suggested and it's something that came
8 up at my Community Board meeting last month with the
9 person from City Planning. It's not a mandate, and
10 if it's not a mandate for City Planning, they are not
11 going to make it a mandate when people come into
12 communities to develop that there be community
13 facilities at all, let alone anything with arts and
14 culture. So, you know, I definitely wholeheartedly
15 support the idea that that be in the cultural plan,
16 that City Planning be a part of that and that be a
17 mandate to retain and build community spaces. Gated
18 communities are not the same thing, and that's what
19 we're getting a lot of. I only have 40 seconds left,
20 so the last thing I will read with my glasses on
21 because I'm over 40 now, is I share my belief in the
22 need for New York City to have a comprehensive
23 culture plan. I'm also concerned about the possible
24 loss of funding for the arts nationally and that
25 impact on our city and the nation. I am concerned

2 about the decrease in funding for the arts as people
3 give less to the arts and more to causes that seem to
4 directly work for human rights and healthcare and
5 immigrant's rights. We cannot sacrifice our souls
6 and our fight against terror. We must support the
7 arts even more so as to let all people of New York
8 City know that culture matters. When this plan is
9 finalized, we must as a city celebrate it and send a
10 message to the state, country and the world that arts
11 and culture matters for everyone. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
13 much. Incredibly well-timed I might as well. Randy?

14 RANDY BOURSCHEIDT: Thank you. Thank
15 you. Thank you very much for the opportunity of
16 hearing all of this testimony and contributing my
17 thoughts to it, and thank you, Councilman for your
18 leadership in getting us into this whole planning
19 process. We've had a Cultural Affairs Department for
20 40 or 45 years, and it's high time that we step back
21 and look at what it all adds up to. A lot of
22 impressive work has been done, but much more needs to
23 be done. And my thoughts primarily are in two areas,
24 one to diversify the-- and extend the cultural
25 organizations which receive support from the city,

2 and the other is to create closer partnerships
3 between Cultural Affairs and other city agencies, and
4 you've been hearing this from a number of people.
5 I'm going to-- if I may, I'm going to start with what
6 I could end with which is an interesting story, the
7 height of the Battle of Britain. Winston Churchill
8 proposed an increase in the arts budget, and he was
9 challenged by another member of parliament, and he
10 stood up and said, "I do it to remind us what we are
11 fighting for." And I think that's one way of summing
12 up a lot of what we've been hearing today. Culture
13 is native and endemic to all societies. It is
14 especially and proudly a part of our society.
15 Councilwoman Cumbo, you know this very well in your
16 district, but we all know that. And so my
17 suggestions are fairly simply increase funding.
18 Certainly the 40 million dollar, 20 for cultural
19 institutions and 20 for the programs groups, are
20 very, very important. Cultural Affairs is the
21 largest government funding agency in America, and
22 yet, it amounts to only one-fifth of one percent of
23 the New York City budget. We can do better, and I
24 believe we should do better. I would like to see more
25 CIG-like institutions. It's an incredibly powerful

2 model. These are-- it's a diverse group and a group
3 of large and small organizations, but there are other
4 organizations that I think could follow that model,
5 and we would be a far stronger city if we had that.
6 My final suggestion is that by-- a think to keep in
7 mind when we consider all the recommendations that
8 we've been hearing today and will hear through the
9 plan process, including the strong suggestion of
10 significantly increased funding, one thing that seems
11 especially appropriate and timely at the moment is
12 thinking about our brothers and sisters in the
13 immigrant community. Cultural organizations give
14 them the opportunity to hold on to the cultural
15 traditions they were born to and pass it on to their
16 children while at the same time better experiencing
17 other cultural traditions that they are no living in
18 a community with. Thank you very much.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
20 much, Randy, and that's exactly why the Speaker and I
21 created the Cultural Immigrant Initiative, but
22 obviously we always want to continue to try and do
23 even more. So, next we'll hear from Ifetayo.

24 SANDRA BOWIE: My name is Sandra Bowie.
25 I'm the Executive Director of Ifetayo Cultural Arts

2 Academy, an arts and cultural organizations
3 celebrating 28 years of service in Central Brooklyn.
4 Our programs assist youth of African descent to
5 realize their goals and survive and thrive as leaders
6 in their community. Our primary goal of the plan, of
7 this cultural plan, is to assess cultural needs in
8 each of the five boroughs and find new ways to
9 support existing groups, especially in under-
10 resourced communities. Doctor Marta Vega said then
11 today and in this article that diversity within the
12 cultural plan can be maintained by funding small
13 community-based organizations. Currently a handful
14 of large institutions receive the majority of city
15 funding when programs run by local organizations
16 often have a more direct effect than a big
17 institution might. Two frontline issues that address
18 critical cultural needs in nonprofits and under-
19 resourced communities have been pushed to the
20 periphery of the outreach and planning process thus
21 far. One of them is historical underfunding of
22 smaller community-based organizations and those owned
23 and operated by people of color, and number two, the
24 rapid gentrification of the City of New York and the
25 displacement of families, artists and cultural

2 organizations in many communities. Four months from
3 the submission date of the cultural plan, the process
4 of assessing and addressing the needs of smaller
5 community-based organizations and those owned and
6 operated by people of color have been avoided, eluded
7 or dismissed due to the complexity of the issues.
8 the vast majority of DCLA public funding supports
9 large organizations with budgets greater than five
10 million dollars which comprise less than five percent
11 of the landscape of arts and cultural nonprofits in
12 New York City and guarantees 80 percent of the DCLA
13 expense budget year after year. These institutions
14 focus primarily on art and culture rooted in the
15 western European cannon and their programs serve
16 audiences that are predominantly white and wealthy.
17 That's from an article by Nicole E. Reiner in January
18 2017. The gentrification issue has been raised in
19 every cultural planning meeting thus far, but when
20 the DCA Commissioner was asked by three artists about
21 this issue, he said that the Commission was
22 responding and Hester Street were not talking about
23 the answers and solutions right now. They were
24 focusing on pertinent questions. I have some
25 pertinent questions, and I want to get a few of them

2 to you. As the New York City cultural plan is
3 designed to address issues of funding equity and
4 neighborhood character or gentrification, why has
5 there been such an ongoing reluctance to directly
6 address these systemic issues of inequality? When
7 and how will these issues and policy solutions be
8 seriously addressed in the final four months prior to
9 the plan's submission? A number of meetings have been
10 held with large, well-funded New York City arts and
11 cultural organizations and the DCA Commissioner to
12 discuss the NYC cultural plan. In terms of equity of
13 outreach, when will substantive meetings be planned
14 with DCA Commissioner and smaller, under-resourced
15 organizations owned and operated by people of color?
16 What vetting criteria was used for evaluating
17 cultural plan lead organizations such as Hester
18 Street? Was the diversity of plan leadership
19 considered? How diverse is the cultural plan's
20 current leadership team? I'm speaking of decision
21 makers, not advisors and staff. Since the Create New
22 York research phase has ended, where can the data
23 that is driving the plan be accessed? Does the
24 research and data collected accurately represent the
25 demographics represented? That ends my testimony.

