



**New York City Council  
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations**

**Oversight Hearing: Fiscal Year 2025 DCLA Preliminary Budget**

**Tuesday, March 12, 2:00PM – City Council Chambers**

**Testimony Presented by NYC Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner  
Laurie Cumbo**

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Good afternoon, Chair Rivera and members of the committee. I am Laurie Cumbo, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, here to testify in regards to DCLA's proposed Fiscal Year 2025 preliminary budget. I am joined today by a number of my colleagues from the agency.

Before I get started, I just want to take a moment to reflect on Women's HERstory Month, especially as a woman-led agency testifies before a woman-led committee. My team's research indicates that you are the first woman to chair this body since it was established as a standalone committee. It's so exciting to see women assuming so many leadership roles throughout the city – something that this month provides a perfect moment to reflect upon.

I will start my testimony today with a quick review of the numbers. For FY25, the preliminary budget allocates a total of \$143.9 million for the agency. This includes:

- \$24.9 million for the Cultural Development Fund
- \$108.7 million for the Cultural Institutions Group
- \$7.4 million for agency operations and staffing
- \$2.92 million for CreateNYC initiatives, energy support, and other funding for culturals.

These figures do reflect the Programs to Eliminate the Gap (PEGs) required by the Mayor last November and again in January. Note that they do not reflect any one-time funding typically added at Adoption, such as Council Initiatives and Member Items. At this point in the process last year, DCLA's preliminary budget stood at \$149.5 million.

I want to say up front here, we understand the immense challenges that any reduction to DCLA's budget presents for the groups we support. But all agencies were asked to do their part and make reductions in light of the unprecedented fiscal challenges we're facing as a city. DCLA was exempted from four prior rounds of PEGs, and thanks to this prudent financial planning, the Mayor was able to cancel the PEG that was being expected in April of this year. We have also gotten the green light to fill several open

positions at the agency following a hiring freeze, and our support for the city's cultural community remains steadfast and high by historical standards.

Happy to answer questions you might have about these figures. But first I'd like to provide a few updates on the work we're doing at Cultural Affairs.

Last month, Cultural Development Fund notifications went to the field, with \$52.2 million going to support cultural programming at 1,031 nonprofits citywide. Due to the PEG, these notifications were delayed, and we recognize the major challenges this posed to many of the recipients. Our program officers are ready to answer questions any groups might have, including handling scope changes due to the timing of notifications. Still, distributing more than \$50 million to the cultural sector despite the fiscal challenges is a major investment in this essential community of organizations and artists. I founded and led an organization that received funding from the CDF, and I know firsthand how big of a deal this is. The FY25 application period will be opening in just a few weeks. We'll be looking to you, our partners on the City Council, to spread the word and help us recruit panelists that reflect the full breadth and diversity of our communities.

City Canvas is an exciting program that allows artists to install work on the sidewalk sheds, fences, and scaffolding that line so many miles of New York's streets. You might recall that last July, Mayor Adams and the Department of Buildings announced "Get Sheds Down," a sweeping new effort to remove these eyesores from city streets more quickly while redesigning and reimagining those that are needed. Make no mistake: we fully support the effort to get sheds down. We are here for it. But for the sheds that have to remain installed for safety reasons, we stand ready to transform them into platforms for creative expression that beautify our cityscape.

Following a pilot version of the program that lasted several years, we launched the new, permanent City Canvas program last year. This new program – which I'm proud to say, was created thanks to legislation I passed while serving on the Council – includes an open call for artists to design "pre-approved artworks" that site owners will be able to choose from. The open call received hundreds of submissions from artists, and we look forward to announcing up to ten selected designs later this spring.

Staying in the realm of public art: our Percent for Art program recently turned 40! This program has had a transformative impact on the city's public spaces: Since it was established, more than 400 permanent, public art projects have been completed. Another 100+ commissions are in progress throughout the five boroughs. This administration understands the critical importance of public spaces to our city's health and vitality, and these spaces wouldn't be complete without the extraordinary artworks we've commissioned for them. This program is one of the most critical ways that we invite artists to work with our communities to co-create our public realm together – and it gives real, meaningful financial support to artists in the process. Often, a Percent commission is their first foray into public art. Hank Willis Thomas, for instance, designed the incredible "Unity" monument in Brooklyn – a massive bronze arm protruding from the median on Tillary Street. This was his first public art commission, and now he has



also created the monument to Coretta Scott King and Martin Luther King, Jr. recently unveiled in Boston Common.

The very first Percent project, completed in 1985, was artist Jorge Luis Rodriguez's "Growth" in the East Harlem Art Park. It still stands tall there today, and it marks the first in a proud lineage. Soon, a monument to Shirley Chisholm will rise in Prospect Park, designed by the MacArthur winning artist Amanda Williams and Olalekan Jeyifous, who won a major award at the Venice Architecture Biennale. So far, in recognition of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we've already had an installation on the steps of City Hall in celebration, and hosted tours during Open House New York Weekend. When I was in Council, I was proud to sponsor legislation that updated the Percent for Art formula for the first time since the program's inception. Law 22 of 2017 raised the cap per project from \$400,000 to \$900,000 and raised the annual cap for spending from \$1.4 million to \$4 million, allocating even more funding to create ambitious, exciting projects that can stand the test of time.

Black History Month and now Women's HERstory Month provide great opportunities to remind us of the power of cultural programming to examine our past, come together in the present, and chart the course for a brighter future. Last month, you could visit the Black Future Festival at Brooklyn Children's Museum; explore the history of the Black Angels of Sea View Hospital at the Staten Island Museum; participate in the Bronx Museum's James Baldwin book club; or hear bassist Hilliard Greene present "Milestone Negro Spirituals" at the National Jazz Museum. This month, you can experience Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning's "Strength Courage & Wisdom," a performance showcasing the range of women's voices and vocal expression on March 30; or visit the "Women's Work" exhibition at New-York Historical Society.

We are living through such a pivotal moment for our Black community, and for the fight for women's rights and equality. Black leaders and institutions are reaching new heights of influence and investment. Just think of Studio Museum, Universal Hip Hop Museum, Afro Latin Jazz Alliance, National Black Theatre, MoCADA, 651 Arts, La MaMa, and so many more – these Black institutions (many of them founded and led by women) have all opened new and renovated spaces, or will soon. We're proud of the city's investment in all of these spaces. Black culture, Black leadership, Black excellence are getting their long overdue credit. But it took generations of advocacy and investment to get to this point, and it's going to take generations more to continue building on the achievements we're witnessing before our eyes. The city alone has never been able to fully support all of our sector, even in the best fiscal circumstances. We need all levels of government to step up. We need private philanthropy to invest. We need our leaders across sectors to join boards and pledge their support. It took a village to get us here, and it's going to take the whole city to keep us moving forward. Just consider that Black residents are leaving New York in record numbers. We don't want these institutions to become tributes to past greatness. We want them to be anchors for living, vital communities. We need to invest in working New Yorkers, as the Mayor is committed to doing – through affordable housing, through good jobs, and so much more.

DCLA's capital program continues to pay dividends for New Yorkers. No other city in America provides this level of support for construction, equipment, renovation, and other hard costs like these. These sorts of projects can often be more difficult to raise funds for, because HVAC isn't an exciting thing for a donor to put their name on. But these are essential investments that deliver world class cultural infrastructure for New Yorkers. Just this year, we broke ground on a new \$13 million project for The Clemente, which will modernize their historic facility, and install a new elevator that will make it accessible for people with disabilities. We cut the ribbon on a revamped education center at the Brooklyn Museum, and a new performing arts space at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y. The full renovation of the Nuyorican Poets Café will soon be underway, and projects at Downtown Art and Teatro Circulo will also be complete. Along with the major renovation of La MaMa we cut the ribbon on last year, the arts community on East 4<sup>th</sup> Street is having a major moment that will ensure it continues to engage New Yorkers and attract audiences from all over for many years to come. Just a few blocks away, the Joyce is starting to welcome dancers to its new facility on 10<sup>th</sup> Street in the East Village. We're proud of the city's role in supporting these public-private partnerships.

Art and culture are essential to New York City. They drive our economy and strengthen our communities. We're proud of the city's ongoing investment in and partnership with the cultural nonprofits that form the backbone of this essential sector. Despite the fiscal headwinds the city has been facing, we've done our best to make the necessary reductions in a way that would minimize impacts on our constituents. We're optimistic about the city's trajectory: with prudent fiscal management, we've been able to avoid another PEG. And soon, we'll be preparing to launch the FY25 CDF process. No one knows your districts better than you do, so we'll look to you to help spread the word about this opportunity to groups in your communities. We will provide tool kits and everything you need to make this happen.

Thank you for the opportunity to present on the FY25 preliminary budget. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**ANTONIO REYNOSO**

Brooklyn Borough President

### **City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations Hearing on the FY 2025 Preliminary Budget 3.12.24**

Good afternoon Chair Rivera, and congratulations on leading this very important committee in the new term. I am here on behalf of Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso to call upon the administration to restore cuts to our libraries and cultural institutions.

The administration's budget projections, cuts, and restorations have been unpredictable and lacking in transparency. Yet recent analysis from the Independent Budget Office predicts a [\\$3.3 billion surplus](#) for FY 2025, and the administration itself now says that its projections are rosier than expected. Yet rather than restoring cuts to our libraries and cultural institutions, they instead chose to uphold cuts to the libraries and double down on cuts to cultural organizations, forcing both to make difficult choices about cuts to staff, programming, operating hours, and more.

Mayor Adams recently called libraries "a lifeline to countless communities and the great equalizer." On this, Borough President Reynoso agrees – libraries provide critical services for youth, older adults, immigrants, the formerly incarcerated, and really everyone who wants to expand their mind and learn new skills. Mid-year budget cuts are already having a huge impact, with the loss of Sunday service citywide, yet the administration did not include the libraries in its January restorations. Given the new budget projections, the administration must restore funding to the libraries to reinstate Sunday service and support for critical programs.

Similarly critical are our cultural institutions, which faced sharp cuts both in November and January. The cuts have the most outsized impact on small non-profits and organizations run by and serving people of color, which are [often called upon](#) to serve their communities in myriad ways [other than just arts programming](#). It also impacts the anchor institutions of the CIG, cutting into programming that serves communities citywide, especially our youth. Organizations say that these cuts have already resulted or will result in cuts to after-school and youth workforce programs, programs for the elderly, jobs for full-time staff and teaching artists, festivals and celebrations, and even closures or suspension of programs.

Put simply, these cuts are bad for the City's bottom line. [A letter from the CIG](#) to the mayor asserts that for every \$1 of City funding, the institutions leverage at least \$3 in philanthropic

contributions. And as you, Chair Rivera, pointed out in a [recent op-ed](#), cultural activities are an important economic driver for the city, generating \$22 billion annually, a 99:1 return on what the City spends. Borough President Rynoso urges the Council to work proactively to restore cuts to the Cultural Development Fund and the CIGs, and to explore once again significantly supplementing DCLA's budget in recognition of the difficult years cultural organizations have faced recovering from the pandemic.

Finally, I want to address DCLA's capital budget. Borough President Rynoso has testified about this twice before, but the problem remains – DCLA does not facilitate property acquisition with its capital dollars, making it very difficult for small cultural organizations to find and secure permanent homes. Being at the mercy of a private landlord in our competitive real estate market can make long-term planning difficult. These groups should be focusing on their work, not worrying about losing their space. The BP has substantial capital resources to allocate to Brooklyn and wants to use them to help groups find permanent spaces, yet remains frustrated that he cannot extend this resource to cultural organizations due to this unnecessary limitation. He encourages the Council and administration to work together to address this in FY25.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. Borough President Rynoso looks forward to working with the Council to support our libraries and cultural institutions as they continue to bounce back from the very difficult pandemic times and thrive into the future.

## ADVANCE | MORE OPERA

The Association for the Development of Vocal Artistry and Neighborhood Cultural Enrichment  
Manhattan Opera Repertory Ensemble  
Ansonia Station Box 231152, New York, NY 10023

Testimony to the New York City Council  
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations  
New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on  
The Preliminary Budget for  
Fiscal Year 2025  
T2024-0286

Submitted by

Cheryl Warfield

Professional Opera Singer, Teaching Artist, Producer and Founder of ADVANCE/MORE Opera

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Greetings. Thank you, Chair Rivera, committee, and council members, including my CM Brewer for reading my testimony. I am writing to urge the Council to restore full funding for arts and culture in the FY 2025 budget including funding for arts education for young and old alike. New York needs to "keep culture whole" for the health and welfare of all our communities.

Please allow me to introduce myself. I am Cheryl Warfield, a professional opera singer and teaching artist who has performed at the Metropolitan Opera and on Broadway. I am also a producer of innovative arts programming and the founder of the Association for the Development of Vocal Artistry and Neighborhood Cultural Enrichment (ADVANCE), a 501(c) 3 non-profit and the artistic director of MORE Opera. For the past two years, I have been a CDF panelist and previously sat on panels for the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.

For over 20 years, ADVANCE/MORE Opera has mounted dozens of public performances and conducted educational workshops and no-cost community choral training to hundreds of young people and adults in New York City. ADVANCE/MORE Opera showcases outstanding and diverse talent while providing culturally responsive outreach and educational programming to youth and seniors in underserved communities. As an African American performer and arts administrator, I am determined to contribute to the musical education of young people, feature black themes, and highlight diversity in opera and classical music. As a producer of color, I strive to spotlight outstanding talent from all backgrounds who otherwise may be overlooked or ostracized. MORE Opera's most recent production, "Angelitos Negros" builds a bridge between African American and Hispanic people and music.

Small minority-led organizations like ours work in the trenches and focus on meeting the needs of underserved communities. Initiatives like CASA and Su Casa help provide funding for services to our targeted communities. I have witnessed first-hand the benefits to the participants these discretionary and initiative funds have provided.

## **AFM LOCAL 802 MEMORANDUM**

TO: New York City Council, Mayor Eric Adams  
FROM: NYC musicians' union (AFM Local 802)  
DATE: March 12, 2024  
RE: Roll back devastating cuts to city arts budget

AFM Local 802, a union representing over 6,000 musicians in New York City, Long Island and the surrounding areas, implores the Adams administration to restore the proposed budget cuts to the arts.

The musicians of Local 802 provide live music throughout all five boroughs including our Broadway theaters, Radio City Music Hall, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and countless other locations. With the resurgence of tourism in the wake of the pandemic, visitors are returning to our stages to see the world-class live entertainment that our city has to offer. However, with audience sizes still rebounding to pre-pandemic levels, most performing musicians are still struggling to make ends meet.

This is a critical time for musicians and creative artists throughout New York City. The arts fuel our local economy and provide jobs and stability to our cultural workers, many of whom are members of Local 802.

With the recent announcement of cuts to DCLA and the cultural community at-large, we will see our musicians and other creative artists suffer. For so long, we have been working to ensure that musicians and their fellow artists receive the economic security they deserve. These short-sighted actions threaten the chance for all creative workers to sustain themselves

In order for New York City to remain the cultural capital of the world and retain its creative workers, you must restore the proposed October 2023 and January 2024 cuts, increase baseline support, expand funding for music education, and continue to approve important cultural initiative funding that makes it possible for our members to continue to live and work here. Anything else would be a disinvestment that will destroy what makes this city so great – our musicians, our artists, and all of our creative workers.

# American Museum of Natural History

Chair Rivera and distinguished members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and Intergroup Relations, my name is Dohini Sompura, Director of Government Affairs, and I am providing testimony on behalf of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) at this Preliminary Budget hearing today.

AMNH is one of 34 cultural institutions that comprise the Cultural Institutions Group (CIGs) and are charged with maintaining some of the most important New York City-owned properties throughout the five boroughs. Our institutions are vital economic engines that power tourism, employment, and commerce in addition to providing cultural, educational, and workforce development programming to New Yorkers.

The CIGs contribute more than \$20 billion per year and the cultural economy as a whole, generates \$110 billion in activity in NYC. Our direct impact on the City economy includes approximately \$500 million in spending on local vendors for goods and services, and AMNH specifically generates more than \$2 billion in economic activity annually.

Culture employs hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, with the CIGs employing 15,700 full and part-time employees in a range of jobs, which are open to New Yorkers of all education and skill levels, including union jobs. Our institutions employ 5,800 union jobs, and AMNH alone employs more than 1,000 people, including in more than 500 jobs represented by DC37, IATSE, and IBEW.

CIGs serve as a lifeline for communities, and investing in culture is investing in safe, public spaces for New Yorkers of all ages and from all walks of life. The CIGs position New York City as a world-class cultural hub and leader in Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) education and public programs. AMNH understands the importance of having our programming accessible to all students throughout the City, and our educational programs serve as an extension of the classroom and provide opportunities for students who

may not have access or the resources to visit us. We strive to engage students to spark curiosity and encourage a lifelong interest in science and the natural world through our various educational programs, which serve students as young as Pre-Kindergarten all the way to graduate school. AMNH is also a partner with NYC Public Schools in administering the Urban Advantage program, a groundbreaking science education program and one of the largest model science education programs in the country – now celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> year.

### **Impact of Department of Cultural Affairs Budget Reductions**

As you are already aware, the impact of the November and January reductions to the Department of Cultural Affairs' (DCLA) budget are devastating to CIGs that receive operational support from the City. This loss of funding is painful enough on its own, but it comes at a time when cultural institutions are still recovering from the debilitating effects of the pandemic. International visitation has not yet returned to 2019 levels, and many CIGs, including our museum, are operating through multi-year deficits. City support has been a crucial part of our ability to maintain our services to New York City families, students, and schools. These budget cuts and baseline reductions are hitting CIG organizations that are already stretched too thin, exacerbating budget shortfalls, undermining program delivery, and imperiling jobs. It is also important to note that baseline funding for CIGs has not changed since 2009, and in fact, AMNH will be receiving the same amount in operational support from the City in FY25 as we did in FY00 if these budget cuts are not restored.

I ask you and your colleagues to prioritize the restoration of these cuts in the Fiscal 2025 Budget, as well as the one-time funding of \$45 million; as an investment in cultural institutions is an investment in New York City, and it's needed now more than ever.

### **Fiscal 2025 City Council Expense and Capital Requests**

AMNH is grateful to the City Council and its support of our Discovery Days and Sci Network programming in Fiscal 2024 and for Fiscal 2025. We request continued support for these two programs.

#### *Discovery Days Program*



Since 2014, AMNH has been proud to partner with the New York City Council to offer New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) families an opportunity to participate in the AMNH Discovery Days program, which organizes Saturday visits to the museum for NYCHA residents from selected developments. The program supports families in developing skills for observing and understanding the natural world, engaging parents and children alike in scientific conversations, while providing them with the resources needed for continued engagement after their visit. AMNH hosts 8 to 10 Discovery Day sessions throughout the academic year, engaging NYCHA developments from each of the five boroughs. In Fiscal 2023, the initiative resumed to pre-pandemic programming and served 500 individuals from 15 NYCHA Houses across the city. In Fiscal 2024 we will be providing programming for developments in all five boroughs as well and have so far hosted over 200 individuals. **For Fiscal 2025, AMNH requests \$100,000 from the City Council to continue this program.**

### *SCI Network*

New York City is a world-class cultural hub and leader in science education. At the forefront of these efforts are eight science-based cultural institutions: the American Museum of Natural History, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, New York Botanical Garden, New York Hall of Science, Queens Botanical Garden, Staten Island Zoo, Wave Hill, and the Wildlife Conservation Society. Together we act as STEM career development centers, supporting young New Yorkers as they build their STEM skills, professional experience, and social capital.

In Fiscal 2024, SCI Network NYC funding supports AMNH's Science Research Mentorship Program (SRMP) and the Museum Education Experience Program (MEEP), two flagship workforce development initiatives. MEEP prepares college students for careers in education, science communication, and museum careers more broadly. The SRMP Consortium – which consists of 28 partners across the city, serving primarily low-income students and those of color – has provided mentored-research opportunities for over 600 NYC high school students over the past decade. Through coursework and apprenticeships, these students learn lab techniques, data science, and scientific communication skills. In Fiscal 2024, we aim to serve 100 students across both programs, increasing their reach to 120 students in Fiscal 2025. **In Fiscal 2025, along with**

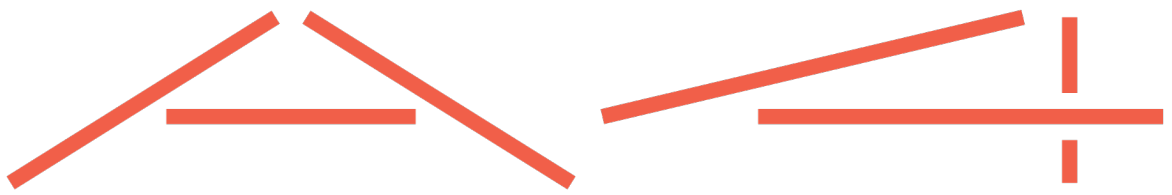
**our partner institutions, AMNH requests \$1,000,000 from the City Council to continue to support this network.**

*Capital Request – Roof Replacement Project*

**For Fiscal 2025, AMNH requests \$32.5M from the City Council for the restoration of roofs across seven of our buildings.** Many of these roofs are over 100 years old and well beyond their useful life. The buildings in need of roof repairs house our Science offices and laboratories, public exhibition halls, collection storage areas, and infrastructure facilities, all of which play an integral role in fulfilling the Museum's mission of science and education. Water damage caused by the leaking roofs presents a risk of mold and delamination of asbestos, which is a health and safety hazard to our staff and visitors, and compromises our collection and laboratory spaces housed in these buildings.

By replacing our roofs, we will be able to preserve and protect our extensive collection, maintain our historic landmarked building, and continue to provide an exceptional visitor experience. Funding this project will continue to build on the successful private-public partnerships AMNH maintains, where City funding supports the maintenance and improvements of this City-owned asset.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



**Public Testimony**  
**Preliminary Budget Hearing - Cultural Affairs, Libraries and**  
**International Intergroup Relations**  
**March 12, 2024**

Good afternoon, Chair Rivera, Members of the City Council, and friends from the Department of Cultural Affairs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Lisa Gold and I am the Executive Director of the Asian American Arts Alliance, a 40-year-old nonprofit service organization currently based in District 4 that works to ensure representation, equity, and opportunities for Asian American and Pacific Islander artists (AAPIs) and arts organizations of all disciplines across this great city. We are the only organization in the country that serves this role.

AAPIs are one of the most diverse and fastest growing ethnic groups in New York City, making up almost 18% of the city's population, yet we receive fewer than 2% of grants administered by the Department of Cultural Affairs.<sup>1</sup> We speak more than 50 languages so you can understand the importance of language access for our community. Not to mention its importance to the many tourists who come to New York from abroad.

The arts play such a critical part in the lives of our constituents, bringing understanding and tolerance in a time where it is so needed. Not to mention that the arts promote holistic wellness, prevent illness, and help with chronic conditions according to the World Health Organization.<sup>2</sup>

And you know that the arts are an economic engine, creating jobs, attracting investment, generating tax revenues, and stimulating the economy through tourism and consumer purchases.

It is for these reasons, that I join my colleagues in asking the city to:

- **Reverse** the November and Preliminary Budget Cuts to culture - that's \$20 million in FY24 and \$15.5M in FY25 (no cuts to FY25);

- **Restore and baseline** last year’s one-time addition of \$45 million to all cultural groups across the city, with the ideal goal to increase cultural funding to 1% of the city’s budget;
- **Fully fund City Council initiatives** including the Cultural Immigrant Initiative and the Coalition of Theaters of Color; and
- **Ensure the implementation** of transparency bill 1184 to promote accessible, transparent, and usable data from DCLA so that we can partner with the agency to support equitable funding distribution.

Communities of color rely on city funding much, much more than private and predominantly white institutions. In order to ensure there is true equity in this city, I implore you to restore the cuts support to arts and culture to keep our city the cultural capital of the world.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> IBO Report from DCLA dataset detailing allocations for CDF grantees over 6 fiscal years: <https://culturepolicy.org/analyzing-the-impact-on-fiscal-adjustments-on-nycs-cultural-landscape/>

<sup>2</sup> *Ground Breaking Research Series on the Health Benefits of the Arts*, 2023, <https://www.who.int/news/item/25-09-2023-ground-breaking-research-series-on-health-benefits-of-the-arts>

3.12.24

### **Statement for City Council Cultural Committee Budget Meeting**

Good Afternoon Honorable Speaker Adams, Committee Chair Rivera & City Council Members,

My name is Judith Insell & I am the Executive Director of the Bronx Arts Ensemble, a 52-year-old organization that annually provides over 20,000 residents of the Bronx with "FREE OF CHARGE" live performances presented by professional musicians(employing Local 802 members) in multiple music genres like classical, jazz, & Latin Jazz.

This fiscal year's deep funding cuts to the Department of Cultural Affairs are resulting in the elimination of jobs and public programming at cultural institutions, both leading to the loss of vital wages for cultural workers like Bronx-based artists. Our organization has received annual funding from the Department of Cultural Affairs for over 40 years, until this fiscal year, with us being completely "zeroed out" of the Cultural Development Fund. As a direct result, we are facing the unfamiliar challenges of NOT employing all of our scheduled Bronx-based musicians & canceling scheduled live performances for Bronx neighborhoods. We urge Mayor Adams and the City Council to approach this upcoming funding cycle and beyond with the understanding that the cultural sector of New York City is an industry that drives the economic engine of business & supports the building of community by providing safe spaces for citizens to come together in the Bronx and all boroughs.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak to you today. The current crisis that the cultural sector is facing is crippling all nonprofit arts institutions in NYC and will have an overall negative effect on the city's economy. The Bronx Arts Ensemble urges you to remember one thing when tackling the FY25 Cultural Budget: Allocating funding for neighborhood arts nonprofit institutions is NOT OPTIONAL, IT'S ESSENTIAL.

Thank you.

**BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY**  
**PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING**  
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations  
March 12, 2024

Good afternoon. I am Linda Johnson, President & CEO of Brooklyn Public Library. Thank you to Speaker Adams, Chair Rivera and members of the committee, Finance Chair Brannan, our Brooklyn delegation, and the entire City Council for your steadfast support of New York City's libraries.

Libraries are the most democratic spaces in our city, and you—our dedicated and outspoken leaders—understand the importance of protecting libraries and the promise we hold for every community. For this, we are grateful.

As you know, Libraries are facing some of the most significant cuts we have seen in years. **In total, \$58.3 million dollars for New York City's Libraries has been stripped from the Fiscal Year 2025 preliminary budget.** And for the first time in 16 years, the libraries' capital plans have been reduced, **by a staggering \$130 million.**

The numbers are mind boggling. We are not blind to the financial troubles the city finds itself in. But Libraries ought to be held harmless. As you know, investments in our libraries yield strong returns. Given the difficulties facing our city, we should be increasing these investments, not slashing them.

Today, I ask for your continued support and urge the **full restoration and baselining of library funding in the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget.** In expense funding, this includes a reversal of the \$22.1 million PEG to the libraries' baseline funding, the reinstatement of \$20.5 million in mayoral funding, and the restoration of the Council's Libraries Initiative, funded last year at \$15.7 million. In capital funding, we ask you to advocate for a reversal of the capital PEG, returning the sorely needed \$130 million to our capital plans. The impact of these cuts is untenable and will result in devastating service loss and derailed infrastructure upgrades if they are allowed to proceed.

### **Expense**

Too often our libraries are asked to absorb mid-year reductions. The result is an underfunded, thinly staffed system, forced to dedicate our precious resources to regaining lost ground in the face of increased costs.

This past November, the city's three library systems, along with city agencies, sustained a 5% cut to our operating budgets. We have already eliminated universal seven-day service; significantly reduced

spending on library materials, programming and building maintenance; and had to eliminate vacant positions, all of which resulted in disruptions to service.

**The proposed FY25 operating budget will only deepen these service impacts. Brooklyn Public Library alone faces a \$16.2 million cut, or 13% of our operating budget.**

To sustain a loss of this magnitude, we would have to drastically curtail hiring, exacerbating staffing shortages and our ability to fully operate our libraries. Over half of our branches would reduce operations to only five days a week. And our projections show that after about nine months, this number will likely increase due to attrition without active hiring and the loss of half of our part-time staff hours.

Further, we will have to reduce hours by opening at 1pm on Thursdays, as we already do on Tuesdays, to keep our branches open until 8pm two nights per week. Our operating hours have already decreased from 52 hours prior to the November PEG to 48 hours currently, an 8% reduction. If these cuts proceed, on July 1 we will drop to 38 operating hours, a 27% reduction. Additionally, to help maintain adequate staffing levels, three branches due to come back online in FY25 after renovations are completed, may not be able to reopen. It is heartbreaking to be in this position, when we have invested so much time and money renovating branches the community deserves to have back online.

We are reducing our building hours at a time when our patrons most want to walk through our doors.

By nearly every metric, demand for our services increased in 2023. Compared to 2022, program sessions grew by 59% and program attendance was up by 46%. Notably, visits across the system increased by 40% and new card applications were up 42%.

New Yorkers are eager to use their local libraries and connect with one another. This fall, I watched as over 600,000 visitors came to Central Library to see *The Book of HOV* exhibition, breaking previous daily records. Visitors sang, danced and even double-dutched together on our plaza as they not only celebrated a Brooklyn icon, but also checked out their first books in years and found a genuine sense of community and belonging.

Similarly, our LevelUp program has built a community of over 250 Black female entrepreneurs. Through instructional workshops, mentoring and financial coaching, these women are working together to accelerate their careers in the real estate, finance and tech sectors; combat systematic and individual discrimination in the job market; and build a more equitable future for New York and beyond.

We are proud to bring creative programming and workshops like these to the library and will continue to look for opportunities to expand our reach. In fact, we have already hosted over 80,000 in-person programs this fiscal year. But offering fewer days of service hinders this momentum and means our programming will be significantly curtailed.

Though library usage is soaring, we will need to reduce programming budgets by one third, impacting all non-grant funded programming. This translates to fewer citizenship classes, fewer visits to senior centers and nursing homes, cuts to creative aging and older adult classes, reduction of the young adult literacy program by half, fewer stipends resulting in fewer teen interns, and unfortunately, scaling back our new and popular teen takeover initiative.

We have made great strides in the last few years to focus on better serving our younger patrons as they begin to navigate the world outside their homes. With funding from the Administration, we added five new Teen Tech Centers, safe spaces where teens can meet their peers, sharpen their digital skills and express their creativity. However, if the FY25 cuts are enacted, the teen programming budget will be cut and one of our new Tech Centers will close on Saturdays.

It's not only our programming that's shrinking, so are our collections. There are 40,000 fewer books on the shelves since the enactment of the November cut. And there will be even fewer in FY25 despite increasing demand for physical and digital materials. In 2023, our physical and digital collections circulated nearly 10 million items.

On top of these collections and programming impacts, there is a dangerous domino effect at play: if these cuts are not reversed, libraries could lose 25% of our state funding. The Maintenance of Effort (MOE) clause in the State's Library Aid statute requires local aid to remain at or above 95% of the prior 2-year average. If the MOE is triggered in this year's city budget, Brooklyn Public Library stands to lose an additional \$2 million in state funding next year.

It is impossible to run an institution this way.

We spend months every year planning for cuts instead of planning more programming for the millions of New Yorkers who rely on our services. Fighting to regain lost ground every year forces us to be reactive instead of proactive, losing both time, money and opportunities as we navigate our constantly shifting budget. One minute we are recruiting new employees and the next imposing hiring freezes, driving away the best candidates and discouraging our staff, who are already stretched thin.

And all the while, the operational costs of providing quality library service are increasing. Covering the necessary union salary and minimum wage increases will cost an additional \$1.8 million for Brooklyn Public Library; the Library's share of staff health care premiums has increased by \$1.4 million; and the



operating costs of two new locations, the Center for Brooklyn History and the Library for Arts and Culture, are an additional \$1.4 million. Operating with these increased costs is tantamount to a cut.

Our libraries need more, not less. Our patrons deserve more, not less. So, in addition to advocating for a full restoration of Library funding, I also urge you to push for the \$58.3 million restoration to be baselined. In these increasingly uncertain times, New Yorkers must have stable, reliable, free public spaces.

### **Capital**

And those spaces must be safe, welcoming and in a state of good repair. While the Library's operational funding is of grave concern, our capital funding is also at risk. Brooklyn Public Library is the steward of over one million square feet of city-owned facilities, but we lack adequate funding to maintain them.

These needs are not new. You have heard it from me many times. Brooklyn Public Library is an aging system, where the average branch is 70 years old, and 19 locations are over 100 years old. Our deferred maintenance has grown to over \$380 million dollars, one third of which is emergency infrastructure like roofs, heating and cooling systems, or fire safety and accessibility needs. Last year, we lost more than 2,200 hours to unplanned closures stemming from infrastructure needs at 56 of our 62 branches.

What is new is that for the first time since 2008, nearly \$47 million dollars of capital funding necessary to maintain the public libraries our patrons rely on has been pulled out of our capital plan.

We depend on city support for the maintenance of our physical plant. And of course, without the support of our councilmembers who have funded local projects in their districts and supported us with delegation-level funding, we would not have come this far in revitalizing our local libraries. Our progress is at risk.

Try as we might to minimize the detrimental impacts of this capital reduction, we have already been forced to eliminate four long-awaited renovations, remove funding for several construction projects and eliminate critical infrastructure funds.

A capital cut of this size is unimaginable. And it is even more painful when paired with reduced expense funds. Every year, we are forced to dip into our operating budget to solve urgent capital demands — maintaining old boilers, replacing dilapidated furniture, and funding temporary heating and cooling fixes — while we wait for long overdue capital projects to be completed. This year, there's no cushion to pull from.

For example, many of the HVAC systems throughout our branches are in such disrepair that our vendor can no longer service them. It will cost us half a million dollars in expense funding this year to bring the units up to a serviceable level.

Additionally, nearly \$10 million in council funded capital projects were pushed out ten years to Fiscal Year 2033 of our capital plan and cannot proceed. This includes 6 projects; several about to begin construction, two full branch renovations, and systemwide funding to cover active shortfalls.

By delaying projects we will incur construction cost escalation, increased maintenance costs to keep troubled branches operational, squander design fees, and sustain unplanned branch closures due to failing infrastructure, as we endure drastic reductions to the Library's operating budget. This will have a catastrophic effect on patrons, staff and our library system.

In total, the FY25 Preliminary Budget Proposal will have dire consequences for public service, which will, in turn, have dire consequences for our city.

### **Conclusion**

Chair Rivera, members of the committee, the future of our libraries depends on your leadership and support.

Libraries are front of mind for so many New Yorkers.

If you need a warm hideout, an enriching afterschool program, help learning English or filing your taxes, a recommendation for a new book or simply a quiet space to work — we are the first place you think of.

But now, the loss of library service is front of mind for so many New Yorkers.

Restoring and baselining our funds will barely affect the city's finances but will greatly affect New Yorkers' lives. *You* can make a difference for so many of our neighbors by championing libraries and protecting the most democratic spaces in our country.

Thank you.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Erin McCready <erin@brooklynyouthcompany.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 12, 2024 2:02 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Restore Arts and Culture Funding NOW!

[REDACTED]

Dear City Council,

As the Artistic Director of the Brooklyn Youth Company (BYC), I am writing to you about the critical importance of restoring and increasing funding for New York City's culture and arts sector in the upcoming fiscal years. Our organization serves as a cornerstone of creative expression and community engagement for the diverse neighborhoods of Brooklyn.

BYC is dedicated to providing a nurturing environment where young artists aged 10-18 can develop their creative talents, hone their skills, and produce their own theatrical works for free community performance. Through our programming, we not only empower young artists but also provide opportunities for families to engage with the arts together. From parent-child workshops to community performances, BYC fosters meaningful connections and strengthens bonds within our neighborhoods.

The restoration of funding to NYC's culture and arts in FY24 is crucial for sustaining organizations like BYC that serve as lifelines for our communities. Without adequate support, we risk depriving countless young people and families of the enriching experiences and transformative opportunities that the arts provide.

Looking ahead to FY25, we urge policymakers to consider increasing funding for youth arts programs like BYC. By investing in our organization, you are investing in the future of Brooklyn's cultural landscape and the well-being of its residents. Increased funding would allow us to expand our reach, develop new initiatives, and deepen our impact on the communities we serve.

It's important to note that BYC relies heavily on grants from the Brooklyn Arts Council and other arts contracts to sustain our operations. While we are grateful for this support, delays in the release of grant funds has impeded our ability to deliver essential services to our community.

In conclusion, I demand that you prioritize the restoration and increase of funding for NYC's culture and arts in FY24 and FY25. By doing so, you are not only investing in the arts but also in the social cohesion, well-being, and vibrancy of our communities.

Thank you,

Erin McCready Artistic Director Brooklyn Youth Company





**Cultural Institutions Group Preliminary Budget Hearing Testimony**  
**Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations**  
**Tuesday, March 12th at 4:00 pm**  
**Coco Killingsworth, Chair, Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)**

Good afternoon, Chair Rivera and members of the Committee. I am Coco Killingsworth, Chief Experience and Impact Officer at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG). I am here today to provide testimony on behalf of the CIGs – a coalition of 34 cultural organizations located in all five boroughs, including zoos, gardens, museums, and performing arts organizations.

This is a critical time for the cultural community and the CIG. The City’s relationship with the CIGs is based in partnership: CIGs are nonprofits operating in public facilities for the benefit of all New Yorkers and the City provides the institutions with critical funding. However, the November and Preliminary budget cuts have cut our sector to the bone. In addition, our baseline support for the CIGs has not increased since 2009.

Many of the impacts of the cuts have been immediate and more will be on the way. Staff hours have been reduced, hiring freezes and furloughs have been implemented and jobs left vacant. Public programming has been curtailed, including programs that engage local and underprivileged communities, seniors, youth education and career development and internship programs.

This is an unprecedented disinvestment in the arts and culture that make our city great.

The cultural sector is a major ECONOMIC DRIVER for the city of New York generating approximately \$110 billion in economic activity and is central to the success of our tourism industry. Thousands of union and non-union jobs depend on the arts and culture sector. CIGs employ 15,700 full and part-time employees and more than 6,000 New Yorkers participate in CIG workforce development programs. The jobs driven by the cultural sector also include the education contractors and food services staff at the CIGs, to those driving cabs, and working in hotels, retail and restaurants.

As if driving critical economic revenue to New York City isn’t enough on its own, arts and culture is a LIFELINE for our youth, for low-income New Yorkers and for families throughout the five boroughs that rely on their local and citywide institutions. Each year more than 2,500,000 children, many of whom are New York City schoolchildren/camp groups, visit CIG institutions or

benefit from in-school programs provided by its members. In 2019, pre-COVID, the CIGs had over 4 million free visits. CIG partnerships with senior centers, community partners, and other cultural organizations extend its reach beyond the boundaries of its members' buildings.

The cuts have hit small , medium and large LIFELINE institutions and that in turn has already hit the communities we serve . It is shameful.

We are requesting the Council to prioritize culture and to **reverse the November and Preliminary budget cuts to DCLA** –that's \$20 million in FY24 for CIGs and programs and \$15.5 in FY25 as well as to **restore and baseline the one-time addition to CIGs and Programs at \$45 million**. The Council is a real champion for culture and we also ask you to **fully fund key initiatives including the Cultural After-School Adventures Program (CASA), the Cultural Immigrant Initiative, Coalition of Theaters of Color (CTC) and the SU-CASA Arts Programs for Seniors.**

We must eventually get to a place where we are no longer talking about cuts to economic drivers and community uplifters – but how to invest further in arts and culture for the benefit of all New Yorkers. Investment in culture is an investment in New York City

To: NYC City Council and Mayor of the City of New York

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I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the proposed cuts to Arts and Culture funding in the proposed FY2025 Budget. As a resident and passionate advocate for the arts, I urge you and the City Council to reconsider any plans that would diminish support for the cultural institutions and artists that enrich our communities.

The arts are not merely a luxury; they are an integral part of the fabric of our society, contributing to the vitality and vibrancy of our City in countless ways. Moreover, the arts play a crucial role in our economy, generating nearly \$300 mil in revenue annually and supporting thousands of jobs.

Beyond their economic impact, the arts have the power to inspire, educate, and unite us. They provide a platform for expression, creativity, and dialogue, fostering empathy and understanding across diverse communities. Now, more than ever, as we navigate the challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic and strive to rebuild and recover, the arts offer solace, hope, and healing to individuals and communities alike.

I understand the difficult decisions that must be made in balancing the City's budget, but I implore you to explore alternative solutions rather than targeting Arts and Culture funding.

In conclusion, I urge you to prioritize the arts and recognize their essential contribution to the cultural, social, and economic well-being of New York City. By preserving and strengthening arts funding, we can ensure that our city remains a beacon of creativity, diversity, and innovation for generations to come.

Thank you.

Reshma Patel

Dance/NYC Board Member

Community Board 6 Board Member



## **Testimony to City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations Preliminary Budget Hearing**

*Submitted to the City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations on March 15, 2024*

*Prepared by Candace Thompson-Zachery, Co-Executive Director of Dance/NYC*

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Thank you for your consideration of this testimony, submitted on behalf of Dance/NYC ([Dance.NYC](https://www.dance.nyc.org)), a service organization that reaches over 6,000 individual dance artists, 1,700 dance entities, and the many for-profit dance businesses based in the metropolitan New York City area. Its areas of service are of special benefit to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Color), immigrant, disabled, low-income, and small-budget dance workers. Through its action-oriented research and advocacy, Dance/NYC seeks to represent and advance the interests of the dance field. It embeds the values of justice, equity, and inclusion into all aspects of its operations and frames the following requests through the lens of those values.

Dance/NYC joins colleague advocates working across creative disciplines in thanking you for your leadership and calling on you to:

1. **Reverse the November and Preliminary Budget Cuts to Culture** –
  - That's \$20 million in FY24 and \$15.5M in FY25.
2. **At minimum restore and baseline last year's one-time addition of \$45 million. However, our goal is to increase the Arts and Culture allotment to match 1% of the city's budget by 2030. Currently, that is equivalent to \$1.1 billion dollars.**
3. **Fully fund City Council initiatives** including CASA for school children, Su Casa for seniors, Cultural Immigrant Initiative, and the Coalition of Theaters of Color.
4. **Ensure the implementation of transparency law 1184 to ensure accessibility and usable data from DCLA** so our sector can continue to partner with the agency to support equitable distribution of the CDF Fund.



## Why the Dance Sector Matters

**The dance industry alone contributes an estimated \$300 million<sup>1</sup> annually to the city's economy.** This does not include fiscally sponsored organizations, for profit enterprises, sole proprietorships, and individual dance workers. Dance is a key component of our entertainment industry, a major contributor to the vibrancy and diversity of our culture, **and an important factor in both individual and community well-being. When we have cultural assets, we can expect improved outcomes in health, schooling, and personal security.<sup>2</sup>** However, the dance sector continues to grapple with systemic inequities and insufficient access to resources, funding, and advancement.

Besides dance, 28% of our workers work in education, 23% in healthcare + wellness, and 19% in hospitality, increasing the essential nature of their work and the contributions they are making to our communities. About 64% of producing dance workers are shouldering the cost of producing programs to their detriment with funds out of their own pockets. The individuals and organizations in the dance community are keeping our sector alive on their own backs and we need the city's continued investment.

**The arts and culture industry more broadly are at the core of New York City's economic development and are essential to its overall economic health.** In addition to being the number one driver of tourism to the city, the arts and cultural sector generates \$143.8B in economic activity and accounts for nearly 13% of New York City's total economic output.<sup>3</sup> In 2019, New York City's arts, entertainment, and recreation sector employed 93,500 people in 6,250 establishments amounting to \$7.4 billion in wages.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> State of NYC Dance 2016 & Workforce Demographics 2016.

<https://www.dance.nyc/uploads/State%20of%20NYC%20Dance%20and%20Workforce%20Demographics%20Online%20Version.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The Social Wellbeing of New York City's Neighborhoods: The Contribution of Culture and The Arts.

<https://repository.upenn.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/d7531a8f-f046-497f-aa37-494486d98cf4/content>

<sup>3</sup> Office of the New York City Comptroller (2019). *The Creative Economy: Art, Culture and Creativity in New York City*. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-creative-economy/>

<sup>4</sup> Office of the New York State Comptroller (2021). *Arts, Entertainment and Recreation in New York City Recent Trends and Impact of COVID-19*.

<https://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/osdc/arts-entertainment-and-recreation-new-york-city-recent-trends-and-impact-covid-19>

The dynamic economic activities of the creative industry have generated an estimated \$1.6 billion in additional revenues<sup>5</sup> and have a multiplier effect that benefits adjacent industries such as: real estate, business and professional services, wholesale and retail trade, eating and drinking establishments, hotels and personal services, utilities, transportation, medical and educational services, finance and insurance.

## What the Dance Sector Experiences

**Dance organizations and workers in NYC are still navigating the effects of the pandemic with fragility.** Based on Dance/NYC's most recent 2023 report,<sup>6</sup> 40% of dance organizations are classifying their financial health as weak or very weak, an increased number of organizations are relying on contributed income and more than half of organizations don't have access to reserves. On average, dance workers earn about 15% below NYC's living wage, while dancers and choreographers earn about \$23K. We need strong support at the city level to ensure our workers and organizations can survive this economic climate.

Dance/NYC's COVID-19 Covid Brief<sup>7</sup> also reveals the disproportionate impact that the pandemic has had on small-budget groups and individual dance makers, which make up the majority of the dance-making sector but have historically lacked access to resources and support. Additionally, these impacts are felt most acutely by arts workers who identify as BIPOC, immigrants, and disabled among communities with less access to capital reserves. As of October 2023, total employment in the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector remains 13.1% below pre-pandemic levels.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Americans for the Arts. *The Arts As an Industry: Their Economic Importance to the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan Region*.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/naappd/the-arts-as-an-industry-their-economic-importance-to-the-new-york-new-jersey-metropolitan-region-0>

<sup>6</sup> State of NYC Dance 2023: Findings from the Dance Industry Census.