2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
3 much. That was the quickest read, but it was
4 incredibly clear--

5 SANDRA BOWIE: [interposing] I was doing
6 my thing [sic].

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: which is why I
8 was like let's just go through it.

9 SANDRA BOWIE: I missed two questions. I
10 can go back and--

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I read along
12 with you, but all very, very important questions, and
13 I'm not sure if the Department of Cultural Affairs is
14 still represented in the room. I was hoping that
15 somebody from the Department of Cultural Affairs was
16 as you were asking those questions, but suffice it
17 say we're listening and we'll make sure that all of
18 those continue to be raised, and I'm glad you're here
19 to raise them. So, last but not least on this panel,
20 Mr. Carroll, if you can saddle up to that microphone.
21 Just take the microphone really. Thank you.

22 CHRISTOPHER CARROLL: Good afternoon,
23 Chair Van Bramer and members of the committee. My
24 name is Christopher Carroll and I'm the Political
25 Director for the Associated Musicians of Greater New

2 York, Local 802. I would like to thank you for the
3 opportunity to present testimony, and out of respect
4 for time I'm abbreviating it a great deal, but I've
5 presented it in hard copy. We are honored to serve
6 on the Citizens Advisory Committee upon which we are
7 working in close partnership with DCLA to develop a
8 process and plan that'll benefit all New Yorkers,
9 artists, residents and visitors alike. Local 802 is
10 the largest local union of professional musicians in
11 the world, and we're comprised of musicians from all
12 styles and backgrounds, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra
13 and the New York Philharmonic to the pit orchestras
14 of Broadway and dozens of musicians playing across
15 the city every day. But with studies estimating the
16 musician's median income is 29,600 dollars annually
17 and that musicians and singers make less than
18 national median income when adjusted for New York
19 City's cost of living, it's clear the city is quickly
20 becoming a place where the same artists who have made
21 our artistic environment world renowned can no longer
22 thrive or support a living. In this light, the
23 comprehensive cultural plan has never been more
24 important and the City must play a positive and
25 prominent role in supporting that community. DCLA

2 and Hester Street Collaborative team have designed
3 and implemented a robust public engagement process
4 designed to solicit input from New Yorkers within and
5 outside the industry. Communicating with and
6 engaging with artists is a difficult challenge due to
7 the nature of their work. DCLA's flexibility and
8 willingness to meet with all stakeholders and
9 audiences and artists has been a tremendous strength,
10 but there can be and should be more done. DCLA has
11 made a concerted effort to engage musicians,
12 performers and artists in the city's cultural plan,
13 and we were glad to help them organize and convene an
14 organized labor focus group designed to discuss the
15 challenges facing artists and workers throughout the
16 industry. Attendees were invited to discuss
17 challenges facing artists and workers in the
18 entertainment industry as well as recommend solutions
19 that will help ensure that artists and performers who
20 are working here every day have the opportunity to
21 thrive. Ultimately, the success of this plan will be
22 determined in whether it reflects the needs of the
23 workers who drive the industry by making
24 recommendations that will encourage financially
25 viable and sustainable careers, implement incentive

2 reform, expand affordable housing and space, better
3 fund and celebrate the City's cultural community, and
4 ensure that the arts remain in our public schools,
5 ensure this is a place where musicians, performers,
6 writers, dancers, actors, stagehands, teachers, and
7 all artists can afford to live, work and raise a
8 family. It's an honor to serve in the Advisory
9 Committee, and I again thank you for allowing me to
10 speak. I'd be happy to answer any questions
11 afterwards about what our recommendations are going
12 to be.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
14 much, and I am glad you are here to represent workers
15 in the cultural, in particular music, industry. So,
16 I want to thank everyone from this panel for taking
17 the time out to be with us today and for your
18 important contributions. Thank you so much. Next
19 panel, we have a few folks from Dance Wave. I think
20 if we are still here we can hopefully condense,
21 Lillian Altrippter [sp?], I think I said that wrong,
22 and Diane Jacobowitz, and then we have Rudolph Shaw
23 from the Caribbean-American Rep Theater from Saint
24 Albans, Queens, yay, and is that Jennie Schlenzka
25 [sp?], yes, from Performance Base 122, and I want to

2 say it's Rocky Attieu [sp?]- oh, wait. This is
3 Cultural Collaborative. Are there other folks from
4 Cultural Collaborative from Doctor Moreno Vega's
5 group? Are they testifying separately? You are?
6 Yes. So you-- are you? You all have three folks
7 testifying on behalf of--

8 UNIDENTIFIED: [off mic comments]

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Got it. Then,
10 please join us at this panel. Yes, and we'll do
11 that. Thank you. Alright. Rocky Attieu we have,
12 and then is Bessie Edwards from Central Brooklyn Jazz
13 Consortium? Ms. Edwards? Alright. If you'll take
14 the last seat that would be great. And then we have
15 I think two more panels. And I see-- is Nicole
16 Reiner here still? Right. And are you also
17 testifying like separately sort of but also with the
18 same group sort of thing? Got it, okay. So we got
19 you next. Who wants to begin on this panel? Ms.
20 Edwards, raised her hand first. She got it.

21 BESSIE EDWARDS: Good afternoon, Chairman
22 Van Bramer and respected members of the City Council
23 Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and
24 International Intergroup Relations. This is my first
25

2 time doing this, so I prepared presentation, but I'm
3 going to just highlight a few things.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

5 BESSIE EDWARDS: I am representing the
6 Central Brooklyn Jazz Consortium, and we are
7 delighted to be invited to participate in this, and
8 we have received funding from the City Council,
9 particularly the Immigrant Cultural Initiative and
10 Anti-gun Violence Program and the Arts and Culture
11 Initiative. The plan, cultural plan, that you've
12 been discussing today is something that we are
13 excited about, and we had a couple of recommendations
14 of what could be included in that plan as
15 considerations for any inner-city nonprofit
16 organization. Two things, one is that we're
17 suggesting that you include in your planning an
18 American Jazz Capital, which would be Brooklyn, New
19 York. The Central Brooklyn Jazz Consortium is
20 featuring the African-American Artform Jazz as a
21 cultural currency, the community and New York City
22 both can benefit from. Brooklyn is an international
23 tourist destination because of its diversity and
24 independent art scenes. Music is the universal
25 language and attracts a wide range of ethnic groups.