[https://hub.dance.nyc/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/State-of-NYC-Dance-2023-Report-FINAL-23\\_12\\_11\\_ACC.pdf](https://hub.dance.nyc/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/State-of-NYC-Dance-2023-Report-FINAL-23_12_11_ACC.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Coronavirus Dance Impact Information Brief 2021.

<https://www.dance.nyc/programs/research/2021/03/Coronavirus-Dance-Impact-Information-Brief-A-Dance-Sector-in-Peril/>

<sup>8</sup> Office of the New York City Comptroller. *New York by the Numbers: Monthly Economic and Fiscal Outlook* no. 64, January 30, 2024.

<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/newsletter/new-york-by-the-numbers-monthly-economic-and-fiscal-outlook-no-85-january-17th-2024/>

**Dance organizations and individual dance workers are earning less money.** Our research indicates that dance organizations are increasingly relying on donated income, up by 22% nationwide<sup>9</sup> and by at least 8% in NYC. Additionally, earned revenue in the dance sector has notably decreased across the nation, standing at 69%.<sup>10</sup> In NYC, 40% of dance organizations rate their financial health as weak. Individual dance workers face significant challenges, with nearly half holding up to four jobs to make ends meet. Many of them lack access to sufficient care or social safety nets.

## **The Impact of Current Funding**

**Sudden budget cuts to arts and culture hurt all New Yorkers.** In the fall, Mayor Adams announced a 15% budget cut to all agencies without informing nonprofits until November and January of this year. Furthermore, the current CDF reforms and the extreme delays in FY24 awards further compounded the harm and precarity that organizations face, especially groups with budgets under \$250K and those from BIPOC, disabled, and immigrant communities. **The city must reverse the November and other preliminary budget cuts including \$20M in FY24 and \$15.5M in FY25.**

**As New York City's primary agency dedicated to supporting arts and culture, the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) plays a critical role in ensuring the sector not only survives but thrives. We are requesting \$45 million in baseline funding with the goal of increasing the Arts and Culture allotment to match 1% of the city's budget. That is the equivalent of \$1.1 billion, and would allow DLCA to provide longer-term and more consistent support for cultural organizations.**

In addition, DCLA programs, such as the Cultural Development Fund, Coalition of Theatres of Color Initiative, Cultural Immigrant Initiative, CASA, and SU-CASA, have helped arts and cultural organizations and creative workers sustain their work and deepen their engagement with communities. It is crucial that these City Council initiatives are fully funded.

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<sup>9</sup> Dance/USA's 2023 Impact Report [https://issuu.com/danceusa/docs/danceusa\\_2023\\_impactreport\\_issuu\\_booklet](https://issuu.com/danceusa/docs/danceusa_2023_impactreport_issuu_booklet)

<sup>10</sup> Dance/USA's 2023 Impact Report [https://issuu.com/danceusa/docs/danceusa\\_2023\\_impactreport\\_issuu\\_booklet](https://issuu.com/danceusa/docs/danceusa_2023_impactreport_issuu_booklet)

**Lastly, our sector requires transparency and inclusion in the City’s budget. The arts and culture community wants to be a part of the solutions to our City’s fiscal challenges, but this is not possible when decisions are made without us.**

**Implementing transparency law 1184 is crucial for our sector to effectively collaborate with DCLA and ensure the equitable distribution of CDF grants.**

While the CDF program has provided increased funding opportunities for some, including many smaller organizations receiving their first grants, it has also precipitated detrimental cuts for many others.

We insist on meaningful partnership with the nonprofit sector, greater transparency in the budgeting process, and the resolution of long-standing contract delays.

**Dance/NYC thanks you again for your leadership and as stated above urges you to:**

- 1. Reverse the November and Preliminary Budget Cuts to Culture –**
  - That's \$20 million in FY24 and \$15.5M in FY25.
- 2. At minimum restore and baseline last year’s one-time addition of \$45 million. However, our goal is to increase the Arts and Culture allotment to match 1% of the city’s budget by 2030. Currently, that is equivalent to \$1.1 billion dollars.**
- 3. Fully fund City Council initiatives** including CASA for school children, Su Casa for seniors, Cultural Immigrant Initiative, and the Coalition of Theaters of Color.
- 4. Ensure the implementation of transparency law 1184 to ensure accessibility and usable data from DCLA** so our sector can continue to partner with the agency to support equitable distribution of the CDF Fund.

**Dance/NYC calls on the city government to ensure that dance workers can thrive in NYC, maintain a competitive edge in arts and entertainment, boost tourism dollars and keep our communities safe. Please consider this as you champion our sector.**

###



March 12, 2024

Testimony for Preliminary Budget Hearing Department of Cultural Affairs

Dance Parade represents, as far as we know, the largest single-day event in the world, nor do we know of a single other city that has one. On the third Saturday of May, as many as 10,000 dancers invigorate the people in the streets of our City and then hold forth in a 4-hour free festival in Tompkins Square Park. There, 5 stages including teaching and social dancing stages bring the Park to exuberant life. Y'all shouldn't miss the celebration when we gather for the 18<sup>th</sup> Parade on Saturday, May 18, beginning at 12 noon.

At the culminating DanceFest in Tompkins Square one of the most interesting stages, and certainly the most hopeful for the future of the City, would have to be the Community Stage. We provide Community Engagement programs for seniors and school children throughout the Five Boroughs and here, having just danced through the streets for a mile and a half, they complete their journey through the year in celebratory public performance. The joy they embody for each other and themselves completes the cycle that began on West 17<sup>th</sup> Street where, all in one block as they prepare to step off, they see each other in all their many cultured glory and realize that they have become part of something much bigger than they might have imagine.

The power and centrality of arts and culture in our city remains the crown jewel of the city's life. We ask the Council to support us in keeping our Community Engagement programs and the Parade itself alive. In this way you will help our children catch a glimpse and feel the exhilaration of what might be possible in a City of Yes.

We join our colleagues in asking the city to

- **Reverse** the November and Preliminary Budget Cuts to culture - that's \$20 million in FY24 and \$15.5M in FY25.
- **Restore and baseline** last year's one-time addition of \$45 million to CIGs and all cultural groups across the city
- **Fully fund City Council initiatives** including CASA for school kids, Su Casa for seniors, Cultural Immigrant Initiative especially dear to Dance Parade, and the Coalition of Theaters of Color.

We look forward to seeing you all on May 18, and maybe even on the steps of City Hall on Wednesday, May 15, at noon when we hold our annual press conference with Grand Marshals tap dance legend Brenda Bufalino, Memphis Jookin', ballet, hip-hop, and modern star L'il Buck, and Mexican folkloric dance exemplar Martha Zarate-Alvarez.

Respectfully submitted

DJ McDonald



**Preliminary Budget Hearing Testimony on behalf of Dancewave, Inc.  
New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs,  
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations  
Presented by Nicole Touzien on March 12, 2024**

Speaker Adams, Chair Rivera and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Dancewave, where I serve as Executive Director.

Dancewave is an essential service provider, leveraging inclusive, empowering dance programming to help fill persistent gaps in City services. We reach 6,200 New Yorkers each year; helping children develop the skills necessary for lifelong success, facilitating successful transitions to higher education, cultivating artists and arts workers, caring for older adults, inspiring social cohesion and cultural competency, and much, much more, all while centering equity as part of our commitment to the community.

Since 2020, I have delivered testimony each year advocating for the City to invest in arts and cultural organizations, like Dancewave, that make New York City the cultural capital of the world. Today, again, I offer testimony in protest to the administration's preliminary budget, and urge members of the committee to ensure that spending cuts to culture are reversed, so that, to borrow Speaker Adams's words, we can "re-invest in services that are foundational to meeting the needs of New Yorkers".

Each year, cultural organizations are expected to do more with less. Demand for cultural programs and experiences -- a majority at no or low cost to participants -- continues to increase; this is met with sweeping, devastating budget cuts while operational costs rise exponentially. 80% of arts and cultural organizations faced a reduction in funding from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs in 2024; and those who were fortunate to receive funding, like Dancewave, were notified of their award eight months into the year, forcing organizations to scramble and find creative solutions to ensure that our programs deliver ever-increasing impact. In fact, despite these devastating PEG cuts, the city's overall budget increased in FY24. Cultural organizations are already stretched too thin; the City is inviting an unnecessary crisis.

Nonprofit arts leaders like myself are steadfast stewards of their organizations. We make strategic decisions to maximize limited resources in service to our missions. We innovate programs that provide life-affirming benefits and serve as transformational catalysts. We mentor and help to develop the next generation of artists and arts workers. We continue a long lineage of cultural organizations that are essential to our City. We need the stewards of New York City, our elected leaders in the City Council, to back us. I ask that the members of this committee demand that the administration produce a budget that asks for careful prioritization without compromising city services like those provided by cultural organizations. Restore funding so that essential programs like CASA, SU-CASA and Cultural Immigrant Initiative can continue to enhance our communities, not make "shortsighted, drastic cuts to vital City services and programs" as Comptroller Lander also advocated.



Dancewave is one of many cultural organizations that provides direct services addressing our city's complex and multifaceted issues such as public safety and mental health. We know that, to quote Chair Rivera, "access to art and culture is linked to wellbeing, improved quality of life, and safer neighborhoods. Culture delivers." As she also explained, cultural activity is a revenue driver, generating \$22 billion annually. Among many other things, cultural funding will drive economic activity, save jobs, preserve the programming that serves vulnerable New Yorkers, and will contribute to improved mental and physical health, increased social cohesion, and a deepened sense of belonging -- all necessary for a thriving, vibrant New York City.

Please restore cultural funding.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole Touzien". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Nicole Touzien  
Executive Director



**Testimony of Educational Alliance  
Before the New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs  
New York City Preliminary Budget Hearing  
Councilmember Carlina Rivera, Chair  
Submitted March 15, 2024**

Thank you Chair Rivera and members of the Cultural Affairs Committee for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Elizabeth Bird and I am the Director of Public Policy at Educational Alliance. Educational Alliance was founded in 1889 to provide supports to newly arrived Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. In those days, programs included art classes and local performances that allowed participants to explore their own creativity and to escape cramped tenement life. Guided by the principle that each person is born with a divine spark of dignity and creativity, Educational Alliance continues to incorporate cultural programming and artistic expression into the services we provide at every stage of life and in each of our community centers. Through studio arts classes and culturally relevant dance, theater performances for all ages, music programs for parents and babies, dance, creative movement, and improv for older adults, arts programming takes a central role in our community-centered approach to service.

Today I will offer recommendations on how New York City's budget can bolster the community-based cultural organizations that support local economies and enrich our City by helping New Yorkers of all ages thrive and flourish.

New York City's creative sector is an economic engine, attracting world-class artists and creative workers, and supports a thriving cultural tourism industry that attracts visitors from around the world and employs tens of thousands of New Yorkers. Small non-profit cultural organizations create cultural content and make it widely available through free programming or extremely affordable ticket sales. These programs add vibrancy to neighborhoods, yet most non-profit cultural organizations depend on limited private fundraising for revenue and operate on an extremely limited budget.

To bridge this revenue gap and support the programs that add so much value to their local neighborhoods, community-centered cultural organizations across the City require more government resources. We urge the New York City leaders to expand DCLA's ability to support smaller, community-based arts organizations through funding and promotional support. Unfortunately, this preliminary budget does the opposite.

Funds from New York City's Cultural Development Fund (CDF) directly support arts and culture programming at EA through our historic art school, which offers studio art classes to anyone in the community, and theater performances in the 14Y Theater. Additionally, we rely on discretionary awards through the CASA initiative for arts enrichment programming in our afterschool classrooms and SU-CASA supports arts programming for older adults in our older adult centers and our Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC). **Our annual Celebrate Arts festival** showcases over 180 artists from within our older adult community, including Chinese and Japanese Dance groups and the diverse cast of our own Alliance Stage Company, which benefit from SU-CASA funds.

**You belong here.**



These funding sources -- the Cultural Development Fund and discretionary awards through CASA and SU-CASA -- are critical to the work we do. Rather than paring down funding available through the CDF, the City should strengthen its support for local, community-based arts programming through the following recommendations:

- **Reverse the \$8.5 million reduction to the Cultural Development Fund and baseline \$40 million included in last year's adopted budget for DCLA.** Last year's increase to the DCLA budget provided crucial stability to make operational decisions about hiring and programming. We urge the City to baseline this funding going forward, and support the community-centered arts programming offered through smaller, cultural organizations.
- **Increase funding for DCLA's CASA and SU-CASA programs by \$10 million,** to support community-based organizations, ensure competitive wages for staff, and adjust to rising costs due to inflation.
- **Increase capital funds available specifically to small, non-profit community centers** to help them make improvements and preserve existing spaces used for arts performances, exhibits, and demonstrations
- Provide dedicated **funding to increase programmatic support for accessibility initiatives** in smaller performing arts venues.

Arts programming is critical to New York City's economy, and to New Yorkers themselves. We urge this committee to push the City to increase the DCLA budget for community-based arts programming through CDF, CASA and SU-CASA and push for baselined funding increase to provide stability for local arts organizations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

TESTIMONY for Cultural Affairs - Committee

March 12, 2024

Ryan Gilliam

Executive Director, FABnyc

[ryan@fabnyc.org](mailto:ryan@fabnyc.org)

Good afternoon – Chairwoman Rivera and members of the Committee, hello to all my colleagues. I know that you all know the very pragmatic and compelling reasons why the city budget supporting arts and culture shouldn't be kneecapped – my colleagues are making that case eloquently. And knowing how well they are making that case, I'm going to request your patience while I bend your ear in a slightly different direction.

I've been a working artist all my life – much of it devoted to working with the people of the Lower East Side. I got to tell you that these budget fights over why we should put a small piece – of the city budget towards supporting the arts have been a feature of life all that time. We are so stuck and I've been asking myself truly – why is it so hard to fund arts and culture?

I think it's because we know in our hearts that people will always make art. No matter what happens, no matter how hard you make it, how little money you provide for it, people will make art. You can make art suffer, you can make art limited, you can deprive students from learning about it, you can make it so only wealthy people can make art during working hours — but you can't outright kill it. Art will always be made – because, as people, we are hard wired to create.

And why should we pay for something we will get for free? We are all artists and we all will be artists whether there's funding or not.

If you want proof that we are all artists... here's one. I'd ask you to remember your youngest self – isn't it true that that self was undeniably an artist? Drawing, painting, making games, making theater, dancing, improvising, I mean young humans are jazz! And, despite what you might think, that self, that artist, is still in you. Or if that's too buried an example, then what do you think you're doing nightly making dreams? One way or another, from the beginning of our lives to the end, we create because it's our nature to do so.

Given our complete unwillingness to stop making art even in the worst of circumstances, I think we have to assume that somehow art is necessary. Our problem is that we aren't yet smart enough to say why it's necessary in a way that satisfies capitalism. Honestly, capitalism doesn't seem to have a clue how to deal with our artistic natures.

I think sometimes – what if we each had enough? What if we had decent housing, food, healthcare, education – what if we reached that blessed land? What would we do with ourselves? Hell, we'd make art. Yes, probably a few other things too – but I think we'd see an explosion of art and creativity! So maybe the end goal of a successful economy is that we can finally all be artists!

What would happen if instead of treating artmaking like dessert – desirable, slightly suspect, and not earned until we've cleared our plate of every other task – what if we actually invested in our core natures?

I'm hoping that one day we won't have to answer why art is important by pointing to its secondary effects – like thriving tourism, better math scores, or an uplift to the city's economy. We'll actually have an answer – with the scientific proof our culture respects. Right now, we know artmaking is important – we know it here – but like other things we know here – our explanations don't seem to satisfy investors.

There are a few segments of the artmaking world that have found a way to function with the marketplace - perhaps uneasily, but still, functioning; there are a few arts institutions who have been able to successfully foster a roster of patrons who may have the means to sustain them through challenging times, – from my observation, it is the small community organizations who are most impacted by the withdrawal of public funds. I think that great and extraordinary artists might survive in the marketplace, in the institutions – but I think its the everyday artist, the artists on the Council, the artists holding down security jobs or cleaning up this room each night, the everyday every person artist that is always hurt.

I know we're here scrabbling for small change when it comes to the city budget – but it would be great to start thinking about something beyond the annual routine negotiations – to think about what it might mean to invest in ourselves. In our human potential. In our creativity. To think what it might mean for the world if we valued the artists we are, if we generously seeded artmaking — – even if we don't yet understand why this part of our humanity is so important for our future.

I would love to see the day when art is no longer dessert – at the bottom of the menu, to be considered after all other needs are met – but instead we manage to evolve and learn to trust when our body and soul declare that art is nourishing, that it strengthens and sustains us, that it should truly be at the table – even if our calculating mind can't quite figure out why.





City Council Cultural Affairs and Libraries Hearing March 12, 2024

Jessica B. Phillips, CEO Historic Richmond Town & Vice Chair of Staten Island CIGs  
JPhillips@historicrichmondtown.org

Members of the Council, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak today on behalf of Staten Island's cherished members of the Cultural Institution Group: Staten Island Zoo, Staten Island Children's Museum, Staten Island Museum, Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Gardens and my organization, Historic Richmond Town. As we gather here, it's imperative to address the pressing issue that has deeply affected not only my institution but the entire cultural fabric of our city—the devastating cuts to cultural funding.

Historic Richmond Town stands as a testament to the rich history and vibrant cultural heritage of our city. Imagine taking an evening tour in the winter, hearing the crunch of snow under your feet as you cross the threshold of 1835, entering the candlelit small home of Thomas and Elinor who welcome you to warm your hands by the crackling fire. A noise is heard upstairs, Thomas calls up the narrow hall to his friend to come down. A man descends into the glow of the fire - you meet Henry, an intrepid self-emancipator from Maryland who has made a stop on Staten Island as he journeyed on what we now call the Underground Railroad. This factual immersive vignette was co-produced with local public historian and Co-President of the Staten Island Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, Debbie-Ann Paige.

Grabbing and welcoming programs like the one I just described serve as windows into the past, connecting visitors with an understanding of the diverse tapestry of New York's history. But our ability to fulfill this vital role has been severely hindered by the recent cuts to cultural funding. **Due to the cuts we laid off 13% of our workforce and reduced our public hours by 40%.** Since we serve over 100,000 visitors annually, this reduction has had a deep impact on service to our community.

The impact of these cuts extends far beyond southern Staten Island. Culture is not merely a luxury; it is an essential component of the city's identity and economy. Cultural institutions contribute significantly to the economic vitality of New York City - **110 billion dollars or 13% of the City economy come from culture** - generating jobs, attracting tourists, and fostering creativity and innovation. By cutting funding to culture, we are not only jeopardizing the survival of beloved institutions like Historic Richmond Town but also undermining the very foundation of our city's economy - **culture spends approximately \$500 million on local vendors for goods and services.**

The positive economic impact of culture cannot be overstated. According to a recent study by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, every dollar invested in cultural organizations yields a return of over seven dollars to the city's economy. Furthermore, cultural tourists spend

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more and stay longer than any other tourist group, providing a substantial boost to local businesses and communities.

But beyond the economic benefits, culture plays a fundamental role in shaping the identity and soul of our city. It fosters a sense of community, promotes inclusivity and diversity, and enriches the lives of all New Yorkers. The cultural sector serves as a beacon of hope and resilience, particularly in times of crisis, providing solace, inspiration, and healing to our communities - **2.5 million students visit CIGs annually and we offer over 4 million free admissions per year.**

As we look ahead to fiscal year 2025, I implore you to reconsider the devastating cuts to culture. **Restore the November and preliminary cuts, that's \$20 million in FY24 and \$15.5 million in FY25**, this funding includes all the program group funding as well. **Restore and baseline the one-time additional CIG and Program funding of \$45 million.** We cannot afford to let our cultural institutions wither away under the weight of financial uncertainty. **Please fully fund council initiatives including the Cultural After-School Adventure program, the Cultural Immigration Initiative, Coalition of Theaters of Color and the SU-CASA arts program for seniors.** Now, more than ever, we need to invest in culture as a catalyst for recovery and renewal.

Reversing, restoring and baselining funding to cultural is not merely an act of charity—it is an investment in the future of our city. It is an investment in our economy, our identity, and our collective well-being. Together, we make New York City truly extraordinary.

Thank you.

Members of the Council, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak today on behalf of Historic Richmond Town on Staten Island, a cherished member of New York City's Cultural Institutions Group. As we gather here, it's imperative to address the pressing issue that has deeply affected not only my institution but the entire cultural fabric of our city—the devastating cuts to cultural funding.

Historic Richmond Town stands as a testament to the rich history and vibrant cultural heritage of our city. Our historic buildings, artifacts, and programs serve as windows into the past, welcoming visitors to connect with and understand the diverse tapestry of New York's history. But our ability to fulfill this vital role has been severely hindered by the recent cuts to cultural funding.

The impact of these cuts extends far beyond southern Staten Island. Culture is not merely a luxury; it is an essential component of the city's identity and economy. Cultural institutions contribute significantly to the economic vitality of New York City - **110 billion dollars or 13% of the City economy come from culture** - generating jobs, attracting tourists, and fostering creativity and innovation. By cutting funding to culture, we are not only jeopardizing the survival of beloved institutions like ours but also undermining the very foundation of our city's economy - **culture spends approximately \$500 million on local vendors for goods and services.**

The positive economic impact of culture cannot be overstated. According to a recent study by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, every dollar invested in cultural organizations yields a return of over seven dollars to the city's economy. Furthermore, cultural tourists spend more and stay longer than any other tourist group, providing a substantial boost to local businesses and communities.

But beyond the economic benefits, culture plays a fundamental role in shaping the identity and soul of our city. It fosters a sense of community, promotes inclusivity and diversity, and enriches the lives of all New Yorkers. The cultural sector serves as a beacon of hope and resilience, particularly in times of crisis, providing solace, inspiration, and healing to our communities - **2.5 million students visit CIGs annually and we offer over 4 million free admissions per year.**

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Thank you.





Dear Honorable Members of the New York City Council and Chair Carlina Rivera:

Please accept this testimony on behalf of IndieSpace, a nonprofit organization dedicated to celebrating and centering independent theater-making in New York City. We provide radically transparent, responsive, and equity-focused funding, real estate programs, professional development, and advocacy to **nearly 700 indie companies and venues and thousands of individual artists** every year.

New York City has long been recognized as a global cultural capital, renowned for its diverse and dynamic arts scene. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the creative economy employed more than 300,000 people and generated \$110 billion in economic activity for the city. Moreover, the arts play a crucial role in fostering social cohesion, promoting diversity, and enhancing the quality of life for all New Yorkers.

We join our colleagues in asking the city to

- **Reverse** the November and Preliminary Budget Cuts to culture - that's \$20 million in FY24 and \$15.5M in FY25.
- **Restore and baseline** last year's one-time addition of \$45 million to cultural groups across the city
- **Fully fund City Council initiatives** including CASA for school kids, Su Casa for seniors, Cultural Immigrant Initiative, and the Coalition of Theaters of Color
- Create a plan to increase DCLA's funding to 0.5% of the City budget with increases to the organizations and neighborhoods that currently receive the least funding, in order to achieve geographic equity in per capita funding, with a longer-term goal of achieving a 1% allocation to DCLA in the City's budget by 2030.