2 Wow. By partnering with cultural institutions and
3 the Chamber of Commerce and legislative leaders, CBJC
4 activities will create a broad economic boost to
5 local businesses and employment for struggling
6 musicians and support services involved in the
7 production of a music festival. I'll mention two
8 other issues very quickly. One is to the Cultural
9 Institution Groups that are publicly and privately
10 operated, publicly funded and privately operated. We
11 are suggesting that they become partners with smaller
12 nonprofit organizations, and the things that they
13 could do to be helpful would be to allow us to use
14 CIG facilities and make co-marketing agreements,
15 expand public school arts, mentoring workshops, and
16 also provide sponsorships for more programs for
17 targeted underserved communities. The other thing I
18 wanted to mention is the whole issue of the impact of
19 gentrification on cultural diversity. I know some of
20 you addressed that issue already, but one of the-- a
21 few of the ways that we could increase sponsorship by
22 corporations is to establish relationships with the
23 development company. Developers love to get into
24 downtown Brooklyn as Councilwoman Cumbo mentioned.
25 They are all over the place. I happen to be very much

2 involved in the real estate community as well, and I
3 know that they will do anything to get into the city,
4 the neighborhoods to rebuild. So, to encourage and
5 retain diversity in historical cultures in
6 neighborhoods, developers must be required to build
7 and allocate space required to build and allocate
8 space for communities and recreational activities.
9 Instead of a restaurant, a chain, coffee shop, build
10 a theater, rehearsal space or office space for
11 nonprofit cultural organizations. The price for
12 building expensive housing for higher profits should
13 be to retain and support the existing culture by
14 encouraging old residents to stay, provide support
15 for local artistic development and feature the
16 characteristics of the neighborhood to attract and
17 reach out for residents who are seeking a compatible
18 neighborhood lifestyle. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
20 much. Now, I let you go a little bit longer because
21 it's your first time here, and--

22 BESSIE EDWARDS: [interposing] I
23 appreciate that.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And you also
25 said the full name of the Committee which takes two

2 minutes just to say the full name of the committee.

3 So, in the future, just say Cultural Affairs and
4 Libraries.

5 BESSIE EDWARDS: Okay, thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
7 much, and why don't we go next.

8 ROCKY ATTIEU: Thank you, Chairman,
9 honorable Council Members, ladies and gentlemen for
10 offering me the opportunity to testify. I am Rocky
11 Attieu [sp?], an Arts Administrator, and I'm here
12 today representing the Innovative Cultural Advocacy
13 cohort of the Caribbean Cultural Center of the
14 African Diaspora Institute. We represent a
15 passionate and innovative group of emerging leaders
16 that value local creative communities and maintain an
17 eye on global issues, affecting our neighborhoods,
18 institutions and public spaces. From this city's
19 diversity survey, we know that 62 percent of staff,
20 74 percent of executive leadership and 78 percent of
21 boards of these organizations are all white. With 67
22 percent of the city's population identifying as a
23 person of color, we see these numbers as an
24 underutilization of the rich talent and perspectives
25 available in our city. I'll make the point here that

2 we cannot truly be a sanctuary city if we do not
3 allow the opportunities for the cultures of the
4 immigrants arriving on our shores to be sustained,
5 and by sustained I mean have the opportunity to
6 integrate themselves into the institutions, the
7 neighborhoods and the social life of New York City.
8 As this group of emerging leaders, we see the
9 opportunity to invest in fellowships and residency
10 opportunities for young professionals of color,
11 pairing them with organizations that do not have
12 staff that represent the rich diversity of the city.
13 We see also an opportunity for this city to pair
14 emerging talent with local cultural professionals and
15 local cultural institutions with neighborhood
16 organizations that don't have the capacity to support
17 such talent. Our third recommendation is to increase
18 reporting from nonprofit cultural institutions on
19 board, staff and leadership at their organization.
20 I'm going to finally close with saying that not
21 allowing the many cultures that are represented in
22 the city to be sustained into the first, second and
23 third generation is a form of erasure [sic] that
24 really does a disservice to the New Yorkers of the
25 future and understanding who was here before them and

2 having institutions that support their vibrant lives.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. I
5 think next is Mr. Shaw?

6 RUDOLPH SHAW: Yes, thank you, Mr.-- am I
7 on? Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the
8 committee. My name is Rudolph Shaw and I represent
9 the Caribbean American Repertory Theater. We are in
10 Saint Albans, Queens, and we've also expanded into
11 Brooklyn into Council Member Cumbo's district. Also
12 we hold workshops there on Saturdays. Our company--
13 and I will jump around on this for time. Our company
14 recognizes the importance of theater and our
15 multicultural society. Particularly in Saint Albans
16 we've got a lot of immigrants from the Caribbean,
17 from Africa and African-Americans, and so we
18 recognize that theater is an opportunity for the
19 Council to show the importance of cultural exchanges
20 as a means of building the currency or communication
21 with each other as a people. The experience of
22 theater works from the Caribbean, African and
23 African-American playwrights are teaching moments of
24 the black experience and our various cultural
25 expressions. Such experiences will encourage the

2 community to embrace the value of creativity which is
3 important for careers in both the arts and sciences.
4 Cultural tools and exchanges are important
5 opportunities to enhance cross cultural communication
6 and increase economic development. We are therefore
7 recommending that the cultural plan includes
8 opportunities for arts organizations to engage in
9 cultural exchanges through international travel which
10 will increase performance opportunities for artists
11 and patrons in our communities. We also need to
12 elevate the borough of Queens as a global destination
13 for creativity, innovation and excellence in the
14 arts. The cultural plan should include partnerships
15 with airlines that fly into Queens to enhance
16 cultural tourism, which since many passengers
17 traveling through the airports stay overnight in
18 Queens. I'll conclude by saying professional-- we
19 have funded through the CASA program. We feel that
20 professional development for teaching artists should
21 include support through grants or international
22 outreach. And I would also like to say small theater
23 companies like ours need to benefit from the
24 conversion of underutilized spaces in our boroughs
25 for cultural uses and the creation of affordable

2 offices, office spaces, for cultural organizations
3 such as ours. I work out of home. We need a space
4 where we could employ people to come and work for us
5 without them having to come into my house. Thank you
6 very much. A lot of what I wanted to say has already
7 been said. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. And
9 do you get a CASA grant?

10 RUDOLPH SHAW: Yes, we are at the Ronald
11 Macnere [sic] School in Cambria Heights, and
12 previously we've gotten for two years the SU CASA
13 [sic], also. We also get the Immigrant Initiative
14 and Coalition for Theaters of Color.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Nothing makes me
16 happier than to see a panel like this and to have
17 folks say they get the Cultural Immigrant Initiative,
18 SU CASA, CASA, and all those initiatives which either
19 were created in the last couple of years or expanded
20 greatly. It makes me feel incredibly good about this
21 work.

22 RUDOLPH SHAW: Me too.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Because to see
24 the folks in the organizations who are drawing down
25 that funding and bringing it to the good people of

2 southeast Queens in particular. It's great that
3 you're going in to Brooklyn, but just remember
4 Queens.

5 RUDOLPH SHAW: We were invited.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alright, alright.
7 Then it's okay.

8 RUDOLPH SHAW: [inaudible]

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Then it's okay.
10 We love Brooklyn, don't get me wrong. We love
11 Brooklyn. Ms. Edwards giving me the eye there.

12 BESSIE EDWARDS: Right.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: But a little
14 special shout-out to Queens is okay.

15 RUDOLPH SHAW: Of course.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, thank you,
17 Mr. Shaw. Dancewave? Yep.

18 DIANE JACOBOWITZ: Good afternoon and
19 thank you Councilman Van Bramer and other members,
20 distinguished members of the Council and the
21 Committee for Cultural Affairs. It's an honor to be
22 here, and thank you for the opportunity to speak this
23 afternoon. Dancewave is a dance education nonprofit
24 that focuses on the development of the whole person
25 through a dance experience accessible to all. We

2 serve over 3,000 students per year through the school
3 at Dancewave through our youth performing company
4 ensembles and in our D-wave in Motion Program which
5 provides free dance residencies to underserved New
6 York City public schools. New York City as we know
7 is famous for its cultural diversity and vibrant arts
8 community. However, as you all know, the
9 distribution of resources across the five boroughs is
10 vastly unequal. This phenomenon is particularly true
11 with regard to dance. It is an art form that demands
12 a significant investment both in terms of time and
13 money. Thus, it comes as no surprise that people
14 from low income backgrounds or with little disposable
15 income are all too often locked out of the dance
16 world. People of color, particularly women of color,
17 face the disproportionately greater struggle in the
18 dance world than in any other art form. A recent
19 study conducted by Dance/NYC revealed that 68 percent
20 of dance professionals including both arts and arts
21 administrators identify as white, non-Hispanic, and
22 although the dance workforce is 65 percent female,
23 only 30 percent of female dance professionals
24 identify as women of color. Many large cultural
25 institutions remain inaccessible to an overwhelming

2 majority of people that cannot afford dollars for the
3 concert tickets or professional dance tuition. For
4 many years now, small and mid-sized dance
5 organizations have done the lion's share of work
6 towards making dance accessible to all. Oh, boy.
7 Here are my quick recommendations and suggestions.
8 One is to create institutional incentives for small
9 and mid-sized dance organizations. Small dance
10 organizations give performance opportunities to
11 emerging artists and prioritize work by people of
12 color, members of the LGBTQ community, immigrants,
13 refugees and other artists who may not be invited to
14 more established theaters. Two, promote
15 communication between nonprofits and community
16 members in concrete, measurable ways. Just as
17 elected officials have a duty to their constituents
18 to make themselves available, arts leaders have an
19 obligation to ask the communities they serve what
20 they want and need. This can easily become a
21 measurable metric for success. Three, create
22 opportunities for different age groups and
23 intergenerational arts programming. Thanks to the
24 City's push for arts education, many public schools
25 are now gaining access to some kinds of arts

2 programming. This is a terrific success and
3 Dancewave is participating in this 100 percent. We
4 are also thrilled that SU CASA has arisen and that we
5 are now giving credence to the senior community
6 through creative aging programs. I urge you to
7 continue to grow this program to incorporate and
8 prioritize intergenerational arts programming within
9 the City's cultural plan. There are exceptionally
10 fewer opportunities for middle aged and senior adult
11 populations. I also see that the dance organizations
12 like Dancewave are slowly beginning to offer
13 programming's also for special needs populations, and
14 I encourage the committee to consider how we can more
15 effectively fill this void. Four, allocate space to
16 the arts. Without a space the arts cannot thrive.
17 Real estate developers have grown pricey condos on
18 every corner. If we keep pushing artists to the
19 fringe, there will be no art here. We need
20 affordable housing for artists and affordable spaces
21 for dance so we can keep living and working in this
22 city. We find ourselves often despite the fact that
23 we have a capital project in the works that is being
24 funded by New York City, we are looking for space
25 every day. Why not require percentage of new

2 construction to allocate public space for dance and
3 the arts. Public school space permits take months to
4 approve and get caught in bureaucratic webs. If we
5 make the public school permit process easier for
6 dance organizations, the school also gets a chance to
7 have professional dancers working in their building,
8 which is inspiring for the school and their students
9 learning to dance. And lastly, improve access for
10 the next generation of arts professionals. The arts
11 community is constantly lauded for being diverse, a
12 haven for all kinds of people. However, as long arts
13 organizations rely on a constantly rotating cast of
14 underpaid interns for their most basic operational
15 and administrative needs, professional positions in
16 the arts will always be held by the same privileged
17 groups. And young--

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing] If
19 you could wrap up, Diane?

20 DIANE JACOBOWITZ: Sure.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Those are all
22 your recommendations. I got it.

23 DIANE JACOBOWITZ: Those are my
24 recommendations.

25 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yep.

2 DIANE JACOBOWITZ: I thank you again for
3 inviting us to address you today. This is an amazing
4 opportunity that the city has to codify and enhance
5 the support for the arts at a time when our city's
6 population needs are more than ever to provide
7 nurturing safe communities that inspire confidence,
8 trust--

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
10 Great.

11 DIANE JACOBOWITZ: and inclusion. Thank
12 you.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. And
14 all-- and you skipped this paragraph which I
15 appreciate, but all the Council Members that you
16 mentioned in your testimony, you get grants from
17 every single one of those Council Members?