As we work towards recovery and revitalization, it is essential that we prioritize the restoration of funding to the arts and culture sector. By restoring funding to the arts, we can help stimulate economic growth, create employment opportunities, and ensure the continued vitality of our creative communities.

IndieSpace is focused on the full 360 care of the indie artist as a worker, a creator and a human being. Art and Culture is an essential need in this world; but creation can not happen if an artist cannot buy groceries or care for their mental health. Through all of our programs, we consider how to provide holistic support for the artist, bolstering them personally and professionally. Our organization was created to address systemic inequities and rethink philanthropy and real estate ownership and operation, with the artist in mind. We are addressing issues like affordable housing, a long term Safety Net for creative workers and Guaranteed Income. IndieSpace is dedicated to broadening access to resources and enriching cultural experiences for both artists and the diverse communities we serve. Without crucial funding from the city, there is a real danger of rendering the arts accessible to only those who can afford it, both artists and audiences. By prioritizing investment in the arts, however, we can help ensure that every New Yorker has the opportunity to engage fully in the arts, fostering inclusivity and enabling widespread participation.

IndieSpace is deeply committed to advocating for artists and the creative sector, and we stand ready to work with you to ensure that New York City remains a thriving hub of creativity and innovation.

Thank you for prioritizing the restoration and expansion of funding to NYC's culture and arts in the upcoming budget. Your support for the arts will strengthen and sustain our vibrant cultural ecosystem.

Sincerely,

Randi Berry, Executive Director  
IndieSpace



## **New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearing**

March 12, 2024, 2:00 pm | Department of Cultural Affairs

Gina Tribotti | International Studio & Curatorial Program

Thank you Committee Chair Rivera and Council Members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Gina Tribotti and I am the Development Manager at the International Studio & Curatorial Program. I am here to advocate for the reversal of budget cuts to the DCLA and for the full restoration of funding for City Council initiatives such as the Cultural Immigrant Initiative.

I am really proud to be in a room where we all share a deep appreciation for the arts and culture and the value it brings to our communities. The arts provide a pathway for New Yorkers to expand their own social horizons—experiencing more, appreciating more, and empathizing more. What I want to underscore today is that tumultuous times for our city justify more funding for arts and culture, *not* less.

As the largest arts and cultural organization in East Williamsburg, ISCP brings together 80 international and 15 New York-based artists each year. Our programs foster a more inclusive and diverse cultural community and provide transformative opportunities for local residents of all ages and backgrounds with funded artist residencies, paid high school and college internships, high school visits and free cultural education.

Our Ground Floor Program addresses a lack of affordable space by providing heavily subsidized studios and professional development for New York-based artists, and our Vision Fund provides fully-funded residencies with stipends for BIPOC artists from across the United States. ISCP's unique approach of bringing New York-based artists together with international artists nurtures the cross-fertilizations that emerge when people from diverse backgrounds come together. In 2023, our programs showcased the work of 136 creative practitioners from 55 countries around the world. Approximately 10,000 people visit ISCP annually for its open studios, exhibitions and artist talks.

For 30 years, ISCP has safeguarded freedom of expression by providing refuge and support to artists under threat for ideas expressed in their work. In recent years, this has included supporting the residency of an asylum seeker from Russia, who fled the abuses he suffered there as a queer artist; granting a residency to an Afghani artist forced to flee after a performance about her experience living as a woman in a male-dominated society; working with a Puerto Rican artist to bring her to Brooklyn after her home was hit by Hurricane Maria; exhibiting the work of a feminist artist whose work could never be exhibited in her home country of Qatar; to hosting a talk about the current cultural climate of Iran by an artist whose images of political unrest have never been shown in her home country.

The DCLA and the City Council oversee New York City's role as a world capital for artistic talent and creative exchange. This significant public investment ensures that wealth is not a prerequisite for employment in creative fields and provides opportunities for all New Yorkers to express their visionary capabilities through the arts.

Contemporary artists employ an ever-expanding range of media to allow us to make sense of our world. If we are not supporting the work of a wide range of artists, we deny our communities from seeing our society, history and culture for what it is, and for what it could be.

As socio-political tensions, cultural inequities, and environmental crises deepen, it's imperative that New York City continues to protect the expressive and visionary capabilities of its artists. By providing space, time, materials, and access to financial and professional resources and networks, artist residency programs like ISCP are the kindling for a diverse and thriving arts ecosystem.

In light of the recent increase of new arrivals to the city, the work of cultural institutions is more vital now than ever. By showcasing the arts of immigrant communities and sharing international art practices with long-term New York City residents, our programs help de-escalate racial tensions, and promote cross-cultural understanding, empathy and awareness throughout New York City and beyond.



**Preliminary Budget Hearing Fiscal Year 2025  
Committee on Finance, New York City Council  
Joint Testimony of**

**President George Sarah Olken, Brooklyn Public Library Guild, Local 1482**

**President Deborah Allman, New York Public Library Guild, Local 1930**

**President Leonard Paul, New York Public Library Quasi-Public Employees, Local 374**

**President John Hyslop, Queens Public Library Guild, Local 1321**

**March 12, 2024**

Chairperson Rivera and fellow committee members, thank you for giving us an opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of all the union workers of Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, and Queens Public Library. We are united in our appeal for our elected officials to save our public libraries.

In July 2023, the Mayor and the City Council agreed to a Fiscal Year 2024 budget that allowed library workers to provide all the library services our patrons expect. All of our branches provided materials, programs, computers, Wi-Fi, printing, and free and clean open space six and seven days a week across every borough. Five months later, the Mayor implemented a 5% budget cut that forced the libraries to cut a whole day of service; decimated materials budgets; eliminated maintenance budgets; and stopped them hiring staff. The mayor's cut had no meaningful impact on the city's fiscal situation but has had a very meaningful and negative impact on our patrons and the City.

Today, only two branches are open on Sunday, and they are closed on Saturday. Queens Library cannot afford Sunday service at Flushing, the busiest branch in the nation. Families, who relied on Sunday service because that was the only day they could visit their branch, are denied valuable educational and civic resources.

Furthermore, this cut has impacted staff salaries who need that extra money to survive in New York City and keep up with everyday rising costs.

The Library systems have not been able to fill all the positions that have been made vacant from people who have left, and staffing levels are very low. Locations sometimes open with three workers, or sometimes two, limiting our ability to provide programs and services, and creates very unsafe conditions for both staff and patrons. Custodians cover multiple branches in one day, affecting the cleanliness and safety of these branches. Programs are cut because we do not have staff to offer them. Maintenance requests remain open longer because we do not have enough maintenance staff. Newly renovated branches cannot open because we do not have enough staff.

The Library systems have had to cut back our materials budget. As we learned in the City Council's oversight hearing on book banning, book banning is a crisis across the country, including New York City. We cannot be as effective fighting book bans if we cannot buy books or keep the doors open, which keeps material from our patrons.

Many have stated that New York City is resilient and thriving. And it is true, our spirit remains as defiant and strong as ever. However, the majority of New Yorkers are still struggling with the day-to-day *expenses* of our city. That is why the cuts to libraries have such an impact. All of the services library workers provide are *free* to everyone who walks through our doors, and when a need arises, we adapt and provide. To fight the affordability crisis, we provided free Wi-Fi, computers, printing, job-hunting skills, afterschool programs, entertainment, and education. In response to the pandemic, we pivoted to include a virtual-service model, which is now a permanent part of our service model. To accommodate the newest New Yorkers, the many immigrants who are now our neighbors, we brought library services to shelters and food pantries, library workers volunteered to act as translators and librarians created book lists in Spanish, French, Kreyol and more.

New York City's public libraries are one of the City's most democratic and trusted institutions. Our free, open, and clean spaces in every New York City community allow library workers to create literacy and community for anyone who walks through our doors. As the divide between those who have and those who do not grows into a chasm, New Yorkers need our government resources more than ever. The only way library workers can do our vital work is for our elected officials to adopt a budget that is more than what we received in FY 2024. That will allow us to thrive and grow.

Library workers strengthen the fabric of every neighborhood. These are the values we cannot afford to cut.

# Lincoln Center

70 Lincoln Center Plaza, New York, NY 10023-6583 | [LincolnCenter.org](https://LincolnCenter.org)

## **Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. FY25 Preliminary Budget Testimony March 12, 2024**

Thank you, Chair Rivera and members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations for accepting testimony today about the critical need for city investments in arts and culture.

New York City has been and always will be a city of vibrancy, opportunity, and innovative thinking, in large part due to the contributions of our cultural community. However, it was not long ago live performing arts were the first forced to close their doors and the last to open due to the pandemic. While our stages were dark, many of our institutions remained in use as civic hubs for New Yorkers in need of support. Like any significant piece of civic infrastructure, our cultural institutions require public support.

Fast forward to today, rather than uplifting the arts we are seeing cuts across the sector. The Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) – composed of some of New York City’s world-renowned public gardens, museums, wildlife centers, and performing and visual arts institutions – have not only seen severe cuts to their FY24 funding, but the baseline operating support from the city for these partially city-owned properties hasn’t changed in 15 years. New York City needs to lead the way again in leveraging the arts to show New Yorkers and the world that all are welcome and reflected in the diversity of the works on our stages. Whether you are a newly arrived immigrant, LGBTQIA+, living with a disability, identify as BIPOC, or a curious young person, our arts and cultural spaces represent a collective sense of belonging.

As a sector we are requesting:

- Reversal of the November and Preliminary Budget Cuts to culture - that's \$20 million in FY24 for CIGs and Programs and \$15.5 in FY25.
- Restore and baseline the one-time addition CIGs and Programs - \$45 million.
- Fully fund council initiatives including the Autism Awareness, Geriatric Mental Health, and initiatives supporting culture and the arts.

Serving as both cultural and community hubs, the arts are the beating heart of this city nurturing the mind, body, and soul of all that live here and those that visit. A healthy cultural ecosystem helps enrich our economic resiliency and growth, uplifts the mental and civic health of communities, and lays the foundation for an equitable, educated, and strong city. We at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) join our colleagues in the Cultural Institutions Group and across the sector in seeking sustained public support to ensure stability across our cultural ecosystem and artistic communities.

In 1956, [Lincoln Center](#) was founded as “an experiment in cultural democracy” in post-war America to showcase the best of the arts for the most and serve as an invaluable part of daily civic life with the arts broadly accessible to all. Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, as the steward of the 16.3 acre artistic and civic cornerstone, is a member of the CIG. Lincoln Center’s 11 resident arts and arts education nonprofits are part of an ecosystem of cultural organizations, artists, creative workers, and educators that are deeply embedded into all aspects of New York City life. Arts and culture organizations, including those located at Lincoln Center, are critical drivers of the economy, social wellbeing, and the City’s workforce. Cuts to the budget affect the livelihoods of New Yorkers both directly and indirectly.

**Culture is an economic engine.** Pre-pandemic New York City’s cultural sector was responsible for \$110 billion in economic output (NYC Comptroller, October 2019). With tourism numbers expected to surpass 2019 numbers next year, visitors are coming to experience our distinctively “New York” ecosystem of museums, culture, and the arts. From ticket sales and artist commissions to neighboring hotels and small businesses, 13% of economic activity in the city can be traced back to the cultural sector.

**Culture is a jobs creator**, powered by a growing network of cultural organizations, creatives, contractors, and small businesses supporting more than 84,000 jobs (NYC Tourism + Conventions, 2023). From our stagehands to construction workers, we work to support union jobs. When jobs were needed most, LCPA accelerated its timeline for the new David Geffen Hall to get New Yorkers back to work by supporting 6,000 jobs during construction, awarded 43% of construction contracts to MWBEs and developed a workforce development program with Turner Construction that put 30 nearby residents in full-time union positions with construction trades. Today, David Geffen Hall serves as New York City’s cultural living room, delivering simulcasts, workshops, and performances for free, hosts Tatiana By Kwame Onwuachi - New York City’s #1 restaurant, home of the New York Philharmonic, and that building alone is a place of employment for over 400 people working in the performing arts.

**Culture nurtures the whole student on a path toward upward mobility.** Last year LCPA welcomed over 18,000 student visitors, including through partnerships like Summer Rising, Big Apple Circus, and year-round family programming. Annually over 50,000 New York City students are served by the Lincoln Center campus through the work of the constituent organizations with hundreds of schools. As students are continuing to catch up post-pandemic, the arts and arts education should be part of the solution in re-engaging in the classroom.

Since 2014 LCPA has partnered with the NYC Department of Education to host Middle School Arts Audition Bootcamp, welcoming students from 150 middle schools across the city. Last summer LCPA hosted DYCD Summer Youth Employment students for a panel on careers in the arts as part of their *Exploring Futures* series. Education at LCPA successfully piloted the Young Artist Pipeline, an arts training program for middle school students addressing the opportunity gap many experience due to the prohibitive cost of training in the arts. This year we have 34 six-graders from 17 DOE middle schools, primarily Title 1 schools. Additionally, this fall we welcomed 200+ families and educators to our Education Open House where young people explored the intersection of arts and digital

technology through creative workshops and hands-on artmaking. We are continuing this work by hosting the [Fresh, Bold & So Def Symposium](#) on April 5th in celebration of women in hip hop. Through LCPA's education work, we are building new and expanded approaches to developing the next generation of arts leaders.

**Culture is inclusive.** In 2023, we saw growing audiences at [Lincoln Center Moments](#) performances, a program serving older adults living with dementia and their caregivers, with more than 1,500 participants attending both in-person and virtually. For young audiences, we host [Big Umbrella Festival](#), a free large-scale campus takeover designed to be accessible for neuro-diverse participants and their caregivers. This summer we had 5,410 attendees join us and expect even more to join this April. For young people with disabilities, [Passport to the Arts](#), one of our longest running access programs, provides free and inclusively designed classes, performances, and behind the scenes experiences with world class artists, in person and virtually. Public investment is imperative to the long-term attainability of these programs. We are immensely grateful for the City Council's Autism Awareness and Geriatric Mental Health Initiatives that have been critical to continuing and strengthening these programs.

**Culture serves as a center for the community.** We at Lincoln Center have strengthened our commitment to positioning arts at the core of daily life as a civic hub, helping address the needs of local neighbors and community. In Fiscal Year [2023](#), we welcomed over 360,000 people to campus for free and choose-what-you-pay programming and partnered with our neighbors on initiatives, including distributing free tickets, turkeys, and holiday gifts to our NYCHA neighbors in Amsterdam Houses, Amsterdam Addition, Harborview Terrace, and throughout Manhattan. We have leveraged our spaces to be responsive to the needs of community residents, including saving more than 3,500 lives since the start of our partnership with the New York Blood Center, hosting Older Adult Tech Clinics in **partnership** with Council Member Gale Brewer, and **partnered** with the New York Immigration Coalition to host a resource fair serving more than 150 New New Yorkers.

**Culture uplifts and reflects.** Lincoln Center is committed to **confronting injustices in our founding history**. We recently launched [Legacies of San Juan Hill](#), a living digital hub full of video interviews, archival photography and audio, interactive maps, and scholarly essays to honor and celebrate the people who lived in the neighborhood. This work is a collaboration with the Schomburg Center, the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College (CENTRO), and numerous artists and scholars. Last month we added [Buffalo Sonnet](#), a digital comic book written and illustrated by Kamau Ware inspired by San Juan Hill and artistic meditation on the Black experience in the historic neighborhood and across New York City. Next month, we invite you to join us for a conversation with leading artists and scholars about the life and impact of James Reese Europe and his Harlem Hell Fighters' 369th Regimental Band which recruited Afro-Caribbean musicians from Puerto Rico to serve in this New York National Guard military band during World War I.

**Culture welcomes.** Lincoln Center believes the arts are an essential part of civic life and that all New Yorkers should be able to see themselves and their stories represented. For a second year *Summer for the City* welcomed more than 380,000 visitors to our campus for a summer of hundreds of free outdoor concerts and programs. By the numbers, 75% of audiences attended one of our performances



for the first time, 54% identifying as BIPOC, and 25% came from the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island. Year round we offer free and low-cost civic and artist programming in the public David Rubenstein Atrium and inside the new David Geffen Hall.

City support this year is essential for the survival of the arts in New York City. Look at all the sector has accomplished with only 0.2% of the city budget. Imagine what we could accomplish **if funded at 1%**. **We could make critical strides in** advancing equity, invest in aging infrastructure, do more to offer arts in public schools, and the list goes on. We need to move forward, not back, and maintaining stable funding for the arts and culture sector needs to be the bare minimum. Culture has the data-proven ability to strengthen communities, improve education outcomes, decrease youth involvement in the criminal justice system, and improve the mental health and well-being of neighborhoods. City funding allows the cultural sector to fulfill its role within a healthy democracy as spaces for convening, learning, and healing.

Respectfully submitted,

Leah C. Johnson  
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**Testimony of Leonard Paul**  
**President of Local 374, DC37**  
**Before the City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and**  
**International Intergroup Relations**  
**FY 2025 Preliminary Budget**  
**March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**Good afternoon, Chairperson Rivera, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today. I am Leonard Paul, President of Local 374 of DC37, representing workers of the Botanic Gardens, the NYPL and Cary Institute. We have titles such as: Maintainers, Security Officers, Custodians, Instructors, Gardeners, MVO's, and Clericals, etc. I am testifying today on behalf of my fellow DC37 Cultural Institution's Presidents. We represent workers within the Cultural Institutions Group throughout the five boroughs. We are asking the city to support all the Cultural Institutions in an equitable fashion. Hence, we are hereby requesting:**

- The restoration of the Mayor's PEGs from the November modification and the Preliminary budget totaling \$35.5 M**
- The restoration and baselining of the \$45 M from the City Council to the CIG's programs, such as the Cultural After School Adventures Program.**

**Cultural Institutions partner with the NYC public schools to provide educational programming and visits throughout the year. Without these programs, many low-income students would not have the opportunity to visit and experience the beauty of our world class institutions, throughout the five boroughs.**

**Without continued funding, many free educational programs for students and the public, will be reduced or eliminated.**

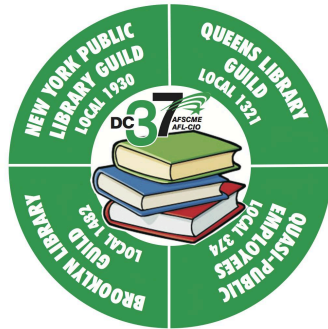
**Furthermore, this will limit the availability of career development and internship opportunities for students who are thinking of working in the cultural field.**

**I want to remind everyone that the CIG's employ thousands of unionized workers. They provide a stable living wage for many NYC families. As a matter of fact, the Bronx Zoo is the largest employer of young workers in the Bronx, who live and work in the community. If these cuts are not restored, it can lead to the elimination of many jobs, furloughs, and reduced hours at various institutions. Some Institutions have already rolled out furloughs and hiring freezes. We have seen this occur in the past and we are pleading for this not to happen again.**

**It has been proven that in NYC, cultural Institutions are economic drivers. This is true for the past and the present. Tourists come here to experience our World-renowned Museums and famous botanic gardens. Our institutions are revenue generators that support local economies and businesses. We all remember how our institutions played a key role in the City's economic revitalization after the worse economic downturn, due to Covid-19. If we want our city to continue its economic recovery, the administration needs to invest in places that draws tourism, which are our Cultural Institutions!**

**In closing, I want to reiterate that it is so vitally important for the city to restore the funding for our Cultural Treasures and for its workforce to survive.... We really, really need this investment!**

**Thank you for the time! I will be very happy to take any questions.**



**Preliminary Budget Hearing Fiscal Year 2025  
Committee on Finance, New York City Council  
Joint Testimony of**

**President George Sarah Olken, Brooklyn Public Library Guild, Local 1482**

**President Deborah Allman, New York Public Library Guild, Local 1930**

**President Leonard Paul, New York Public Library Quasi-Public Employees, Local 374**

**President John Hyslop, Queens Public Library Guild, Local 1321**

**March 12, 2024**

Chairperson Rivera and fellow committee members, thank you for giving us an opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of all the union workers of Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, and Queens Public Library. We are united in our appeal for the City Council to save our public libraries.

In July 2023, the Mayor and the City Council agreed to a Fiscal Year 2024 budget that allowed library workers to provide all the library services our patrons expect. All of our branches provided materials, programs, computers, Wi-Fi, printing, and free and clean open space six and seven days a week across every borough. Five months later, the Mayor implemented a 5% budget cut that forced the libraries to cut a whole day of service; decimated materials budgets; eliminated maintenance budgets; and stopped them hiring staff. The mayor's cut had no meaningful impact on the city's fiscal situation but has had a very meaningful and negative impact on our patrons and the City.

Today, only two branches are open on Sunday, and they are closed on Saturday. Queens Library cannot afford Sunday service at Flushing, the busiest branch in the nation. Families, who relied on Sunday service because that was the only day they could visit their branch, are denied valuable educational and civic resources.

Furthermore, this cut has impacted staff salaries who need that extra money to survive in New York City and keep up with everyday rising costs.

The Library systems have not been able to fill all the positions that have been made vacant from people who have left, and staffing levels are very low. Locations sometimes open with three workers, or sometimes two, limiting our ability to provide programs and services, and creates very unsafe conditions for both staff and patrons. Custodians cover multiple branches in one day, affecting the cleanliness and safety of these branches. Programs are cut because we do not have staff to offer them. Maintenance requests remain open longer because we do not have enough maintenance staff. Newly renovated branches cannot open because we do not have enough staff.

The Library systems have had to cut back our materials budget. As we learned in the City Council's oversight hearing on book banning, book banning is a crisis across the country, including New York City. We cannot be as effective fighting book bans if we cannot buy books or keep the doors open, which keeps material from our patrons.

Many have stated that New York City is resilient and thriving. And it is true, our spirit remains as defiant and strong as ever. However, the majority of New Yorkers are still struggling with the day-to-day *expenses* of our city. That is why the cuts to libraries have such an impact. All of the services library workers provide are *free* to everyone who walks through our doors, and when a need arises, we adapt and provide. To fight the affordability crisis, we provided free Wi-Fi, computers, printing, job-hunting skills, afterschool programs, entertainment, and education. In response to the pandemic, we pivoted to include a virtual-service model, which is now a permanent part of our service model. To accommodate the newest New Yorkers, the many immigrants who are now our neighbors, we brought library services to shelters and food pantries, library workers volunteered to act as translators and librarians created book lists in Spanish, French, Kreyol and more. Library workers strengthen the fabric of every neighborhood. These are the values we cannot afford to cut.

New York City's public libraries are one of the City's most democratic and trusted institutions. Our free, open, and clean spaces in every New York City community allow library workers to create literacy and community for anyone who walks through our doors. As the divide between those who have and those who do not grows into a chasm, New Yorkers need our government resources more than ever. The only way we can continue our work is for the City to adopt a budget that funds our public libraries. We need partners in our elected officials, to make the financial commitment that ensures libraries are a part of our City's success.