18 DIANE JACOBOWITZ: We have gotten CASA
19 grants. We have gotten discretionary funds, and now
20 we are so proud that we have two SU CASA grants and
21 are going to be working in the senior community as
22 well.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's great.
24 Congratulations. I'm glad we--

2 DIANE JACOBOWITZ: [interposing] Thank
3 you. We are very grateful for it.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: created all
5 those. I guess, SU CASA, Cultural Immigrant
6 Initiative, CASA, all of those are City Council
7 cultural initiatives, let me be very clear. That
8 comes from the New York City Council. We found all
9 those initiatives, and as--

10 DIANE JACOBOWITZ: [interposing] And we
11 are so grateful for-- what an incredible City Council
12 we have that in a time when other government, our
13 larger government, might not be nearly as
14 progressive, we are so lucky in New York City to have
15 a--

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
17 Amen. Thank you.

18 DIANE JACOBOWITZ: progressive City
19 Council.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And in this
21 annual report which we will get out I think tomorrow,
22 it points out that City Council cultural initiatives
23 alone have doubled in the last couple of years. So,
24 with that I'll say thank you to everyone here for
25 being here. Congratulations, Ms. Edwards, your first

2 try, right? It wasn't that bad, right? Thank you.
3 What's that? I thought you were amazing. I thought
4 you were amazing. Thank you very much. And we have
5 I think two more panels. So, if you're still here,
6 thank you for hanging in. Nicole Reiner, I think,
7 right? Is it Juliana Cope, is Juliana Cope still
8 with us? Thank you. Jenny Dubnau? Jenny Dubnau?
9 Is Jenny still with us? Luis Laviana [sp?], is Luis-
10 - Laviana, Musica de Camara. Who is here and who is
11 not? Nicole, Juliana, Jenny, yes? Luis and we have
12 only three more, I think. I think it's Robert Lee
13 from Asian American Arts. What's that? Okay. There
14 we go. And then we have one final panel: Patricia
15 Robinson and Christine Whitaker if they're still
16 here. My apologies, but there were so many folks who
17 want to testify, and rightly so. So why don't we
18 start with Luis, and then we'll end with Mr. Lee and
19 this panel.

20 LUIS LAVIANA: Okay. I want to thank the
21 Committee for giving us this opportunity to talk.
22 This is also my first time, and I have to start by
23 saying I am not an artist. I am a psychologist, but
24 my involvement with Musica de Camara started a long
25 time ago. I am a co-author of the New York State

2 Guidelines for Behavior Management, and I have to use
3 some of the strategies of Musica de Camara to manage
4 problem behavior in the school system where I'm a
5 veteran of 30 years. The mission of Music de Camara
6 now in its 37th year is to preserve tradition to
7 raise awareness and to foster new generations of
8 classical music and musicians in New York City,
9 particularly in the minority communities. There are
10 three goals that Musica de Camara has. I got involved
11 with Musica de Camara very early when I started
12 working with them in what they called the Camara
13 Lecture Demonstration Program. This is an
14 educational emersion in classical music which has
15 targeted significant, specifically to public school
16 children whose current arts curriculum is severely
17 limited. Even though scientific studies suggest the
18 educational benefits and all the games that the
19 students have in their time. The program follows a
20 daily lesson plan based on prepared curriculum which
21 is aligned with Blueprint for Teaching and Learning
22 Music developed by New York State Department of
23 Education. The lecture demonstration program teaches
24 students the technique of oral analysis which we
25 discovered with time and being in the trenches, as we

2 call it, that it gives much more than just helping
3 the students focus and learn. It was very
4 interesting to see how when children see the faces in
5 their role models, they lighten up and begin to work
6 on those things. Well, that was fast. It's also
7 giving them the opportunity to create and develop
8 something on their own. They feel that they can do
9 something and something positive, and also the
10 opportunity to focus and develop and learn things in
11 different ways. Another way in which Musica de
12 Camara helps people is in the concert programs. It's
13 giving the opportunity to new artists from Latin
14 America and African-American, Puerto Rican ancestry
15 to show their art and show their work. As a matter
16 of fact, tomorrow night we're going to be having a
17 concert in Museo del Barrio where we're going to have
18 an integrated performance. We're going to have
19 artists playing music and some of the other artists
20 actually doing their paintings given the-- following
21 the inspiration of the music. And the third one is
22 in commissions, which is providing the opportunity of
23 our performers, minority performers to have a chance
24 to show their art and to share their art in our
25 communities that otherwise wouldn't have the chance

2 or the opportunity to get exposed to these. The rest
3 of the information is in our sheets, and our main
4 recommendation is to talk to us, use us. Let's have
5 a conversation and see what we're capable of doing.
6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You are
8 representing Eva?

9 LUIS LAVIANA: Eva, yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Here today?

11 LUIS LAVIANA: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Send her my
13 regards. She sang-- we named a street after Alice
14 Cardona in Woodside, Queens. It was a legendary
15 Puerto Rican woman, and Eva sang--

16 LUIS LAVIANA: [interposing] Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: and brought
18 everyone to tears--

19 LUIS LAVIANA: [interposing] Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: at that event.

21 LUIS LAVIANA: She's 84.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: What's that?

23 LUIS LAVIANA: She's 84 years old.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well, I don't
3 know if I got to thank her that day for that, but
4 please let her know--

5 LUIS LAVIANA: [interposing] I will.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: that I mentioned
7 her singing at that street co-naming where she
8 literally brought everyone to tears. So thank you
9 very much.

10 LUIS LAVIANA: Thank you. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Next?

12 JULIANA COPE: Good afternoon. Thank you
13 for the opportunity to testify, Chairman Van Bramer
14 and the Cultural Institutions Group, Committee on
15 Cultural Affairs. My name is Juliana Cope, and I am
16 the Director of the Development and Programs Manager
17 for the International Study and Curatorial Program.
18 I'm going to very-- I'm going to briefly testify.
19 ISCP is the most comprehensive program of its kind in
20 New York City and the United States, and the fourth-
21 largest international visual arts residency program
22 in the world. We offer excellent pre-public-- free
23 public programming about contemporary art for all
24 visitors. Beyond audiences, the cost for people
25 working in the arts, visual arts in particular in my

2 case, is steep. It is great that the city supports
3 models such as ISCPs Ground Floor Program, helping
4 talented and needy New York City-based artists secure
5 studio space. In terms of our recommendations, a lot
6 of what we've been thinking about has been said. I
7 would just say from ISCPs perspective, we recommend
8 that we continue to consider our work within a larger
9 context, not only looking at best practices of other
10 global cities, but also considering the national and
11 international climate. So it was great to hear that
12 DCLA is looking at cities across the US, but we would
13 definitely recommend that we're looking at cities
14 across the world in terms of their cultural plans.
15 With this cultural plan, New York City can continue
16 to be a leader in the United States, advocating for
17 cultural workers' rights to mobility and sanctuary as
18 already mentioned, ensuring that people from diverse
19 socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds can
20 participate not only in arts programming, but working
21 in the arts. It can serve as a statement not just to
22 inhabitants of New York City, but to the world about
23 who we are and about who-- how we will continue to do
24 our important cultural work. Thank you again for
25 this--

2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

3 Great, thank you. Also good to read that my
4 colleague Council Member Antonio Reynoso is very
5 supportive in your testimony as well. Jenny?

6 JENNY DUBNAU: I'm going to speak really
7 fast. My name is Jenny Dubnau. I'm a working artist,
8 and I'm here today representing the Artist Studio
9 Affordability Project, a collective of artist
10 activist organizing around New York City's
11 affordability crisis. Working artists in the city
12 are facing multiple crises in our rapidly gentrifying
13 city. Like all New Yorkers of modest means, we can't
14 afford the city anymore. Most of us piece together a
15 living with free-lance and adjunct teaching jobs, and
16 some of us also attempt to pay for working studios.
17 Our concern with the cultural plan so far is a
18 seemingly lack of urgency of the state of emergency
19 that all of our communities are in. In order to be
20 truly relevant to your New York City artists, the
21 cultural plan simply must take a stand and make
22 recommendations on actual policies that are affecting
23 our survival right now. The MIH-ZQA rezonings are
24 hastening the rise of luxury towers in poor
25 neighborhoods of color, and hotels are springing up

2 in our manufacturing zones like Long Island City, as
3 you know, Council Member. You're well aware of that.
4 Residential and commercial rents are rising as a
5 result. The proposed BQX trolley would destroy what
6 is left of the affordable working waterfront where
7 many artists still have studio space. Artists as
8 well as mom and pop stores and jobs producing
9 manufactures cannot afford the sky-high commercial
10 rents. We desperately need commercial rent
11 regulation. The Small Business Job Survival Act of
12 which Council Member Van Bramer is a supporter, which
13 we thank him for, which has been sitting in committee
14 in the City Council for years is a basic commercial
15 rent regulation bill. Why can't the cultural plan
16 recommend the passage of this bill and oppose the MIH
17 rezonings and the BQX trolley? Why can't the
18 cultural plan recommend the establishment of
19 permanently affordable land trusts, particularly on
20 city-owned properties, which would benefit both
21 artists and community residents and businesses? We
22 need the cultural plan to affirm that these concrete
23 policies directly affect our continued survival here
24 and to take a brave stand. We're also somewhat
25 disappointed that actual artists, makers and cultural

2 workers were not the original shapers of this plan
3 from the ground up. We saw little outreach to the
4 working artist community at the very outset. In
5 fact, we're disturbed that two of the four partners
6 working on the creation of the plan are real estate
7 development firms. James Lima Planning and
8 Development worked on the Mayor's rezonings and BJH
9 advisors worked on the BQX trolley car. Real estate
10 developers have always used artists to gentrify and
11 then displace poor communities and communities of
12 color, and in the end, we artists are also displaced.
13 We feel it's time to sever that connection once and
14 for all. Working artists in the city want no part of
15 displacement policy. We also know that the EDC is
16 pushing for what they call Creative Tech Hubs in
17 industrial areas such as the Brooklyn Navy Yard. We
18 want to point out that the reality is that working
19 artists, dance troops and magicians as well as
20 manufacturers who provide skilled jobs to folks who
21 may not have a college degree can pay far less rent
22 than tech and architectural firms. Creative tech is
23 not the same as artists and should not be conflated
24 with us. It is our hope that the cultural plan
25 becomes something more than nice words. The

2 situation in New York City is dire for the survival
3 of artists, and our fate is tied to the preservation
4 of New York City's communities. The cultural plan
5 should respond to that reality.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

7 Next?

8 NICOLE REINER: Majority Leader Van
9 Bramer and committee members, thank you for the
10 opportunity to testify before you in regards to the
11 NYC culture plan and the next steps in the process.
12 I'm Nicole Reiner, Director of Development at the
13 Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute,
14 a 40-year-old multidisciplinary center combining arts
15 and social justice based in East Harlem, and this
16 afternoon I'm also here to testify on behalf of many
17 of the arts and cultural workers of color that we
18 work with across the city. While we agree that New
19 York City needs a transparent cultural plan so that
20 the city can be explicit about its cultural policy
21 and how it furthers or not an equity agenda, we are
22 concerned that the working definition of equity does
23 not amount to much more than lip service in the name
24 of diversity. If one of the goals of the cultural
25 plan is to assess the funding needs of the sector and

2 identify funding solutions that would create a
3 sustainable funding model that ensures the long-term
4 viability of the sector as it must, then the current
5 de facto policy that has systematically underfunded
6 small and mid-sized arts groups and groups led by
7 people of color which are mostly small for decades,
8 should be centered as the single most important issue
9 and not relegated to the sidelines. The fact that
10 the vast majority of tax-derived funding for NYC arts
11 groups is 77 percent goes directly to a small elite
12 group of just 33 organizations. The CIGs with a
13 median budget size we think of around 8.3 million
14 dollars is an indicator of the current state of
15 inequity. Three of the 33 CIGs reported budgets over
16 400 million in 2013, according to their IRS 990
17 filings. Compounding this, Cultural Affairs grants
18 additional important benefits to the group that could
19 play a central role in improving the health of a
20 wider organizational ecology if they were extended to
21 this field as a whole. From subsidized utilities and
22 insurance to funding for core operational costs like
23 fair wages and administrative systems. The current
24 short-term project grant based system that applies to
25 a thousand plus other organizations, the so-called

2 programs groups or Cultural Development Fund grantees
3 forces us to compete against one another for a much
4 smaller slice of pie and helps sustain a nonprofit
5 starvation cycle which studies shows has impacted
6 organizations of color disproportionately. Do we
7 need a huge increase in the city's arts and culture
8 budget? absolutely, now more than ever, but given
9 the enduring systemic inequities and the current
10 funding policy, any new increases such as the NYC
11 Inspires City Budget Campaign seeking 40 million
12 boost must go first and foremost to the organizations
13 of color and to the smaller community-based
14 organizations that have been egregiously underfunded
15 by the current system for decades and yet, which
16 contribute invaluablely to the health, wealth,
17 dynamism, and special character of NYC. Thank you
18 once for the opportunity to testify before you today
19 in regards to the cultural plan.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
21 much. Mr. Lee?