**New York City Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations**

**Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**March 12, 2024, 12 pm**

**TESTIMONY**

**Juliana Cope, Assistant Executive Director for Development and External Affairs, [Jcope@mind-builders.org](mailto:Jcope@mind-builders.org), 718-652-6256**

**Thank you all – you, dedicated public officials for your service and for this opportunity to share the work of Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center and other community-based organizations who train the next generation of New York City civic leaders and cultural contributors and on behalf of the youth, families, and neighborhoods we are honored to serve.**

**Founded in 1978, Mind-Builders began with a grassroots mission to inspire the growth of local youth and families in the Northeast Bronx by providing low-cost, high-quality arts education. Since then we have grown to become a cultural anchor for our community – more than just an arts center, we bring together best practices in arts education, youth development and community engagement in the belief that a healthy community is a vital ingredient in the healthy development of a child.**

**For 45 years, Mind-Builders has offered hundreds of music, dance, theater, visual art, folk art, and martial arts programs serving over 650 young people every week. Programs center on building skills and knowledge on the contributions of artists and culture bearers in our midst. Our public performances include an annual Street Festival, Kwanzaa Celebration and Heroes Day serving thousands of New Yorkers.**

**Intrinsic to our purpose is the community we serve, which is predominantly lower-income; our children and families identify as West African, Black, Latino, and/or Caribbean, with a growing population of families from Yemen and Morocco. Participants come from every zip code in the Bronx, but predominantly from neighborhoods local to our facility – Olinville, Wakefield, Williamsbridge, and Norwood, which have historically had fewer safety nets than their peers, despite greater need. Mind-Builders employs 53 dedicated staff coming from the five boroughs: professional teaching artists, pre-kindergarten instructors, support and admin staff, reflective of the communities we serve. Our work is woven into the fabric of our neighborhood and our staff continue to make transformation in the lives of our young people possible.**

**Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center is a grateful recipient of funding through the Department of Cultural Affairs Cultural Development Fund, Speaker Initiatives, City Council Member Expense Funding, Coalition of Theaters of Color and Cultural Immigrant Initiative. Artistic productions and cultural organizations like ours are vital engines in our communities – for jobs, mental health, activism, education, youth development, empowering messages, and access to other local services. Our communities need us and your support is vital.**

**Organizations like Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to continue your ongoing investments in the cultural sector, supporting work that effectively transforms lives, neighborhoods and cities.**



229 W 42nd Street, 10th Floor  
New York, NY 10036  
646.223.3000

Thank you all for this opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of New 42 and The New Victory Theater. At New 42, we take immense pride in maintaining our position as one of the top 25 NYC cultural institutions as we present a dynamic season of world class performances, essential education programs, and public engagement opportunities. All of New 42's programming is in service of our worthwhile mission: *to make extraordinary performing arts a vital part of everyone's life from the earliest years onward.*

Research has proven that quality early arts exposure has a positive impact on the socioemotional development of young people and yet barriers to arts access still exist. New 42 uses its programming, particularly our **Bring Your Family to the New Victory Program** and **New Victory Education Program** to engage with neighborhoods throughout the five boroughs and beyond and to create accessible, more authentic pathways for young people to experience the transformative power of the arts. In partnership with NYCHA, Bring Your Family provided **over 1000 complimentary tickets to 228 distinct families living in NYCHA housing** for our 2022-23 Season. The program also delivered in-person, family arts activities to NYCHA sites so that young people and their families could experience more robust arts engagement right where they live. As of February 2024, we have already distributed **568 tickets to 94 distinct families in NYCHA housing sites throughout NYC**. We are also partnering with the Public Housing Community Fund to provide MTA travel vouchers along with no cost tickets.

**The New Victory Education Program**, brings free, dynamic, in-classroom arts education to between **130-150 school partners a year**, 70% of which serve large populations of students living in low income neighborhoods and a number of which are District 75 schools serving students with disabilities. **Access for ALL** remains a core tenet of our organization and for many students in the schools we serve, our New Victory Education Program is **the only in-school arts education they receive during the year**. By providing this unique opportunity to engage in collaborative and creative educational play, we positively impact thousands of students each year. As one teacher noted, **"students are empowered by theater and hearing different stories. They communicate with more confidence when theater is in their lives."** In fact, beyond improvements in writing achievement, school engagement and higher education aspirations, New 42's own quantitative research proved that exposure to live performing arts strengthens collaborative skills and nurtures self-confidence and optimism.

In FY25 we are requesting \$150K from the Speaker's Initiative for our education work citywide, as well as discretionary funds to support our arts education programming and to provide more free tickets to residents of NYCHA housing within each district. Additionally, we are requesting \$50K from the Autism Awareness Initiative in support of sensory-friendly programming that provides an inviting experience for kids and families of diverse abilities. Recent cuts in funding for NYC's cultural institutions have had an immense impact on New 42 and the larger arts and culture sector, an industry that provides great economic and social value to NYC. We thank you for your support and hope that you continue to advocate for cultural institutions citywide.

## Testimony of New York City Employment and Training Coalition (NYCETC)

New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on the Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2025

CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Submitted by Gregory J Morris, CEO

March 12, 2024

I'd like to thank **Council Member Rivera** for her leadership and the opportunity to provide testimony. I'm Gregory J Morris, CEO of the New York City Employment and Training Coalition (NYCETC) - *the largest city-based workforce development association in the country*. NYCETC serves as the 'industry voice' of more than 220 workforce development providers in New York City who are counted on to provide job training to more than 500,000 New Yorkers each year — *primarily individuals who live in under-resourced and underserved neighborhoods*. **The most recent survey of our membership indicated that the majority of providers were focused on meeting the needs of women, young adults, NYCHA residents, immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers, and justice-involved individuals.** It is our coalition that is relied upon to connect New Yorkers - of all ages - in every borough - to quality jobs and a living wage; and the services and support necessary to secure long-term, family-sustaining employment.

To achieve an effective and sustainable workforce development ecosystem in NYC, NYCETC is called upon to take three actions:

1. Track the value/impact of the commitments that the City administration makes in support of job readiness and training;
2. Serve as a resource to employers and employer intermediaries seeking talent; and
3. Advocate for the budgetary, legislative, and regulatory action items that maximize access and equity in the programs and services that are central to our efforts. *These efforts include industry specific skill development, college and career exploration, internships and apprenticeships, reskilling/upskill options, as well as, employment placement, retention and advancement assistance.*

**Our City's cultural institutions represent the diversity and dynamism of New Yorkers and the communities they represent.** When we celebrate what is special about what these institutions do, we too often forget to acknowledge the valued workforce that serves and uplifts them, and the absolute reliance we have on the revenue these institutions generate to sustain our City. Budget cuts focused on our museums and parks, gardens and performing arts centers have a direct impact on the sustainability of local economies that rely on those institutions for goods and services, educational opportunities, and meaningful employment. We strongly support efforts to preserve and advance the cultural community and ensure that its workforce has access to both the wages and opportunities that result in economic mobility.

Specific to the [Fiscal 2025 Preliminary Plan and the Fiscal 2024 Preliminary Mayor's Management](#)

[Report for the Department of Cultural Affairs](#), we want to highlight/comment on the following:

*FROM THE REPORT: “CUNY Culture Corps Pause” (p.8)*

COMMENT: DCLA paused funding for Cultural Corps, the internship program that has connected over 1,000 students to internships in the cultural sector over the last 8 years. The “pause” on this valuable and successful entry program is in opposition to the [Mayor’s commitment](#) to providing young adults with pathways to “*fulfilling, economically secure*” careers.

**New York City’s workforce is the backbone of its economic success.** Whether it's the New Yorkers who drive our local economy today, or the young people who will make up our future workforce, the City of New York does better when its people have access to the resources and education they need to access good paying jobs that sustain them and their communities. New York City’s workforce development system is as diverse and ambitious as the city itself, yet there are still too many systemic barriers and disconnections that hold us back from a truly inclusive economy. To equalize opportunity for all New Yorkers, I respectfully request that the Council invests in workforce development now while leading efforts to increase access to quality jobs over time by following this 10 point plan:

- **Commit to restoring all reductions in job training and workforce development opportunities for unemployed and underemployed New Yorkers.** In [Executive Order 22](#), this administration identified investment in the City’s talent and workforce development system as “*critical to an inclusive economic recovery that benefits City residents, employers, and the economy.*” PEGS that reduce or eliminate programs and services focused on preparing New Yorkers - especially economically disadvantaged New Yorkers - for current and future employment opportunities are misaligned with the priorities of the administration and will have a deleterious effect on the City’s economic growth. An independent analysis on the [Return of Investment \(ROI\) on Industry-focused Job Training Programs](#) detailed the value of these programs: 1) These programs lead to 1) significant increases in earnings over time; and 2) have both positive returns in 5 and 10-year ROI estimates;
- **Protect the pathways to continuing education and literacy in New York City including CUNY and public libraries.**
- Address the [municipal job vacancy rates](#) by establishing a [Small Business Services and Workforce Development Initiative](#) that will result in a **first-of-its-kind Civil Service Pathways Apprenticeship** for young adults interested in the city workforce.
- Provide funding for existing or planned **business-training providers networks that can serve as “one-stop shops” to support job seekers** in neighborhoods where there is either planned economic development and/or the absence of targeted workforce development resources like Workforce1 Center and/or Jobs Plus.
- **Equip City Council District Offices** with up-to-date information about job training/hiring within the district and borough to connect constituents to connect constituents to accessible job training and employment placement opportunities;



- Expand the capacity of job training providers serving new arrivals to meet the current and future needs of employers with significant vacancies through **contextual training opportunities and coordinated work authorization effort**.
- **Increase Access to Commercial Delivery Licenses (CDL)** by funding programs that expand and diversify the pool of trained drivers with an important focus on attracting young people and individuals from underserved and immigrant neighborhoods in New York City.
- Assist public assistance beneficiaries to secure credentials and certification through a **[“Bridge to Tech” program](#)** focused on academic remediation, training in the foundational skills required for a career in IT services, and access to on-going supportive and retention services.
- **Launching a City Council Sub-Committee [Task Force] on Workforce Development Results/Outcomes** - The Adams administration has identified a desire to reach 5,000,000 jobs by 2025. This interest follows the completion of the [Pathways to an Inclusive Economy: The Future of Workers Task Force Blueprint](#). Currently, there is no accountability at any level of NYC government specific to employment outcomes and results. A sub-committee could track employment, wages, return on investment, and equity and inclusivity measures related to occupations/industries in NYC.
- **Invest in a 5% COLA for Human Services Workers** - We thank the City Council for the \$100M workforce investment for the last two years and the \$50M investment next year, which is a step in fairly compensating frontline workers. However, the workforce investment is not a true cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) with a guaranteed percentage increase for all contracted human services workers. A COLA is a significant step to address the historic underfunding and lack of investment in the human services sector as these workers do some of the most important jobs in our communities yet are underpaid and undervalued.

**All of the above efforts and initiatives are central to the interests and expertise of the NYCETC members.** A short summary of NYCETC’s accomplishments over the last year are provided on the following pages. Please accept my sincere thanks for the opportunity to testify. I am accessible through email [gmorris@nycetc.org](mailto:gmorris@nycetc.org) and phone/text - 646-469-2683.

## NYCETC ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

In the last year, NYCETC accomplished the following:

- Connected with membership (through the [conference](#), [happy hours](#), and [member orientations](#)) and improved [communications](#). NYCETC's primary communication tool- [Workforce Weekly](#) reaches an audience of more than 6,000 each each week.
- Positioned as a partner to key intermediaries ([NYATEP](#), WPTI, JobsFirst), developed relationships with [elected officials](#), and collaborated with research institutions ([Center for New York City Affairs](#) and Center for an Urban Future (CUF)) NYCETC serves as a partner on CUF's Borough Series - *Helping New Yorkers Access Tech Careers*.
- Worked with the [current administration](#) and [challenged it](#) as a member of the [Future of Workers Task Force](#). NYCETC has cultivated relationships with key agencies (DYCD, SBS, HRA, DDC, and DCAS) as well as MOCS and the Mayor's Office of Nonprofit Services. NYCETC partners with the [Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity](#) to develop an employer-facing digital "front door" to strengthen the public workforce system and [NYCEDC](#) to support community hiring initiatives.
- Launched a new employer network (modeled on LESEN) on the west side of Manhattan West Side Work Coalition) in partnership with the City Council Speaker's Office and Council Member Erik Bottcher. Media related to the announcement can be found using the following links: [amNY](#) and [Patch](#). To support outreach to employers/organizations and community members, the Council Member's Office put out an email blast that can be found [here](#).
- NYCETC has engaged in regular briefings with local and state officials since October 2022 and attended the National Skills Coalition Summit in Washington, D.C. to meet with federal legislators in May 2023.
- In September 2023, NYCETC hosted a [briefing](#) on the cannabis industry for the Black, Latino, Asian Caucus of the City Council.
- NYCETC attended [SOMOS](#) in Puerto Rico in November 2023. NYCETC served as a program partner at the Human Services Reception and the AAPI reception.
- In December 2023, NYCETC hosted the [2023 Annual Conference](#), "Creating Quality Jobs through Partnership and Policy" featuring nearly 400 guests and more than 60 panelists. This [event](#) was co-sponsored by Civic Hall and City & State. The event began with a legislative breakfast attended by Council Members. Featured speakers included Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer, Chancellor Felix Matos Rodriguez, Chancellor David Banks, Kevin D. Kim, Commissioner, New York City Department of Small Business Services, Douglas Lipari, Executive Director, Community Hiring, City of New York, and Dawn Pinnock, Commissioner, New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services. Video of featured sessions from the conference can be found [here](#). Abby Jo Sigal, Executive Director, NYC Mayor's Office of Talent hosted a specific panel on the workforce development ecosystem with all relevant city agencies. Video of that session can be found [here](#). James Parrott, Director of Economic and Fiscal Policies at the Center for New York City Affairs at The New School presented on the current state of the post-pandemic recovery. Video of that session can be found [here](#).

Lucy Sexton

New Yorkers for Culture & Arts

City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs and Libraries

Budget hearing March 12, 2024

Thank you Chair Rivers and members of the City Council for hearing my testimony. My name is Lucy Sexton and I am with the cultural advocacy coalition New Yorkers for Culture & Arts.

Culture is one of NYC's most important economic industries, employing more than 300,000 people and generating \$110B in economic activity---13% of the city's economy. Nonprofit cultural organizations are the foundation and workforce pipeline ensuring that those jobs go to New Yorkers and enrich New York families and communities.

And yet, we are treated like a disposable extra that can be cut and defunded without doing damage to the city at large.

This has got to change----to save the cultural sector and the city's economy!

Culture has been cut by 10%, slicing \$20M from the budget that the City Council passed last June. In addition, the Department of Cultural Affairs was historically late---delivering grant letters 8 months into to the fiscal year the funds were meant to serve AND reducing or fully zeroing out funding to 80% of cultural organizations that regularly receive funding.

This has consequences and they're not pretty. Organizations large and small are cutting staff, theaters that used to produce six shows a year are doing two or three, museums are reducing hours, and cultural center are cutting classes and other programs.

Less shows mean less traffic to local businesses. Less hours and exhibitions mean less visitors staying in hotels. Less classes for youth and seniors mean increased isolation, and decreased mental health. It all adds up to a less vibrant and less safe city.

One people are less likely to visit, and in which families are less likely to live.

I witnessed this downward spiral in the 1970s where cuts to services led to losses for small busiennses and a hollowing out of the middle class tax base, leading to more budget troubles for the city.

Let's shift course now and reverse this spiral! This year's cut of \$20m needs to be reversed! Next year's planned cuts need to be eliminated. We need to baseline the \$45M the Council added to the culture budget last year! And fully fund cultural intitatives

like CASA for schoolkids, Su Casa for seniors, Coalition of Theaters of Color, and the Cultural Immigrant Initiative.

Then we'll see invigorated small businesses, families remaining in the city so their kids can take world class music and dance classes, continued gains in tourism, and increased dollars to our city budget!

They say cut back, we say fight back!

# NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM & LIBRARY

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## Testimony to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations

Fiscal Year 2025 Preliminary Budget Hearing

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

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Dear Council Member Rivera and Members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations:

Thank you for your continued service to education and the arts in New York City, particularly during these challenging times, and for the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of the New-York Historical Society. For over 200 years, New-York Historical has told the story of our nation's founding and history, using our vast collections to highlight diverse perspectives throughout that history.

### **DIVERSIFYING MUSEUM PROGRAMMING**

New-York Historical aims to supplement content in cultural institutions or history curricula by re-telling critical chapters in our history through the perspectives of those often left out of the American narrative. Current exhibitions include:

***Women's Work*** (July 21, 2023 - July 7, 2024), an exploration of how broad trends in American economic, legal, and political history have encouraged women to take certain jobs and restricted them from "men's work," while also considering how race, ethnicity, social class, legal status, sexual orientation, and gender presentation have impacted these distinctions. The exhibition demonstrates that "women's work" defies categorization and has been essential to American society.

***Kay WalkingStick / Hudson River School*** (October 20, 2023 - April 14, 2024), a showcase of the contemporary Cherokee artist's landscapes, in conversation with highlights from New-York Historical's collection of Hudson River School paintings. This artistic dialogue showcases the ways in which WalkingStick's work both connects to and diverges from the Hudson River School tradition, and celebrates a shared reverence for nature while engaging crucial questions about land dispossession and its reclamation by Indigenous peoples and nations and exploring the relationship between Indigenous art and American art history.

***Beatrice Glow: When Our Rivers Meet*** (March 29, 2024 - August 18, 2024), an alternative commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the establishment of the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam from local and global perspectives. Working in conversation with a group of culture bearers, artists, and scholars whose heritages were impacted by the Dutch colonial enterprise, artist-in-residence Beatrice Glow is creating a series of seven parade float maquettes that present an untold version of this history. The small VR-sculpted and 3D-printed sculptures will be

complemented by Glow’s interpretations of decorative arts collection objects, such as embroidered textiles and gilded baby rattles that reflect ideas of social and cultural power.

Together, these exhibitions help to provide a more comprehensive view of the American story by including voices historically left out of museums or history textbooks. Our programming reflects our efforts to engage the broadest possible audience in the making and meaning of history.

### **EDUCATION AND OUTREACH**

New-York Historical partners with schools across the five boroughs to provide quality **K-12 education services** that reflect the cultural fabric of this city. Through field trips, social studies enrichment, workforce development opportunities for teens, early childhood education, teacher professional development opportunities, and digital curricula and classroom resources, New-York Historical enriches classroom learning and highlights under-told stories of BIPOC and minority heroes that have shaped this nation. Our staff conduct deep and thorough outreach to ensure our programs are promoted across all five boroughs, and school discounts are offered on a case-by-case basis for programs that aren’t already offered free of charge. In addition, 60% of slots in our high school internship program—for which students are paid a stipend—are reserved for students who are eligible for reduced-price lunch, ensuring that students do not face financial barriers to participation. Participants in select programs receive Family Passes or Family Memberships, which encourage students who have visited the Museum with their classes to return with their families.

Our commitment to education and outreach also extends to adult audiences. For example, our **Citizenship Project** provides Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) seeking citizenship with free civics and American history workshops that prepare them for the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Naturalization Test. Launched in 2017, in direct response to drastic new federal restrictions on immigration, the Citizenship Project is the first program nationwide to utilize a major museum collection to facilitate citizenship education. In addition to civics classes based on the Naturalization Test, the program includes English language practice workshops and mock test interviews to help participants prepare beyond the test itself. Participants are recruited through CUNY’s Citizenship Now!, the USCIS, and local immigrant advocacy organizations, and a dedicated Citizenship Project Outreach Coordinator works to build strategic partnerships with community organizations to ensure communities across the five boroughs are aware of the program. The program is offered in-person and virtually, in both English and Spanish to attract the broadest possible audience.

### **CONCLUSION**

Ever-rising to the challenge of bringing little or unknown histories to light, New-York Historical’s mission is to collect, preserve, and interpret, for the broadest possible public, material relevant to U.S. history, and serve as an accessible community resource and destination for audiences underserved or underrepresented by cultural institutions. This work would not be possible without the support of the City Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs, and New-York Historical remains grateful for programmatic and capital funds received in recent fiscal years. These funds are essential to our institutional goals, and we thank you and your fellow City Council Members for your exceptional service.



## **FY25 Preliminary Budget Oversight Hearing:**

Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, Chair Rivera and Distinguished Committee Members:

Good Afternoon, my name is Aaron Bouska. I am testifying today as the Bronx Vice-Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) and a proud employee of the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG). As the City Council acknowledges, this is a critical time for the cultural community in the City we all love; and the crisis is especially true in the Bronx for the five cultural anchors that I represent today: Bronx Zoo, Bronx Historical Society, Bronx Museum, NYBG and Wave Hill.

**In just the past five months, Mayor Adams cut operating support to our five Bronx CIGs by \$3.5 million as part of his \$20 million in FY24 cuts to the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA).** And while the Mayor's actions are serious and consequential—resulting in hiring freezes, program and service reductions to Bronx neighborhoods, and even loss of jobs—the mid-year cuts are only part of the story.

**Even before the Mayor's cuts, City funding to DCLA amounted to less than a quarter of one percent of the City's adopted FY24 budget.** Organizations like ours received more City operating support in 2009 than they did at the start of this fiscal year, without any adjustments for inflation or necessary salary growth. Simply put, DCLA's budget has not grown proportionately to the City's significant budget growth over the past decade, a choice that economists might describe as penny wise, but pound foolish.

City Hall agrees that cultural anchors are economic engines and revenue generators and for good reasons; consider the economic impact of just the 34 members of the Cultural Institution Group (CIG):

- The CIG generates \$8 in city-wide economic activity for every \$1 of investment by the City of NY.
- CIGs currently spend nearly \$500M with vendors, many of them local small businesses. Contracts with small businesses that rely on CIG business have been cut as organizations struggled to absorb mid-year cuts.
- CIG members provide 15,700 jobs to the City, including 5800 union members. Another 6,000 artists, educators and other per diem staff work with the CIGs.

So, all of this begs the question – since culture creates needed revenue for the City, serves as a lifeline to communities, educates and inspires the next generations of scientists, artists, business people and scholars **and** does so at a cost that is less than it was fifteen years ago, what is the Mayor's purpose in cutting culture?

Thankfully, the City Council has been asking the same question! Until such time that we receive a sensible answer, I respectfully request the City Council and all New Yorkers to pressure City Hall and Mayor Adams to take the following actions:

- **Reverse the November, January and Preliminary Budget Cuts to culture - that's \$20 million in FY24 for CIGs/ CDF and \$15.5 in FY25.**
- **Restore and baseline the one-time addition to CIGs and CDF - \$45 million - to the FY25 Adopted Budget.**

In conclusion, I applaud the City Council for raising the alarm about the across-the-board reductions to City agencies and for expressing their sincere concerns about impacts on our non-profit cultural community. We look forward to working with you to mitigate or eliminate future rounds of unnecessary cuts. Thank you, Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, and Chair Rivera!

Respectfully submitted by: Aaron T. Bouska, Bronx Vice-Chair of the CIG; Vice President for Government and Community Relations, New York Botanical Garden. [abouska@nybg.org](mailto:abouska@nybg.org); 718.817.8542

# Arts in Education **R**NYC **UNDTABLE**

*Live Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance*

*Hon. Carlina Rivera, Chair*

*Hearing: Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations*

*Tuesday, March 12, 2024*

Thank you to Chair Carlina Rivera, fellow Committee Members and Council staff, for your passion, leadership, and support of arts, culture, and arts education in New York City.

My name is Kimberly Olsen, and I am the Executive Director of the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable. We are an arts service organization that works with thousands of artists, educators, and cultural organizations each year to improve and advance arts education in NYC. **I'm testifying as part of the It Starts with the Arts coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities in the FY25 budget**

The creative sector accounts for 13% of the city's total economic output. 1 out of every \$8 in NYC's economic activity can be traced directly or indirectly to the arts and culture sector. Despite this potential for income generation, cuts to the Department of Cultural Affairs and NYC Public Schools jeopardize not only the creative economy but the very fabric of our city's prosperity and well-being.

The Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Development Fund are a critical resource for NYC's arts education community. For many organizations in our membership, the impact of CDF and cultural initiative funding enables organizations to provide critical arts education services to young New Yorkers in every neighborhood across the five boroughs. We often say at the Roundtable — it starts with the arts. These afterschool arts programs, field trips, arts partnerships, teen programs, and more are funded by CDF seed and grow the next generation of arts workers and audiences.

As an arts service organization working with more than 4,000 arts workers each year, the immediate impact of budget cuts has been keenly felt. It has meant a stark uptick in the number of teaching artists expressing concerns about unemployment, delayed or canceled residencies, housing insecurities, and questioning the overall sustainability of working in the arts in NYC.

Furthermore, these cuts will have an immediate and long-lasting impact on our city's young people. Arts and culture organizations provide an essential lifeline of support to New Yorkers of all ages. More than 600 arts and cultural organizations partnered with NYC Public Schools in the 2022-2023 school year — the most ever — in part attributed to federal stimulus money (set to expire 6/30), increased funding at DCLA (which has since been cut), and a one-time infusion

of Title IV funds. Cultural partnerships have become even more critical as NYC public schools experienced a loss of 425 full-time certified arts teachers (14.88% decrease) from FY2020 to FY2023 — leaving thousands more students without a dedicated arts teacher in their school. A note on transparency: we don't know what schools/districts have been impacted. This type information has been released publicly since 2014 in the Comptroller's State of the Arts report and in [an Open Data set from 2019-2020](#).

The Mayor's proposed cuts harm the heartbeat of our city's economic and cultural growth. We join our colleagues in asking the city to:

- **Reverse** the November and Preliminary Budget Cuts to culture - that's \$20 million in FY24 and \$15.5M in FY25.
- **Restore and baseline** last year's one-time addition of \$45 million to CIGs and all cultural groups across the city
- **Fully fund City Council initiatives** including Support for Arts Instruction, CASA for school kids, Su-Casa for seniors, Cultural Immigrant Initiative, and the Coalition of Theaters of Color
- **Improve data transparency** by compelling NYC Public Schools to provide a school-by-school breakdown of the state of arts education in public schools.
- **Require DOE arts funding be spent on the arts (\$15M):** Boost the per student arts allocation to \$100 from \$80.47, and require that money be spent on arts education.
- **Ensure Every School Has a Certified Arts Teachers (\$38M):** Ensure that all schools have at least one certified arts teacher, closing the equity gap for more than 315 schools.
- **Replace Expiring Federal Covid-Era Funds for Arts (\$30M):** Save arts education programs on the chopping block due to \$1B in expiring federal funds, including arts initiatives, programming to support student social-emotional wellbeing and academic recovery through the arts, and Summer Rising.

Our city's young people represent the vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because success **starts with the arts**.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Kimberly Olsen  
Executive Director  
NYC Arts in Education Roundtable  
[kolsen@nycaieroundtable.org](mailto:kolsen@nycaieroundtable.org)  
516-205-7639



Where people, plants, and cultures meet.

Queens Botanical Garden (QBG) is the place where people, plants, and cultures meet. We're located on 39 acres of city-owned land in downtown Flushing and serve over 300,000 people annually. We are also proud to be a member of the Cultural Institutions Group. We thank the members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Over the past year, QBG has experienced some of its most historic highs. Major achievements in 2023 included recording our highest-ever visitation; serving a record 12 schools through CASA, the City Council-funded afterschool program; introducing new public programs, including a free Garden Party featuring DJ talent from radio station WFUV in March (2,000+ attendees); Pohela Boishakh, a Bengali New Year event with Bangladesh Institute of Performing Arts (BIPA) and the Astoria Welfare Society, in May (1,200+ attendees); and FP Garden Party, a ticketed, upscale summer party featuring DJs, photo opportunities, and content creation with the black-owned travel company Fool's Paradise in July (600 attendees); and successfully launching Astra Lumina, an enchanting evening light and sound experience that has driven over 60,000 tourists and New Yorkers to Flushing during winter evenings. The Garden is more activated and utilized than ever before and is a critical resource to urban children learning about climate change, sustainability, and other environmental issues. Additionally, through the introduction of more large-scale, extended events, QBG has vastly increased its strength as a critical revenue generator for Flushing and Queens.

These successes come at the same time as the Garden and our peer cultural institutions deal with extreme challenges and budgetary setbacks. The significant cuts to QBG's baseline funding, coupled with the complete and sudden elimination of funding for the NYC Compost Project, necessitated two staff layoffs and partial furloughs for all remaining staff, beginning in January 2024. These losses pose challenges to workflow, programming, future planning, and momentum.

Now, we stand united with our cultural colleagues to emphatically request that, in FY25, you reserve the November and Preliminary Budget Cuts to culture and restore and baseline the one-time addition CIGS and Programs. As a mid-sized cultural institution with a strong reliance on government funding, these funds are critical to the continued success and progress of Queens Botanical Garden. As you know, baseline funding for CIGs has not changed since 2009 – although the rest of the world has. Inflation, increasing competition, unemployment, and the pandemic have all exacerbated the challenges of operating a successful cultural institution. We take our responsibility as a steward of the city's land seriously and act as trusted partners to the City of New York in our quest to showcase New York City's culture to the world while, at the same time, serving our closest neighbors day in and day out. It is this unique duality which distinguishes the CIGs and our cultural colleagues. In return, we ask for your thoughtful consideration and enthusiastic response to this request.

Please hear our refrain that this is one of the most critical times for the cultural community. QBG and our fellow cultural institutions are foundational to the City's economic strength, neighborhood safety, and social health and must be appropriately funded by the City. Collectively, the CIGs position New York City as a world-class cultural hub and leader in Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) education and public programs. QBG and our peers must be able to continue this work without the fear of needing to make operational and programmatic cuts to weather additional budget cuts.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests, and for your longstanding support of Queens Botanical Garden, the CIGs, and all of our cultural peers.

Queens Museum  
New York City Building  
Flushing Meadows Corona Park  
Queens, NY 11368

**Cultural Affairs Testimony**  
**Testimony Submitted by:**  
**Sally Tallant, Executive Director, Queens Museum**  
***March 12, 2024***

Thank you so much for this opportunity to provide testimony today. I am Sally Tallant, President and Executive Director of the Queens Museum (QM).

I would like to extend our deepest thanks to the New York City Council for your continued support of all of our work. We are so grateful for your faith in our efforts and for your discretionary CASA and SUCASA funding. We are proud that our programs reach children, teens, families and seniors in every district across the Borough. We are excited to share that we will break ground on the final phase of our capital project this time next year.

While we are looking forward to all of the exciting things in store for us, we need to take this opportunity today to convey just how deeply the administration cuts have affected the Museum.

In November 2023, we instituted an organization-wide hiring freeze. We are currently operating without a Director of Development, a Director of Human Resources or a Director of Exhibitions and Programs. These roles are critical to the operations of our Museum and we cannot afford to hire them. Separately we had eliminated admission fees during the pandemic to ensure our constituents had no financial barriers to entry. We have had to reinstitute these policies in an attempt to keep our doors open.

We have had to cut back on programs and offerings, despite a significant influx of newly arrived immigrants to Queens who would benefit from programs such as our *New New Yorkers program* which offers free multilingual opportunities to meet the needs of adult immigrant communities in Queens. This program has courses that emphasize the arts, technology and English language acquisition and are provided at no cost in a variety of languages.

If these cuts are not restored immediately, we will need to begin laying off staff in April.

With regards to our FY25 budget requests, we are seeking an additional \$2M in capital funding to support the final phase of our capital project which will bring Queens Museum into the future. This project will provide improved access for all visitors, offer the Borough's first children's museum for art and culture, include a revamped theater space which will be available for community use and an Archive and Study Center. The project will also provide Queens Museum staff, who have been working in provisional spaces for too long, with a safe and nurturing workplace.

Additionally, we need to ensure that we have enough money to operate this amazing new Museum. We have not seen a baseline increase in years; not even at completion of the Phase One of our capital project which saw our space and programs nearly double in size.

We need to be sure we have enough money to operate this amazing new place. To that end we are requesting:

- \$100,000 Speaker Request
- \$50,000 Queens Delegation

- \$30,000 Cultural Immigrant Initiative

All of this funding will go towards increasing educational capacity for our education and programming departments. In order to make the most of all of these new spaces and meet the needs of larger audiences, we are engaging in capacity building in advance of the Children's Museum including staffing and research. Our goal is to provide educational programming for our community: from the youngest visitors to seniors in advance of and continuing through to the reopening of the Museum.

Standing in solidarity with the CIG groups and all of culture, we support the \$45M ask of baselined funding and a complete restoration of all initiative funding.

The need for increased capacity is clear and, in light of the continued cuts from the City, which have been devastating for us, we need to make sure that we are prepared to meet the needs of all of our constituents. We thank you for your consideration of this request. With your support, we hope to have a Queens Museum that better serves the growing needs of the Queens community.

Thank you for your time.



**Statement by Dennis M. Walcott, President and CEO, Queens Public Library  
New York City Council's Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup  
Relations  
Fiscal Year 2025 Preliminary Budget Hearing  
March 12, 2024**

Good afternoon. I am Dennis Walcott, President and CEO of Queens Public Library (QPL, Library). It is a pleasure to be here today. Chair Rivera, Speaker Adams, and the members of this esteemed Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on our budget priorities for the upcoming fiscal year.

Last year, New York City's public library systems celebrated full restoration of our budgets for Fiscal Year 2024 after the threat of massive budget cuts. **This achievement would not have been possible without the steadfast advocacy of the Speaker and the entire City Council—thank you for your outstanding support.** Unfortunately, our success was short-lived. In the recent November Plan, Queens Public Library was subjected to a five percent PEG (\$6.8 million). Already a lean organization, we were forced to reduce our collections, programs and services, decrease our building maintenance and repair budgets, eliminate staff positions through attrition and vacancies, and shutter our two busiest libraries – Central and Flushing – on Sundays, ending seven-day service in the borough. Since the end of Sunday service, we estimate a loss of 45,000 visits to our system.

Libraries have the power to change lives. At Queens Public Library locations across the borough and through our digital platforms, our trusted and dedicated staff are there for our communities, providing everyone with opportunities to learn, grow, and find success, to see themselves represented in our collections and programs, and to discover new perspectives. In the most diverse area in the nation, we welcome everyone, regardless of their age, background, or circumstances, and our customers know they can depend on us for whatever they may need. In Fiscal Year 2023, there were more than 5.6 million visits to our locations, a 43% increase.

QPL is often the first stop for new New Yorkers, who know they can get the resources they desperately need, whether it is computer access, IDNYC, or help navigating government services. Our collection has 191 languages represented, ranging from Korean to Swahili to Bambara, and as new populations make the "world's borough" their home, we will ensure they have materials to read in their native language. Earlier this year, our career readiness program, which combines English learning and job training, began offering a hospitality and tourism professional certificate, in addition to our established home health aide and childcare provider programs. Our ESOL programs are in high demand, with the Library serving 3,000 students annually and having a waitlist of 2,000, half of which is for our Flushing location. All students in our Adult Learning Program (ALP), whether participating in ESOL and Civics Education or Adult Basic Education and High School Equivalency classes, have access to case management services.

Many adult learners also benefit from our New Americans Program (NAP). For more than 45 years, NAP has celebrated the dynamic cultures of the borough's newest residents while helping



them learn about life in the United States. NAP's citizenship assistance, immigration sessions, coping skills classes and cultural programs, had an attendance of 11,750 last fiscal year.

Our customers view their local libraries as trusted spaces where they can connect with their neighbors. At our Corona Library, a group of mothers started an informal servilletas (Mexican cloth napkins used to wrap tortillas) sewing group which provided them an opportunity to confide in one another about their families, challenges, and mental health. At the monthly "Circle of Transformation" sessions at our Cambria Heights Library, women are empowered and supported to speak about any and all topics that are affecting their lives. From Long Island City to Arverne, Glen Oaks to Ridgewood, Poppenhusen to Rosedale, our libraries offer refuge and support for our users.

Our teen program attendance soared by 176% due to investments in our teen offerings, made possible by funding from the Mayor. The renovations of the teen centers at Central, Cambria Heights, and Flushing, and a new center at our Long Island City Library, provide safe spaces for students to complete homework, participate in teen-centric programs and leadership initiatives, explore their creativity, and connect with one another and trusted adults. These centers were modeled on our Far Rockaway Teen Library, which recently celebrated its "Sweet Sixteen." The special party showcased art, musical performances and other talents of the local teens who make the library such a unique and cherished place.

QPL's Job & Business Academy (JBA) builds confidence in each participant by focusing on five key areas: job search; technology training; entrepreneurship; job skills; and financial literacy. JBA hosts both group workshops and one-on-one sessions, including mock interviews, skills identification, and personal and online banking. Last fiscal year, they had a combined attendance of over 12,800. The Library also offers a growing collection of more than 500 Civil Service Study Guides.

On New Year's Eve, our renowned Mail-A-Book program, which operates out of our Queens Village Library and serves homebound individuals, hosted a two-hour virtual party for older adults. More than 110 people participated in this fantastic event, which featured presentations by artists, writers, and performers who sparked touching conversations among the guests. Compared to last fiscal year, Mail-A-Book saw a 30% increase in circulation, and a combined virtual and hybrid attendance of 10,500.

To commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hip-Hop, QPL spearheaded a national, multi-organizational consortium and hosted specialized programming that culminated in a two-day summit highlighting the genre's influence on society, fashion, social justice and more, with more than 1,200 attendees. This celebration also included a special edition Hip-Hop library card, designed by famed streetwear designers The Shirt Kings. To date, 25,800 cards have been issued, 41% representing new cardholders.

Through our partnership with the Food Bank for NYC, we hosted mobile food distribution events at our Ozone Park, Peninsula and Rochdale Village libraries. Since the start of this food security initiative in 2022, we have hosted 40 food pantry events serving fresh produce, protein and shelf

stable items to more than 5,400 households and benefiting more than 25,800 individuals. We look forward to continuing this initiative in the spring.

Last year, our Summer Reading initiative, All Together Now, inspired reading through the themes of community, kindness and civic engagement, resulting in an attendance of nearly 146,000. Our community health programs promote both physical and mental wellness for all audiences, such as restorative yoga and “Health Chats” with medical professionals. Overall, our extensive program offerings had a total attendance of nearly 850,000, a jump of 110% when compared to the previous fiscal year. Our engaging and thought-provoking programming continues this year with Black History Month highlighting African Americans’ incredible impact on the arts, including literature, film and design. This Women’s History Month, we are spotlighting individuals who contribute to creating a more equitable world. Our kickoff event was a discussion with New York Times contributing opinion writer and bestselling author Roxane Gay.

In an effort to reduce the digital divide, we have invested in extending our Wi-Fi beyond our walls, allowing anyone to join at any hour outside nearly all our buildings up to 450 feet, no library card required. We also lent hotspots to over 2,500 users, allowing households to have reliable Wi-Fi access. Last fiscal year, Wi-Fi sessions increased by 25%, while public computer usage jumped 48%.

The Administration spared Libraries from a second round of PEGs for this year, and we are extremely grateful. However, the reality is that Queens Public Library is currently confronting a crisis that will only worsen come July. **In Fiscal Year 2025, we are expected to lose \$16.6 million of our expense budget**, which includes both Administration funding and the \$4.38 million from the Council’s Library Initiative. Furthermore, we have significant uncovered increased costs stemming from minimum wage and contractual salary increases, health insurance and more.

The FY 25 proposed budget is a devastating blow to our already strained staffing and resources. In addition to enacting deeper cuts to all the areas affected by the November PEG, **we will also need to end universal six-day service, closing our locations on Saturdays.** On the weekends alone this past fiscal year, QPL had more than 883,000 visits, program attendance of over 125,000, and nearly 110,000 computer sessions. The mid-year cut we sustained crippled QPL’s ability to hire the staff needed to fully operate our libraries, and with looming, deeper cuts, the situation will worsen. **Without the restoration of expense funding, we will not have sufficient staff to reopen the Bay Terrace, Broadway, and Hillcrest libraries once the capital projects are complete.** We know the weekends are an important time for people to use the library, and that our communities are eager to see their recently renovated branches open – we are heartbroken to be facing this scenario.

QPL’s vast capital portfolio includes many projects in the NYC Department of Design & Construction’s (DDC’s) pipeline. Soon a number of our libraries will begin undergoing significant work, including the renovation of the Hollis Library, expansion of the Arverne Library, and replacement of the Douglaston-Little Neck and Rego Park libraries. Last week, we closed our Queensboro Hill Library to replace its HVAC system and soon the roof at the Laurelton Library will be replaced. Each project is crucial to ensuring our buildings continue to be safe and welcoming spaces for our customers and staff. Next month, staff from our Far Rockaway

temporary space will begin moving into and outfitting the brand new building to open to the public in the summer, and the Mitchell-Linden Library will welcome customers to use their expanded computer center. We owe it to our communities to provide modern, functional, and inspiring library buildings, but this is only possible with proper investment.

Queens Public Library has an FY 25 capital need of \$165.2 million. **In the Preliminary Plan, we had to implement a \$32 million PEG to our capital portfolio.** This cut severely limits our ability to bridge latent shortfalls that have yet to be published by DDC. Published shortfalls, if left unresolved, cause project delays now that ultimately lead to larger shortfalls in the future. Many of our projects involve replacing critical infrastructure, such as boilers or HVAC systems, and the longer we wait to complete them, the higher the likelihood of unplanned and extended library closures. Additionally, QPL was notified that Council funds for seven active DDC projects were moved to FY 33, and that access to our Council lump sum allocation was also moved to FY 33. Consequently, two projects are presently paused, five projects are at imminent risk of being paused, and we cannot use the lump sum to bridge published shortfalls. The seven projects are forecasted to hit milestones this year, but the pause will cause the project schedules to be delayed and project costs to increase. To allow these projects to move forward so that desperately needed improvements can be accomplished in a timely fashion and shortfalls can be bridged upon publication, the FY 33 action must be immediately reversed.

The City Council has continuously invested and advocated for capital funding for Queens Public Library, and **we are hopeful to receive your support to restore the PEG and once again your investment in our capital plan.** With 42 active projects, these investments will help shield our DDC portfolio from cost-related interruptions and escalatory consequences.

The budget reductions we are facing across the board are staggering. We understand that the consequences we are describing – deeper cuts to our collections, programs, services, and building maintenance and repairs; the closure of our libraries on weekends; and delayed reopenings – will be a great disservice to the people who count on us each day to be their refuge, their lifeline, their community anchor. The Library does not make these decisions lightly, but the severity of the current and upcoming cuts, combined with increased costs, leaves us no choice. For years, we have grappled with the threat of budget cuts, which have been – thankfully – restored, only to be followed by mid-year reductions, and then a repeat of the entire cycle. This year, we have the added challenge of a capital PEG, which leaves us uncertain about the future of our construction portfolio. Planning for the future, whether by hiring and maintaining much-needed staff or moving forward with critical projects, is increasingly difficult.

**An investment in libraries is an investment in the future of New York City.** We know that people across this city – children, teens, families, adult learners, job seekers, older adults, new Americans – trust and count on libraries for opportunities to become the best version of themselves. Imagine what libraries could do for the people of our great city with steady, reliable, and adequate investment. **We trust that with your unwavering advocacy, we can see our budgets restored and continue offering the services that New Yorkers deserve.**

Chair Rivera and Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak.



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**PRESIDENT**

Francine Garber-Cohen

**EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT/ SECRETARY**

Linda Cantoni

**TREASURER**

Joseph Delfausse

## **TESTIMONY AT THE NYC COUNCIL HEARING ON MARCH 12, 2024**

Good afternoon. Thank you for considering my testimony today.

I'm Fran Garber-Cohen, President of Regina Opera, which offers fully-staged operas with full orchestra and English supertitles, in Sunset Park - an underserved and low income community, as well as many free concerts in public, accessible spaces in Brooklyn.

Today I join my colleagues in asking that New York City reverse the November 2023 and any further Budget Cuts to Culture – That is 20 million dollars in FY 2024 and a projected \$15 million in FY25.

We rely heavily on funding from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs. The funds that we receive through the Cultural Development Fund allow us to provide affordable, professional-level entertainment in accessible venues for people who may not otherwise attend live performances. About 65 percent of the NYC residents that attend our performances are Senior Citizens, who were not able to afford the high ticket prices at the major opera houses or were unable to travel the long distance by subway or bus.

Cuts in funding for NYC Department of Cultural Affairs hurts small organizations like Regina Opera who provide services for NYC's Senior Citizens, a continuously growing population. This important sector of our population depends on us, and on other local groups, to give performances that get these vulnerable groups – our aunts and uncles, our grandparents, and even our own parents, out of the house, where they often live alone. At our operas and concerts, Seniors socialize – they make plans to meet their friends, often for dinner before or after an opera or a concert. They also make new friends, expanding their social contacts. They remember musical performances they saw years ago, and make plans to attend future productions.

We cannot let these people down because of these funding cuts.

Respectfully submitted.

Francine Garber-Cohen

President, The Regina Opera Company, Inc.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francine Garber-Cohen". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the right of the typed name.



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations

Hon. Carlina Rivera, Chair

Hearing: Oversight—Preliminary Budget for FY 2025, etc.

March 13, 2024

Thank you, Chair Rivera and esteemed members of this Committee, for the opportunity to testify at this hearing. At Roundabout Theatre Company, we are grateful for everything you have done to promote equitable arts access for all New Yorkers, and to help arts institutions recover from the pandemic. We were encouraged by Speaker Adams's remarks at this week's State of the City address highlighting the important role the arts play in our communities—driving our economic recovery as well as creating opportunity and a better quality of life for all New Yorkers.

We join our colleagues at New Yorkers for Culture & Arts to ask that the City Council backs the Speaker's remarks and restores its investment in New York arts and culture organizations. The City's support has helped make all that Roundabout has accomplished in its history possible. Your steadfast partnership is essential as we continue to serve hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers each year.