22 ROBERT LEE: Hi. My name is Robert Lee.
23 I'm with the Asian American Art Centre in New York.
24 We've been here for more than four decades and have
25 participated in many of the communities' activities

2 including the Chinatown Working Group where we saw
3 for seven years how our plan for zoning of Chinatown
4 to protect it against the ravages that are going on.
5 As Harvey [sic] won't be accepted except for a couple
6 of parts, and which we hope to begin to talk about
7 soon. Anyway, I did participate in a number of the
8 New York City Inspires events in Brooklyn and up in
9 Harlem, and also went to the Community Trust event
10 where I saw that what was missing from the
11 discussion, and began to see at that point the
12 necessity of writing a letter, which I did at that
13 time, and sent it to many people. The requirement
14 was that with demonstrating the lack of confidence
15 that I could, you know, I could not muster in the
16 planning process that we have decided that we have to
17 do something alternative. So, it's my pleasure and
18 my opportunity and my honor to say that we are
19 putting together a People's Cultural Plan as an
20 alternative to the New York City Inspires process.
21 We are going to introduce, or I will introduce here--
22 I won't read the whole thing, but it's part of my
23 statement-- the introduction to the People's Plan as
24 an attachment to my testimony. Other sections will
25 be made in public later. I'll mention a few. I've

2 already spoken of cultural equity, but about justice.
3 What about justice in housing, land use, real estate,
4 the master and the destroyer of our neighborhoods
5 without which we would have no culture? Also, as has
6 been mentioned working class people of color, the
7 systematic exploitation of all low wage workers
8 including unpaid labor of artists. These sections
9 and others of the People's Cultural Plan are being
10 prepared as we speak and will be issued and
11 demonstrate that the key-- that the arts are central
12 to the key issues of our neighborhoods and our
13 communities. Just to say something more poetic, if
14 you mind. Last night on the Academic Awards we saw a
15 near mistake corrected before our eyes. The reality
16 that the film Moonlight had won best picture was
17 accepted by real by the Director Barry Jenkins.
18 However, Warren Beatty's-- excuse me, following
19 Warren Beatty's pre-remark, that truth is the aim of
20 both art and politics. In the middle, among those
21 two things, before apologies were made for the error,
22 we heard someone from La La Land accept the award and
23 claim the importance of dreams. My comment on that
24 is that big institutions with big dreams and finances
25 do not actually serve the people. They do not

2 empower the people to create the truth of their own
3 real culture. Please, don't make a mistake. Seize
4 the moment. It's time to strike out a path where
5 culture, real culture, is at the heart and truth of
6 our neighborhoods, of our city and with leadership
7 for our nation. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
9 much, Mr. Lee, and I certainly appreciate everything
10 you have to say. I would love to see the People's
11 Cultural Plan when you are ready to share it. And as
12 someone who saw both La La Land and Moonlight, I was
13 really rooting for Moonlight. So, I'm happy that
14 that was a mistake when they read La La Land. So,
15 thank you all very, very much on this panel, and I
16 don't know if they're still here, but Patricia
17 Robinson and Christine Whitaker, are you here? Yes,
18 thank you so much, Christine Whitaker and Patricia
19 Robinson for both being here, and saying you are the
20 final two witnesses for this hearing. And we
21 appreciate your being here with us. Who wants to go
22 first? Flip a coin.

23 PATRICIA ROBINSON: Okay. Good
24 afternoon. Greeting to all City Council Members and
25 all visiting officials and guests, and I think the

2 stage has already been set for all people who are
3 speaking for the first time to announce that. So I
4 am also announcing--

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

6 Welcome.

7 PATRICIA ROBINSON: this is my first time
8 presenting to the Council. My name is Patricia
9 Ghizamboule Robinson, and I am representing the
10 districts that fall within the Southeast Queens area,
11 and in fact, I was so pleased to hear you mention
12 earlier about Baisley Park Library, because I
13 actually grew up in that library, not the new one but
14 the old storefront one, yeah.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wow.

16 PATRICIA ROBINSON: And Rochdale is an
17 area that I walk through frequently. I am an artist,
18 a dance, former dancer, and I am currently the
19 Artistic Director of the United African Dance Troop
20 as well as the newly elected Co-chair to the Jamaica
21 Capacity Building Steering Committee. And for those
22 people who do not know, Jamaica and Southeast Queens
23 has had a long cultural history of cultural arts
24 which includes jazz bands and theater companies and
25 the traditional dancing schools that all of the

2 proper young ladies went to for finishing, and as
3 well as hip-hop artists, and we are very excited
4 about the New York City Cultural Plan, and want to
5 make sure that the culture and arts continue to grow
6 over the next decades in our community. We were
7 honored to receive the Capacity Building Grant from
8 DCLA and our current Capacity Building Steering
9 Committee has held many focus groups and we've been
10 tabling at local events. We've also created surveys
11 to gather data from the community about their
12 participation in arts and culture, and to this date
13 we have gathered approximately 300 surveys and as we
14 speak, that data is being-- [timer] wow-- compiled.
15 We are planning a Visioning Summit which will be on
16 March 25th where over 100 community members have been
17 invited to flesh out their ideas of what culture and
18 arts should look like in our community. Though it's
19 not here, what I would like to recommend is that we
20 would be able to continue to get funding for Capacity
21 Building grants, not only for the continuation and
22 the sustenance of the grant that we're with but in
23 other communities, because it's been a very powerful
24 experience, and it's help to make Jamaica and
25 Southeast Queens ready and primed to sustain our

2 cultural arts and encourage emerging artists and
3 cultural organizations. And we're really looking
4 forward to the findings of the cultural plan and
5 we're eager to participate. And I want to echo
6 something that someone else said earlier. During my
7 participation of one of the New York City cultural
8 activities, one of the participants did mention a
9 cultural arts ambassador somewhere in the Brooklyn
10 districts, and I personally support that idea and
11 think I would love to see that role for all
12 districts. Thank you very much for allowing me to
13 testify today.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
15 much for hanging in there your first time here. This
16 is your house, and of course, I being a Queens born
17 and raised elected official, always especially great
18 to have folks from Southeast Queens here. So, thank
19 you for all the work that you do, and I believe that
20 Baisley Park Library is in for some renovation and
21 some modernization coming, which is a great thing,
22 and I mention that one because before I got elected
23 and chaired this committee seven and a half years ago
24 I worked for the Queens Library for 11 years, so I
25 have a 20-year history with that library.

2 PATRICIA ROBINSON: Wow, okay.

3 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And most all of
4 our libraries. So, thank you very much, and last but
5 not least after three and a half hours of testimony,
6 it's all yours. Your mic is-- there you go.

7 CHRISTINE WHITTAKER: Good evening,
8 Council Jimmy Van Bramer. I'm dyslexic, so. I just
9 squirreled down some notes, really. I have three
10 degrees in the arts. I'm a former Athena Fellow with
11 Mark DiSuvero in the Sculpture Park. His wife was
12 Kate Levine [sp?] with Commissioner of Cultural
13 Affairs for New York City 12 years--

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
15 Sure.

16 CHRISTINE WHITTAKER: here in New York.
17 It has-- it's out of control, but in their 22, 23
18 years in migrating from neighborhood rezoning like a
19 lot of the ethnic minorities in the city trying to
20 survive this debauchery of basic space, my great
21 grandfather developed on 52nd Street the first mobile
22 recorder for Allan Lomax [sp?] in the Library of
23 Congress. They have over 100 recordings there, and
24 also that-- Negro spirituals, let's see, bluegrass,
25 folklore music, dialectics, which is story-telling

2 history. Those are reel to reel recordings. Each
3 one is an hour long. My grandfather helped him all
4 over the eastern corridor collect that information.
5 That's how I got stuck where I am right now sitting
6 in this chair with three degrees. It's an
7 abomination what's happening in New York right now
8 for artists to survive these organizations, to
9 survive. The last time I was sitting at this desk
10 was actually for Five Points, and I wanted to say
11 here right now that that plan for that museum started
12 on my computer after-- it was March 9th, 2004 when
13 the-- what was it-- New York Times stated that it was
14 the museum with only walls. That was my idea, the
15 Five Points Plan. The Five Points Museum was my
16 idea. I brought mirrors up and basically showed it to
17 him, and I put a plan together how we could do it.
18 The first time I talked about it, I went to NYU, and
19 I have to say that the invisibility thing that people
20 are talking about was very true, and I didn't
21 understand it because as an artist that built so many
22 pieces, I didn't understand why people couldn't see
23 us, why they couldn't see the community. When I came
24 to New York the first time-- my cousins have been
25 here from Ireland from the 1800's, they've been all

2 over Westchester. They're all involved in the arts.
3 Some of them notably in the city. And I was like-- I
4 just didn't understand it, basically, and part of the
5 reason I testified was so that people would see it,
6 because one of my first experiences in New York was
7 in 1983 coming up and seeing the subway come up, and
8 I thought, "Oh, my God, look at this. It's so
9 embedded in the culture here. Art is so embedded
10 everywhere." It was fantastic. And it still to me,
11 even though I guess that was a failure in a certain
12 extent, it did manage to get 20,000 square foot of
13 artist studios after three confrontations with Jimmy-
14 - I mean, sorry, with Mr. Wyckoff. And the walls, we
15 got the inclusion of the walls, but of course that's
16 not what people wanted. The immersive experience was
17 incredible of that space and that facility. There
18 was a couple different things that were brought up
19 just in the meeting today that I was thinking about.
20 One of them was places to look at. Another place--
21 in 1986 I was with-- in Kansas City, Missouri after I
22 finished my undergraduate degree, and Volkus Lee
23 [sp?] started the first gallery or museum space in
24 the lower west bottoms. That is massive now.
25 They've gotten corporate funding for the arts. That

2 might be another city-- because they're so
3 diversified. Of course, they're hooked in with
4 people like Hallmark and H&R Block and other
5 communities and stuff like that, but that's really
6 good example of another city that I think is--
7 they've done pretty well as far as buildings and
8 stuff like that. Let's see. I wanted to mention, I
9 have been consulting since I got tapped by the
10 economic developer Allen Town [sp?] through two
11 situations. One was-- well, anyway. I met her at a
12 party. She told me she had a 300 million dollar
13 budget, and my jaw just completely dropped. And she
14 said, "We're having a little problem with Allen
15 Town." And this is after I left Baltimore which is a
16 complete disaster. I was in the neighborhood that
17 blew up probably about three or four months later.
18 Mears [sic] had actually called me from Five Points
19 and he had mentioned that Mr. Wyckoff was trying to
20 take the Five Points logo. Well, I'd been back and
21 forth enough to Library of Congress and to the
22 Trademark Commission to know that that would never be
23 possible, but at the same time, I was also in a new--
24 I was in the area that blew up like three months
25 before it blew up, and I was like, I had never seen

2 anything like that. I'd been in the Five Points
3 building for seven years, and when I was doing the
4 research on Five Points and what it was doing for the
5 inner-city community, one of the high points I found
6 is that there were no murders within that block,
7 within the block of the Five Points building within
8 10 years, and there were just two or three petty
9 crimes. And the community outreach that was going on
10 there with the community was amazing, and I never
11 really put it into contextually like numbers and
12 things like that. Baltimore did not--

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing] So
14 I-- you've waited a long time which is why I'm
15 allowing you to go well beyond your time, but if I
16 could just ask you to maybe--

17 CHRISTINE WHITTAKER: Yeah, Baltimore--

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
19 summarize.

20 CHRISTINE WHITTAKER: didn't have that.
21 New York has something extraordinary, and I think
22 that if we undermined it in a certain way, those
23 provision have to be installed now, because if-- look
24 at the NEAs [sic] facing cuts and things like that.
25 The other thing that was probably even more

2 frightening was having the economic developer Allen
3 Town say we've already gentrified and we don't-- we
4 need help with post-gentrification. And I was like,
5 I don't do that. I don't do post-gentrification.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right.

7 CHRISTINE WHITTAKER: But I went ahead
8 and connected her with Mears One [sic] and they went
9 there and did a few murals. But the thing is like I
10 think that New York has gotten to a point where this
11 is serious and it needs to be confronted and dealt
12 with.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I agree with you.
14 I think all of us here agree that the cultural plan
15 is an opportunity, could be an opportunity.
16 Obviously, some folks are a bit more critical, but
17 that's why we're here today to talk about it, to
18 think about it, and to hopefully come up with a plan
19 that's best. So, I want to thank you, the two of you
20 in particular for closing us out here and everyone
21 who has been a part of this hearing, and you know, I
22 feel like when the draft report comes out in April,
23 all of us will eagerly consume that and then I'm sure
24 we will have a follow-up discussion, possibly hearing
25 to that lead-in to the actual final product, which I

2 believe still will be a very, very good thing for the
3 cultural community in New York City. So, thank you
4 both for being here. Certainly, my love to Southeast
5 Queens in particular, and with that, we are
6 adjourned. Thank you all very much.

7 [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date March 9, 2017