Roundabout is the nation's largest not-for-profit theatre company. We celebrate the power of theatre by spotlighting classics from the past, cultivating new works of the present, and educating minds for the future. We produce plays and musicals on and off-Broadway, serving an average annual audience of over 300,000. Offstage, our education programs reach over 24,000 public school students, teachers, and New Yorkers each year. We reduce physical, financial, and cultural barriers to the arts through a portfolio of community partnerships and programs designed to increase access to theatre. With the City's ongoing support, Roundabout also delivers the Theatrical Workforce Development Program, a first-of-its-kind vocational fellowship that models workforce development best practices within the arts sector, trains underemployed young New Yorkers for careers in technical theatre, and places them on a path to rewarding union jobs backstage.

With support from the Cultural Development Fund, Roundabout has helped keep the arts at the heart of our civic life. Each year we serve not only the locals and tourists who attend our productions, but also tens of thousands of artists, technicians, teachers, students, and community members who benefit from our programs in all five boroughs. We are the fourth largest theatre owner on Broadway, an industry that contributed \$14.7 billion to the city's economy during the 2018-19 theatre season, not including ticket sales and 96,000 local jobs.

And we provide leadership in the overlapping not-for-profit arts sector, an \$8 billion industry that generates \$21.2 billion in economic impact for the city and state.

Not-for-profit theatres like Roundabout continue to face profound hurdles in our recovery. The pandemic has decimated the subscription model that historically sustained theatre companies across our city. For over 50 years, subscriber loyalty empowered Roundabout to take artistic risks on and off-Broadway, become a leading new works incubator and support early career theatre artists, and produce gold-standard revivals of classic plays and musicals—while employing hundreds of New Yorkers every year.

*The Washington Post* warns that “Theater is in freefall,” while *The New York Times* reports that “A Crisis in America’s Theaters Leaves Prestigious Stages Dark”. As we all seek a new business model, peer institutions have laid off staff by the dozens and reduced programming by half. To sustain our commitment to the communities we serve, Roundabout has again drawn significantly from our cash reserves this year, which have been severely depleted since 2020.

We are deeply thankful for the hard work of the Department of Cultural Affairs and their support toward our workforce program—as well as their administration of the City Council discretionary awards that support our work in schools. Looking ahead, with all that our industry faces, the city’s proposed budget reductions—and specifically its disinvestment in allocations to Cultural Affairs—have added additional pressure on an already struggling industry. New York City’s theatre district is unmatched. To support its full the recovery we join our colleagues in the field to request that the City:

- **Reverse** the November and Preliminary Budget Cuts to culture and restore \$20 million cut from the fiscal 2024 budget, and \$15.5M from fiscal year 2025;
- **Restore and baseline** last year’s one-time addition of \$45 million to CIGs and cultural groups across the city;
- **Fully fund City Council initiatives** including CASA for school kids, SU-CASA for seniors, Cultural Immigrant Initiative, and the Coalition of Theaters of Color.

The arts are an essential part of New York City’s identity, and not-for-profits are the reason why. We are cultural flagships, education providers, tourism draws, and community hubs that make New York a better place to live and visit. We deeply appreciate the City’s years of ongoing partnership, and your consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,



Sarah Mercanti  
Director of Government Relations  
Roundabout Theatre Company

TESTIMONY OF JESSICA BAKER VODOOR  
PRESIDENT & CEO  
SNUG HARBOR CULTURAL CENTER & BOTANICAL GARDEN

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL FY24**  
**Oversight Hearing of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries**  
**and International Intergroup Relations**  
**March 12, 2024**

As President & CEO of Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden, I am pleased to submit this written testimony to Speaker Adams, Chair Rivera of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations, and the entire New York City Council. I thank you for this opportunity to detail the impact of the Mayor's proposed budget cuts on Snug Harbor's ability to deliver for our communities.

Founded in 1977, Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden is an expansive culture park where arts, nature, education and history unite to bring dynamic programming, events and festivals to our diverse community. Snug Harbor offers a blend of what is artful, human and cultural with nature, space, beauty and community for the naturally curious from our Staten Island home and beyond. Snug Harbor is Staten Island's largest cultural organization, welcoming 480,000 visitors to explore our galleries, gardens and grounds, and experience the breadth of history, architecture, culture and the natural environment that we manage across our 83 acres. We are open daily, year-round, from dawn to dusk and our grounds are free to explore. We offer a robust green education and workforce development program, serving thousands of emerging adults from our under-served community each year. We are a property manager, overseeing a historical campus and serving more than 40 tenant organizations. We are a unique culture park in New York City.

The North Shore of Staten Island is a rich tapestry of culture and vibrant diversity. Snug Harbor is located in Council District 49, a dynamic, diverse area with no single predominant ethnic or cultural heritage. The North Shore includes 35% Black, 28% white residents, and 26% Latine. Twenty-four percent of our residents live in poverty with 77% of our children qualifying for free/reduced lunch. The level of disengaged youth (16-24 year olds who are neither in school nor employment) hovers around 24%. The North Shore is home to multiple State-designated Qualified Opportunity Zones; Snug Harbor serves 31 North Shore census tracts that are designated as Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) by NYSEDA. The area is home to multiple immigrant populations, with recent arrivals from Mexico and Central America (many from Indigenous populations) joining established communities from Liberia, Sri Lanka, Albania and elsewhere. Spanish is spoken at home by 11% of the population. The North Shore offers 18,866 units of NYCHA housing, 11,982 of them within a two-mile radius of Snug Harbor.

Snug Harbor is an essential community resource for Staten Island, providing a robust workforce development program to under-served youth, free cultural programming, subsidized space rental to a host of community organizations, technical and material assistance to local growers. Snug Harbor supports local entrepreneurship with monthly vendor fairs showcasing creators and small businesses, and hosts a variety of food and cultural festivals with community partners throughout the year.

The impact of these budget cuts to Snug Harbor is devastating. Like every non-profit cultural organization, we are facing alarming increases in operating expenses. In 2023, our general liability insurance increased from approximately \$100,000 the previous year to nearly \$400,000; our deductible also increased. Service contracts have increased by over 15% this year to maintain the aging campus physical plant. Constant failures of the campus's aging infrastructure - including regular steam leaks and electrical outages-- create a steady stream of emergency repair costs. Cuts have delayed re-opening of the historic Music Hall, a significant revenue generator for Snug Harbor.

Snug Harbor manages 83 acres of City-owned property, including 26 buildings, parking lots and sidewalks. We receive no funding from NYC Parks, yet our grounds, galleries, and stunning botanical gardens must be nurtured for today's New Yorkers and future generations. City budget cuts mean reducing repairs to the spaces occupied by 40+ small businesses and independent artists in residence on our campus. Our vibrant Snug Harbor campus community delivers critical services and education to Staten Islanders, including classes across disciplines, a pre-school, children's grief counselling, and more. When well maintained, our grounds provide respite, peace and tranquility for our visitors; when not maintained, the campus is rife with liabilities and security risks.

Snug Harbor is losing talented staff because we cannot compete with salaries escalating across the city. The stressors are high, but our small team of dedicated public service professionals works miracles every day to keep the campus running and serve our community. Staffing levels and salaries must be preserved, and to attract and retain the best, we must be competitive and grant annual cost of living adjustments. The cuts have forced us to freeze salary levels while inflation continues to rise and stall rehiring vacated positions, escalating burnout levels for current staff. We need MORE funding, not less.

Snug Harbor, like our CIG peers and cultural organizations throughout the five boroughs, is an economic driver for our community and a lifeline to the families and young people we serve every day. Cultural institutions deliver billions of dollars into New York's economy each year.



Thousands of union and non-union jobs depend on the cultural sector. Every day, cultural institutions serve students, seniors, low-income, and historically marginalized New Yorkers, and are the primary attractions that draw 62 million visitors to our city every year. This unprecedented disinvestment in arts and culture will ravage the sector, and by extension New York's economy and standing as a world cultural leader. Given that the Department of Cultural Affairs' budget is only .02% of the City budget, we are collectively asking "are these cuts really worth it?"

Cultural organizations depend on City funding to provide the sort of quality, community-centered programming we have described today. The proposed cuts will force a return to pandemic levels of staffing and programming, with profound long-term harm. I join my colleagues in the Cultural Institutions Group, and the entire cultural sector, and ask that DCLA be spared from the Administration's proposed cuts so that we can continue to serve all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your time.



JESSICA BAKER VODOOR

*President & CEO*

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## **Testimony Submitted by Dina Rosenthal, Executive Director, Staten Island Children’s Museum**

Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Chair Carlina Rivera and esteemed members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Council Members Carr and Hanks for their unwavering commitment to Staten Island and the enrichment provided by the Staten Island Children’s Museum (SICM). Our mission—to foster education, cultural enrichment, and community engagement—faces unprecedented challenges due to recent budget cuts to cultural funding.

Culture, an essential quality of life component in our city, mirrors a small business sector with profound economic impacts. SICM, at its core, aims to nurture children's innate creativity and curiosity, acknowledging diverse learning styles and proving that learning can be both exciting and fun. We pride ourselves on being a beacon of inclusivity and empowerment, where the diverse fabric of our community is welcomed to learn, explore, and play.

However, recent budgetary constraints have critically restricted our capacity to serve our community effectively, threatening not just our operation but the economic and cultural vitality of New York City. With cultural institutions contributing \$110 billion or 13% to the city's economy, the repercussions of these cuts extend far beyond our local community, undermining the vibrancy that defines our city. Recognizing that every dollar invested in cultural organizations yields a seven-dollar return to the city's economy, I implore the Council to reconsider and restore the funding for cultural institutions. This appeal is not merely for the preservation of cultural heritage but is a call to bolster our economy, support our communities, and invest in the soul of our city.

The potential ramifications of continued financial austerity are profound, jeopardizing our ability to reach over 2.5 million students and offer more than 4 million free admissions annually. Therefore, I advocate for the restoration of the November and preliminary budget cuts, totaling \$20 million in FY24 and \$15.5 million in FY25, and the baseline of one-time additional funding of \$45 million. It is crucial to ensure ongoing support for vital programs such as the Cultural After-School Adventure, the Cultural Immigration Initiative, the Coalition of Theaters of Color, and the SU-CASA arts program for seniors.

Investing in culture signifies investing in the recovery, resilience, and renewal of New York City. Let us unite to secure the flourishing future of our cultural institutions—the very heartbeat of our city. I thank you for your time, consideration, and hopeful support.

Sincerely,

Dina Rosenthal

Testimony of Janice Monger, President & CEO, Staten Island Museum  
Oversight Hearing of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup  
Relations  
March 12, 2024

The Staten Island Museum recently opened a major new exhibition, ***Taking Care: The Black Angels of Sea View Hospital*** that tells the story of Black nurses who cared for patients during the tuberculosis crisis that resonates in light of our recent pandemic. SIM opened the event to sold-out crowds and the show has been covered on *NY1*, *WNYC*, *The New York Times*, *Time Out* and more. SIM is welcoming school groups to learn about this incredible local history that had national impact. Museums play an important role in education and communicating inclusive and equitable narratives.

We are proud to serve New Yorkers and be a strong partner to NYC. Time and time again, the Staten Island Museum and fellow cultural organizations prove ourselves to deliver our missions; serve New Yorkers and visitors; be economic drivers and trusted partners to advance NYC goals. **NYC's investment in cultural institutions should be steadily rising, not drastically being cut.**

**NYC can't be the greatest city in the world without strong museums, arts and culture.** Costs of doing business, salary requirements, health insurance, minimum wage increases – **all costs are going up, yet NYC is decreasing its support.**

**0.2% of the NYC budget is already the smallest sliver, and it's being further reduced.**

**Cuts in NYC funding of the degree being experienced in FY24 and proposed for FY25 will result in job loss for New Yorkers.** SIM operates with only 15 FT staff to serve 11,000 students through school programs, maintain collections, offer compelling exhibitions and programs for 30,000 visitors, and maintain NYC buildings. **SIM will need to reduce its staff by 25% to weather this reduction in funding and that will make it incredibly difficult to be operational.**

It is quite simply unacceptable for NYC to decrease its investment and expect cultural institutions to survive and somehow take care of NYC buildings and serve New Yorkers with free and low-cost suggested admissions and programs. Serving NYC Title 1 schools for free and reduced rates is only possible with NYC as a strong, reliable partner. We don't want students to further lose out. As a not-for-profit organization, all programs we deliver are subsidized. It costs us \$500/class to serve schools, but we charge schools \$0-\$150. **Without NYC's full funding, it jeopardizes SIM's ability to subsidize programming for the 11,000 NYC schoolchildren we serve.**

Arts and culture is a LIFELINE for our youth, for low-income New Yorkers and for families throughout the five boroughs that rely on their local institutions and citywide institutions. CIGs keep kids focused, curious and busy. Cultural organizations produce the scholars, business people, artists and well-rounded adults of tomorrow.

As we look ahead to fiscal year 2025, I stand with my colleagues to demand that NYC properly invest in culture that contributes heavily to this great city. **Restore the November and preliminary cuts, that's \$20 million in FY24 and \$15.5 million in FY25, this funding includes all the program group funding as well. Restore and baseline the one-time additional CIG and**

**Program funding of \$45 million.** We cannot afford to let our cultural institutions wither away under the weight of financial uncertainty. **Please fully fund council initiatives** including the Cultural After-School Adventure program, the Cultural Immigration Initiative, Coalition of Theaters of Color and the SU-CASA arts program for seniors. Now, more than ever, we need to invest in culture as a catalyst for recovery and renewal.

Thank you for your support.

Janice Monger, President & CEO, Staten Island Museum

[jmonger@statenismuseum.org](mailto:jmonger@statenismuseum.org) 718-483-7113

**Testimony to the New York City Council  
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations  
The 92nd Street Y, New York  
March 12, 2024**

Thank you to the New York City Council and this Committee for the opportunity to share testimony on cultural outreach. **My name is Elizabeth Costa, and I am the Vice President of Government and Community Relations at The 92nd Street Y, New York (92NY), a nonprofit cultural and community center in Manhattan.**

Community service programs have been offered since 92NY's founding 150 years ago. We strive to provide high quality, innovative arts experiences that empower New Yorkers, particularly students, who will most benefit from them. While 92NY is based on the Upper East Side, we reach patrons, schools, and communities in all five boroughs.

Through our School Engagement in the Arts department, we connect about 6,500 students annually with artists of the highest caliber through school-based instruction and live events at 92NY.

For example, this year's Discovery Series offers curriculum-based dance and music education to students in grades 2-5 Citywide.

- 30 schools are enrolled this year, from 15 Council Districts.
- Each student will have 18 lessons by a 92NY teaching artist and come to 92NY's Kaufmann Concert Hall twice over the course of the year for engaging performances by the featured artists:
  - For 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> graders in Discover Dance, Ephrat Asherie Dance and Passion Fruit Dance Company, both groups former Artists in Residence in 92NY's Harkness Dance Center; and
  - For 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders in Discover Music, GRAMMY Award nominee Anat Cohen and GRAMMY Award winner Christian McBride
- 75% of partner schools have Title I status.
- The majority of our partner schools receive significant subsidies to participate in the Discovery Series.

Although 92NY's CDF funding has been reduced by 26 percent (\$47,395) since FY22, we are committed to providing significant subsidies to participating schools so that students will continue to experience high quality arts education in their classrooms and the thrill of live performances at our global community center.

We are relieved that recent City budget forecast is better than it was in December. However, the reductions implemented to this year's CDF funds still negatively affect our own ability to provide the robust level of public service we would like to offer. We ask that there be no further PEG cuts, and that the funding be fully restored and increased as we look ahead to FY25.

We are grateful that funding levels for CASA and SU-CASA programs were not decreased for FY24. Through these programs, 92NY has expanded its direct engagement with schools since 2013 and senior centers since 2018.

- Through FY24 CASA funding, 92NY will provide impactful after-school cultural programs at 7 schools in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx.

- We hold longtime partnerships with many of the partner schools, enabling us to work closely with school staff to craft a program unique to local needs. This year's CASA offerings include visual arts residencies, a percussion club, a circus extravaganza and a hip hop and house dance residency with Passionfruit Dance Company, to name just a few examples.

Building on the work accomplished in communities Citywide, 92NY increases access for students to further their skills in the arts through classes and workforce development at 92NY:

- Arts Fellowships offer 4 years of fully subsidized instruction in music, dance, or visual arts at 92NY for select public high school students; mentorship; and access to live 92NY performances.
- Teen Gems offers professional trade skills training for teens in basic jewelry-making techniques.
- Teen Producers offers a two-year paid internship in the arts at 92NY to high school juniors and seniors.

With support from the City Council, we are thrilled to have brought back Teen Arts Week, a Citywide celebration of the arts created for teens, by teens. This unique initiative creates collaborations between 92NY's Teen Producers, arts organizations across New York City and arts-interested teens.

- Teen Arts Week helps teens take advantage of the vast cultural resources of the City, in their own neighborhoods and in other boroughs.
- The program enables teens to expand their own cultural understanding and artistic skills, and explore their interests.
- In 2020 and 2021, 80% of registrants were first-time visitors to an institution.

On February 28, Teen Arts Week kicked off with a public event in 92NY's historic Kauffman Concert Hall. One teen from each borough was honored with the Community Artist Award for creative service to their community. Each recipient was recognized with a cash prize and a short video presentation spotlighting their work.

Teen Arts Week is taking place this week (March 11-17, 2024) and we hope council members will take note of the activities in each of their districts. Thirty-one leading cultural organizations across all five boroughs are offering free admission, and/or presenting free classes, workshops, and performances.

Public funding is crucial for our organization to be able to provide New Yorkers with experiences that expand thinking and expression as well as bring joy. Without it, our organizations and hundreds of others would not be able to provide the cultural services desired by its residents and visitors from around the world. We thank you for the support you have already provided. As you plan for the City's FY25 budget, we urge you to continue supporting the diversity of NYC cultural organizations by increasing the CDF funding available to DCLA during FY25.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Costa

Vice President, Government and Community Relations



## **Testimony before NYC Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations**

**3/12/24**

**Risa Shoup, Co-Executive Director  
The Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York**

Thank you Chair, Council Member Rivera, thank you to all the Council Members and staff here today, thank you to my colleagues testifying today, particularly those with whom my organization frequently collaborates on advocacy points including Dance/NYC, LX NY, NY4CA, and IndieSpace and all my colleagues here today. My name is Risa Shoup, and I am Co-Executive Director of the Alliance of Resident Theaters/New York.

My sincerest hope is that hearings like today's do indeed increase awareness about the critical importance of arts and culture to our City's physical and financial health and motivates an increase of funds and a more equitable distribution of funds. As some members of the committee are aware, A.R.T./New York and Dance/NYC have once again partnered to develop, distributed and, with the help of Carrie Blake, analyze a survey designed to explicated the impact of CDF changes and awards on the cultural ecosystem in FY23 and FY24. We do this work in support of the sector and solely with funding from our own coffers. We will share our analysis later this month when it is complete.

A.R.T./New York is a 52 year old service organization that works responsively to meet the needs of our over 650 member theaters and theatremakers throughout NYC and NYS. Specifically, we provide financial assistance, including cash grants, educational and professional development opportunities, subsidized workspace across three facilities and two boroughs, and advocacy and convening support for our members. With the exception of our subsidized space rental programs, all of our services are free. Our members range from hyperlocal theaters like Spiderwoman and Rooted Theater Companies, theatres lead by and serving folks with disabilities and neurodivergent folks like EPIC Players, off-Broadway theatres that own Broadway houses like Manhattan Theater Club, and vibrant purveyors of new talent off and off-off Broadway like the Brick and The Bushwick



Starr. Over 75% of our member theatres have a budget under \$500,000. And this reflects the reality of the broader NYC cultural ecosystem: most groups make a huge impact with a small budget. And smaller budget groups, historically, do not have access to private, philanthropic support (which is also in a multi-decade decline). Public philanthropic support should be reliable and supportive so that our ecosystem can continue to thrive - from the smallest groups to the largest groups, from Staten Island to the Bronx. Right now, CDF is neither, and our ecosystem is significantly challenged.

As has been widely reported, almost four years to the day after theatres shut their doors at the start of the COVID19 pandemic, our audiences have not returned. This, coupled with a multi-decade decline in philanthropic support and rising costs of labor, materials, and insurance, finds many theatres on the brink. A.R.T./New York proudly relaunched our historic cash flow loan program in August in partnership with SeaChange capital. The fund was exhausted by December! And this was largely due the historic delay in notification of CDF funds by DCLA, which did not come until earlier last month. This delay alone, all cuts notwithstanding, could have been avoided. Should have been avoided. And because of this delay and the significant cuts to funding, theatres are hemorrhaging cash at a time when money is hard to come by – and with a few months left in the fiscal year, there is very little time to recover with concomitant increases to contributed or earned income. As grantees, we are required to communicate promptly and clearly about our proposed applications and any changes thereof. Can we not expect the same from the agency that funds us?

And despite all these financial and operational challenges, theatres continue to prioritize maintaining thousands of jobs in our sector. We continue to provide space for community and creative expression for New York's under-resourced populations. We continue to be the reason that many people visit, move to, and stay in NYC. In a world currently suffering from multiple violent conflicts with no end in sight, theatre is a place to embrace vulnerability, to develop empathy through story-telling, and to envision bold new methods and solutions as we suspend our our collective disbelief and belief, if only for 120 minutes, that yes, Peter Pan can fly, and yes, we can find a way through the thorniest obstacles.

New Yorkers don't need theatre. New York is theatre. Without it, we will cease to be the magnetic City that drives world culture and world economies.

And to do so, we require collaboration across all sectors of arts and culture and beyond, and it is with this in mind that I submit this testimony today. We demand increased support, including more clear directions and swifter timelines for notification and procurement, from the Mayor and you, our colleagues in City Council. Specifically:

- **Reverse** the November and Preliminary Budget Cuts to culture - that's \$20 million in FY24 and \$15.5M in FY25.
- **At a minimum, restore and baseline** last year's one-time addition of \$45 million to CIGs and all cultural groups across the city with an ideal goal to increase the Arts and Cultural portion of the NYC budget to 1% of the total by 2030.
- **Fully fund City Council initiatives** including CASA for school kids, Su Casa for seniors, Cultural Immigrant Initiative, and the Coalition of Theaters of Color.
- **Ensure the implementation of transparency law 1184** to ensure accessibility and usable data from DCLA so our sector can continue to partner with the agency to support equitable distribution of the CDF Fund.

Thank you for your support and consideration.

Thank you, Chair Rivera and members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs. My name is Steven Payne, and I am Director of The Bronx County Historical Society, a member of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG). Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your ongoing support of arts and culture across New York City.

The 34 cultural institutions, large and small, that make up the CIG are bastions of culture and belonging throughout New York City and greatly enhance the quality of life for all New Yorkers. This we do directly, by providing educational resources, programming, venue space, after-school and weekend enrichment opportunities, childcare, green space, and many other services to our communities. Members of the CIG also benefit our communities by employing 15,700 full- and part-time staff and 6,000 artists, educators, and other per diem staff. We generate \$110 billion in economic activity for the City—13% of its total revenue—by being a primary attraction for out-of-city, out-of-state, and international visitors to our City. Moreover, the CIGs directly spend \$500 million annually on local vendors for goods and services, benefitting our small businesses and powering our local economies.

By any measure, the CIG and other cultural institutions are major contributors to holistic quality of life, jobs creation, and economic growth in New York City. Despite this, the baseline for CIGs has not increased since 2009. Indeed, cultural spending today comprises only around 0.2% of the City's annual budget. And now we face the prospect of an even smaller piece of the budget. We are at a critical juncture for our City: will we prioritize fostering holistic quality of life in our neighborhoods and sustainable, long-term job growth and revenue generation by investing in culture?

To put some numbers on the table: although we are the smallest of the CIG budget-wise, during FY23, The Bronx County Historical Society served 202,657 individuals, virtually and in-person, across our four sites. 99.6% of these interactions, or 201,847, were free to the public. These included museum visits, a community garden and biweekly free farmers markets, research consultations, public installations of our exhibits in NYPL branch libraries and institutions of higher learning, virtual book talks, oral history recordings and public viewings, block parties, film screenings, poetry performances, visits to our research library and archives, school programs about hip hop history and culture, mural making, walking tours, and much more. This current fiscal year, we are on track to reach 270,000 individuals, in spite of the tremendous challenges caused by the unexpected at-adoption cut to the CIG and two in-year cuts. Although we are currently on track to grow in public reach this year, despite the budget cuts and consequent staffing reductions, our institutional elasticity has limits. With further budget cuts, The Bronx County Historical Society's wide-ranging, almost entirely free-to-the-public work will be diminished and jeopardized, as will the upkeep of our two historic house museums and library and archives.

For these reasons, the cultural community respectfully requests the reversal of the following cuts:

- 1) the \$20 million cuts to CIGs and Programs in the November and January PEGs this fiscal year;

- 2) And the \$15.5 million proposed cuts to CIGs and Programs in the preliminary budget for FY2025.

The cultural community also requests the restoration and baselining of one-time additions to CIGs and Programs equaling \$45 million, which includes the \$5 million one-time addition that was mistakenly cut from CIGs at adoption this fiscal year.

We ask for a full restoration of all funding for cultural Council initiatives including the Cultural After-School Adventures Program (CASA), the Cultural Immigrant Initiative, Coalition of Theaters of Color (CTC) and the SU-CASA Arts Programs for Senior

Please ensure our organizations can develop and maintain their workforces and public programming sustainably. I join with my colleagues and peers across the city and respectfully ask that the budget reflects the tremendous value that our institutions and our partners at the Department of Cultural Affairs bring to our city. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and for your leadership and advocacy.

the  
**BRONX OPERA**  
company

EST. 1967

**BENJAMIN SPIERMAN, general director**

**5 minerva place, #2-j  
bronx, new york 10468**

**[www.bronxopera.org](http://www.bronxopera.org)**

**(718) 365-4209  
info@bronxopera.org**

Date: March 12, 2024

To: Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

From: Benjamin Spierman, General Director – Bronx Opera Company

Re: City Arts Funding

Good afternoon. My name is Benjamin Spierman, and I serve as General Director of the Bronx Opera Company. Now in the midst of our Fifty-Seventh Season, Bronx Opera is the only opera company (other than our much larger sibling at Lincoln Center) to produce opera in each year since our founding in 1967. We are proud of that, and we are also proud of our participation in the New York Opera Alliance consortium.

I'm here to say very simply that the choices made in the current city budget have put my company in an incredibly difficult position. In an addition, the delay in informing all of us of has made things harder by depriving us of the chance to plan pre-season. But what does it matter? What does a \$20,000 cut really do? I'm glad you asked.

\$20,000 means one fewer orchestra rehearsal. It means two fewer days onstage. It means people bring their own costumes instead of us making them. It means that there's no makeup or wardrobe specialist backstage. It means that nothing new is built scenically. What do these cuts have in common? They each force us to pay fewer people. Fewer artists, fewer technicians, fewer instrumentalists. Fewer professionals working, fewer New Yorkers working. Fewer people in New York who are able to pay taxes here. Fewer tolls paid by drivers. Fewer metrocard purchased...or OMNY fares paid. Fewer artists

the  
**BRONX OPERA**  
company

EST. 1967

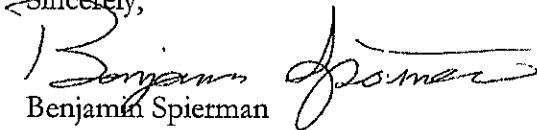
**BRONX OPERA COMPANY**

**Page 2**

paying for meals at city restaurants, or food carts. More artists, more people who can't afford to stay here. A continuation of the trend we saw in during the pandemic, in which many artists left New York. Fewer reasons to move here, fewer reasons to stay here. I'm a native, and I'll probably stay. But these budget cuts make New York a less livable place, and a less affordable place for artists to stay.

And that should scare us. A lot.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benjamin Spierman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Benjamin Spierman

General Director

Bronx Opera Company

**Contact**1850 Amsterdam Avenue  
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**NY City Council Budget Hearing Testimony  
March 12, 2024**

My name is Ty Jones, and I'm the Producing Artistic Director of The Classical Theatre of Harlem. I'd like to open by saying thank you to Chair Carlina Rivera and members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations. I've seen members of the City Council at our free summer productions in Marcus Garvey Park, at the Skirball Center, and at last month's Harlem Arts Alliance gathering, and I want to say that I see and deeply value the level of your engagement with the cultural life of the City. Sophokles, Virgil, Shakespeare, Mozart, and more would not have been able to accomplish what they did without the support of visionary public servants such as yourselves.

Taking inspiration from the Harlem Renaissance that flourished one hundred years ago today, we believe in the ability of the arts to uplift a community: physically, economically, and spiritually. We have seen how, by putting on a play, we have converted a center of indigence in Marcus Garvey Park use into a lovely, enriching, family-friendly space. Dozens of Harlem entrepreneurs can attest that our art provides them with opportunities for their businesses to prosper that didn't otherwise exist. And we have seen the children of Harlem come back night after night to see the same show, becoming deeply familiar with the great works of literature because actors who look and sound like them allow them to see themselves in ancient stories that remain relevant today.

CTH has adopted a deeply community-centered approach to our work, achieving what we do through the connections we are able to leverage. By working with the City Parks Department and our peer nonprofits like the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance, United Palace Theatre, and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, we are able to secure performance space for free. Similarly, marketing partnerships with peer cultural groups, churches, and NGOs pack our events to capacity. In lieu of a gift shop, we spotlight microbusiness entrepreneurs offering unique Harlem-made goods, and work with Uptown Grand Central to provide support infrastructure like tents, tables, and electricity. To expand audiences and make the most of

our presence in the park, we invite peer cultural groups to make use of our infrastructure, offering pre-show concerts with Jazzmobile, the Harlem Chamber Players, and the Young People's Chorus of NYC. In learning to do our own work by involving everyone in it, CTH has become an essential institution that holds together the social, economic, and cultural fabric of our part of New York City.

Social justice in our placekeeping work is also profoundly important to us, not only in the content of our plays, but as we seek the means of establishing a family-friendly atmosphere for our work. We recognize the park penury as part of our community, and respectfully offer free water, grooming essentials, and access to healthcare if they desire. By design, CTH productions are accessible to anyone who shows up, for free and with no reservation required. This encourages repeat viewership, multi-generational family audiences, wholesome date nights, and the participation of block residents and passersby. Over the years, we've cultivated what the Executive Director of the Theatre Communications Group calls, "among the most racially and generationally diverse audiences in the nation."

Studies have shown that CTH's presence in Marcus Garvey Park generates half a million dollars in economic activity for our partners and neighborhood businesses in July alone. Our 25th Anniversary this summer coincides with renovations to the Delacorte that make us New York's only Shakespeare in a Park theatre in 2024. As such, we expect audiences to increase by as much as 50%, or 30,000 people.

Welcoming so many new visitors to Harlem this year, we are working with our partners to help position the neighborhood - once again, a century later - as an essential destination in the cultural life of New York City: a *Renaissance Reborn*.

As you allocate public resources, I would like you to consider the extraordinary return on investment that The Classical Theatre of Harlem and our peers offer the City. Our work directly contributes to making our neighborhoods feel safe and vibrant, attractive places to live, prosperous places to do business, and inspiring places to nurture the next generation.

Thank you.



# THE FRICK COLLECTION

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## **Testimony for the NYC City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Hearing of March 12, 2024**

Chair Rivera and Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the City's Fiscal Year 2025 budget and funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA).

This testimony is submitted on behalf of The Frick Collection, an internationally recognized museum and library that has been part of the cultural life of New York City for almost 90 years.

As Speaker Adams noted in her recent State of the City address, the cultural sector generates \$110 billion in economic activity for New York City. It is a driver of tourism, and one of the main reasons why people choose to live, work, and open businesses in New York City. Additionally, our arts and cultural organizations serve as anchors for safe, thriving, and connected communities.

Cultural institutions play a critical educational role, offering arts education to students from grade school to graduate school, as well as to people not formally enrolled in a course of study. As an example, the Frick offers guided museum visits for students from public, charter, and Title 1 schools in all five boroughs, as well as from public colleges and universities, supported by funding from the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA).

DCLA supports a wide range of institutions, across all five boroughs, by providing subsidies and funding for programs and capital projects. Essentially, it funds an ecosystem, whose individual organizations vary in size, the programming they offer, the communities they serve, but all of which are vital to a vibrant city.

While DCLA is an essential resource for the cultural sector, it receives less than half of one percent of the city's annual budget.

Therefore, we would like to request that the City Council:

- Reverse the November and Preliminary Budget Cuts to culture: \$20 million in FY 24 and \$15.5 million in FY25
- Restore and baseline last year's one-time addition of \$45 million to CIGs and all cultural groups across the City
- Fully fund City Council initiatives (CASA, Su Casa, Coalition of Theaters of Color, Cultural Immigrant Initiative) which depend on this funding to serve vulnerable and underserved communities.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,



Elizabeth Rose Daly

Head of Visitor Services and Government Affairs



**Cultural Institutions Group - Manhattan  
Testimony to the New York City Council  
Cultural Affairs Preliminary Budget Hearing  
March 12, 2024**

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Thank you to Speaker Adams, and Chairs Brannan, and Rivera for convening this hearing and the opportunity to testify before the City Council. I am Norah Yahya, the Senior Government Affairs Officer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and I am here today, in my role as the Vice Chair of the Manhattan CIGs.

The Manhattan CIGs consists of some of the foremost visited and regarded institutions in the nation, drawing visitors from around the world and serving as an engine for workforce development, education and the tourism economy in New York City. These institutions include; the American Museum of Natural History, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, El Museo del Barrio, Museum of the City of New York, Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York City Ballet, New York City Center, Public Theater and the Studio Museum in Harlem. Together these groups serve millions of visitors annually, hundreds of thousands of K-12 school children, and devote programming at little or no cost to the public, among other offerings.

Due to funding cuts imposed by the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA), CIG institutions have faced disruptions that have drastically affected jobs, programs, hours, and operations within their institutions. Funding losses this year include the \$5 million reduction from DCLA at Budget Adoption as well as the two rounds of budget cuts that total \$20 million in Fiscal 2024 for the CIGs and cultural programs combined. The CIG cut total this year is \$13.3 million, from the baseline budget that hasn't been increased for over a decade.

The Manhattan CIGs have tried to absorb the impact of these cuts by implementing hiring freezes, reducing positions, and using furloughs and hour reductions. In addition, public programming has been curtailed, including programs that engage local and underprivileged communities, education programs, and career development and internship programs. As a result of the City's cuts, CIG institutions have faced drastic operational impacts which include reductions in new infrastructure, maintenance, renovations, impacts to daily operations, and loss of resources, and potential reduction of operating hours and times in which the institutions can be open to serving the public.

The impact of these cuts is far-reaching; while major layoffs have not yet been implemented, contract educators and teaching artists are affected by reductions in programming and scaling

back of services, in addition to the youth and families that rely on these services for education and enrichment. Organizations like the Museum of the City of New York, which has ten positions impacted by a hiring freeze, could affect an additional 5-10 positions. After the January cuts, at least two positions will be at risk of staff layoffs. In addition, they have almost fully eliminated their CTLE-Credit professional development programs for NYC educators. Carnegie Hall will be canceling a free citywide concert in collaboration with the Brooklyn Public Library, Lincoln Center faces an eighteen percent reduction in funding which will result in the loss of two months of programming. The Metropolitan Museum of Art has remained closed on Wednesdays since reopening from the pandemic, partly due to staffing shortages and the cost of operations.

Further cuts to arts and cultural organizations in Manhattan and around the City will come at the detriment of the industry, the public and robust support of the education, tourism and economic development sectors which rely on these groups as their engine. It would be devastating for workers, visitors, members of the public, children, and families who rely on the programs and services as pillars of their livelihoods and communities throughout the five boroughs and beyond.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this body concerning the FY 2025 Preliminary Budget on behalf of Manhattan CIGs and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Norah Yahya  
Manhattan Delegation Chair  
Cultural Institutions Group

**MUSEUM OF  
JEWISH HERITAGE**  
A LIVING MEMORIAL  
TO THE HOLOCAUST



Edmond J. Safra Plaza | 36 Battery Place  
New York, NY 10280  
646.437.4202 | [mjhnyc.org](http://mjhnyc.org)

March 12, 2024

Committee on Cultural Affairs

Dear Members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs:

Thank you, Chair Rivera, and Members of the Committee, for hosting today's hearing.

My name is Brennan Sumner, and I am honored to submit testimony today on behalf of The Museum of Jewish Heritage –A Living Memorial to the Holocaust.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage educates diverse visitors about Jewish life before, during, and after the Holocaust. We are committed to the crucial mission of teaching about what unchecked hate and bigotry can do. We are dedicated to education, remembrance, and serving the public by providing free Holocaust education.

The Museum is an essential resource for combatting bigotry and antisemitism in New York City. We provide free admission for NYC public schools, CUNY students, and IDNYC cardholders. Our Holocaust Curriculum, developed with support from the Department of Education, is a free and trustworthy resource for teachers. In October 2023 we opened our first-ever exhibition for grades 3-6 [Courage to Act: Rescue in Denmark](#). This world-class exhibition has expanded our free Holocaust education programs to younger students for the first time. Additionally, as part of our commitment to removing barriers the Museum subsidizes free transportation to and from our Museum for schools in need so that all can access our educational resources regardless of means. Additionally, the Museum organizes over 100 signature public programs, open to the public for free including the annual [New York Jewish Book Festival](#) and this year's first-ever [Spring Equinox Festival](#).

Council funding has helped us as we rebuild our audience to 2019 levels. Prior to COVID, we served 200,000 people per year and were open 6 days per week. This year, we are open four days per week and served 143,000 people in 2023 including 40,000 students. Council and Speakers initiative funding provides critical support for our free educational programming and security.

In a growing climate of Holocaust denial and misinformation, education is our first line of defense. The Museum of Jewish Heritage is deeply grateful for the Council's support of our work. We urge your continued support for the essential work of the City's entire cultural sector.

**Brennan Sumner**

Government Liaison | [Bsumner@mjhnyc.org](mailto:Bsumner@mjhnyc.org)



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF THE MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**HEARING OF THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS**

**New York City Council**

**March 12, 2024**

On behalf of the Museum of the City of New York (MCNY), I am pleased to submit this written testimony to the New York City Council and the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations.

I write to you today as the Director & President of the Museum of the City of New York, one of the 34 essential neighborhood-based city-owned cultural institutions, also known as the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG). As a New Yorker, I share the concerns of my fellow CIG members and the many advocates and supporters of arts and culture in our city that this year's budget cuts and any future reduction of funding to our sector will have a devastating impact on our economy, our communities, and our city's standing as a world class cultural leader.

The Museum of the City of New York, located in District 8 in the East Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan, is a beacon for history, culture, and community. Our exhibitions and programs engage hundreds of thousands of visitors including K-12 students and teachers, national and international visitors, and New Yorkers from across the five boroughs each year. Over 30% of our visitors are served at no charge, including children under the age of 19, and more than half of all visitors come at a discount.

Our work champions New York City, fostering shared identity for New Yorkers; promoting civic engagement; putting New York values at the center of American history; and generating economic activity for our neighborhood and our city. For the past 100 years, the Museum has served as the city's storyteller, preserving, interpreting, and celebrating the diverse and multifaceted communities of our great city.

Cuts to funding MCNY receives from the City of New York resulted in the elimination of Thursday evening hours at the Museum, a loss of roughly 200 service hours per year. MCNY has eliminated most CTLE-credit professional development programs for New York City educators.



With the exception of Chancellor's Day programs, the Museum is not providing this essential service to teachers and the full-time *Manager of Professional Learning* position has been cut. Programs for New York City youth also remain at risk – MCNY has significantly reduced nearly all youth and teen programming and does not anticipate providing any additional teen programming in the coming year.

MCNY had hoped to expand Museum hours in FY25, including increasing days of service and weekend hours, which remain reduced from our pre-pandemic schedule. The Museum also hoped to hire 3-5 new Museum Educators in FY25 to increase the number of students served from 25,000 annually to up to 40,000 annually. Any additional funding cuts will delay this expansion, including the launch of new field trip content connected with the first major New York City exhibition about Shirley Chisholm, opening in June 2024.

This is a critical time for the cultural community. Any threats to culture, across organizations big and small, have rippling effects on the city's economy and workforce. The cultural community is a major economic driver, impacting revenue, tourism, and local economies – all of which are put at risk by these and any future cuts. Investing in culture promises a lifeline for our communities as arts and culture organizations are foundational to providing access to safe, publicly accessible spaces for all New Yorkers.

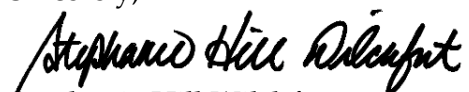
As a member of the CIG, MCNY is only one of many cultural organizations whose staff, visitors, and community deeply feel the effects of the City's disinvestment across our sector. The Museum requests that the Council urge the City to:

- **Reverse the November and Preliminary Budget Cuts to culture**, \$20 million in FY24 for CIGs and Programs and \$15.5 in FY25.
- **Restore and baseline** the one-time addition CIGs and Programs, \$45 million.
- **Fully fund council initiatives** including the Cultural After-School Adventures Program (CASA), the Cultural Immigrant Initiative, Coalition of Theaters of Color (CTC) and the SU-CASA Arts Programs for Seniors.

Organizations such as MCNY and our partners in the CIG touch every aspect of daily life—from education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to work together with the nonprofit sector towards creative solutions, not hinder us further.

Many thanks to the Council for receiving this testimony and for your leadership on these issues.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Hill Wilchfort

*Ronay Menschel Director and President*



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES & INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS RE: THE FY 2025 PRELIMINARY BUDGET

March 12, 2024

Thank you so much to Speaker Adams, Council Member Carlina Rivera, Chair of this Committee and all the committee members for the opportunity to speak on the devastating budget proposal for libraries in FY25. My name is Lauren Comito, I'm a librarian here in NYC and the Executive Director of Urban Librarians Unite, a 501c3 professional organization based in Brooklyn that focuses on supporting library workers in cities across the US.

Every spring, for the last fourteen years, I have been involved in advocacy to restore funding to libraries. Every year during this painful process, we come to City Hall and someone inevitably says that a budget is a statement of priorities. I would take it further to say that a budget is also a demonstration of vision and leadership. The FY25 preliminary budget, particularly when paired with yet another year of proposed mid-year cuts, demonstrates neither of these things. The Adams administration has abdicated its responsibility to provide a cohesive vision for our City in favor of chaos.

Seven budget cuts in 2 years have left providers like libraries unable to plan even a full six months of services; much less an entire fiscal year. It has become, yet again, the burden of this body to save service that New Yorkers count on. The so-called "budget dance" is a transparent, tired, unnecessary exercise in how not to support a service nearly everyone agrees is critical to a strong City.

This Saturday a patron came to my reference desk with a journal article and a circled citation. They were looking for access to another journal article. These are usually the fun questions, a deep question where a librarian can really get into a hunt for information. I dug deeper. I asked what they wanted to know.

Their real question was: given the diagnosis they had just gotten, how long do they have left to live?

Libraries aren't just for assignments and reports in academic settings—which are certainly important in their own right. But they can also be critical in giving people answers to questions that, to them, are a matter of literal life and death. Under Mayor Adams' budget proposal we will lose at least half of our Saturday services. This patron and many others like them—who come to libraries with pressing questions, or for help applying for emergency food assistance, or for their use as cooling centers on sweltering summer days would be greeted with nothing. Not help, not an article, or the compassion of another human being—just a locked gate.

Today I implore the council to hold the line on these cuts. Fight back against these cuts. Restore Library funding so we can keep being this human connection between our neighbors and the overwhelming universe of information that they really need. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.



**Testimony to the Committee on Cultural Affairs,  
Libraries & International Intergroup Relations  
John Calvelli, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs  
Wildlife Conservation Society  
March 12, 2024**

Thank you, Chairwoman Rivera and members of the Committee. I am John Calvelli, Executive Vice President for Public Affairs at the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and a member of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG). Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee.

The Cultural Institutions Group is a coalition of 34 cultural institutions that are charged with providing excellent stewardship for many of the most important New York City owned properties throughout the five boroughs. We too are known as institutional anchors in our boroughs. Our group includes some of the most vital cultural, science, and artistic institutions in the world. Our organizations are the core of the cultural economy that makes New York the greatest city in the world. New Yorkers are at home in our buildings, our halls, our classrooms, and on our stages. The diversity of our offerings is our greatest strength, and we strive to create equitable cultural opportunities for New Yorkers in every borough.

With that said, I testify concerned about the continued deep cuts to our neighborhood-based city-owned, non-profit managed cultural institutions. As two of the 34 institutions that make up the CIG - WCS's Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium - have been negatively impacted by \$1.7 million in cuts resulting from the City's November and January PEGs. We are just one of many in this cultural space who have been affected by these PEGs, and therefore, the cultural community requests that the City **reverse the November and Preliminary budget cuts to culture, (\$20 million in FY24 for CIGs and Programs and \$15.5 in FY25), restore and baseline the one-time addition CIGs and programs at \$45 million, and fully fund council initiatives including the Cultural After-School Adventures Program (CASA), the Cultural Immigrant Initiative, Coalition of Theaters of Color (CTC) and the SU-CASA Arts Programs for Seniors.**

Cultural institutions serve as major economic drivers, generating \$110 billion in economic activity and supporting local vendors with approximately \$500 million in spending. We employ 15,700 full and part-time employees, including 5,800 union members, providing family-sustaining living wage jobs. We serve not only as tourist destinations, but also crucial hubs for family engagement, particularly in some of the city's most economically challenged districts. At WCS, our collections help save endangered species, educate, and inspire tens of thousands of teachers and children in environmental science, and help us maintain our programming and interactive educational experiences for diverse constituencies.

Beyond the economy, CIGs have a profound impact on the neighborhoods we serve. Our work with these communities has been holistic, addressing a broad range of needs for young people in New York. For WCS, some examples of our impact include our *Community Access Program (CAP)*, where we provide thousands of seniors, youth, individuals with special needs, and community-based organizations with complimentary access to our parks. WCS has held long partnerships with city and state agencies to provide educational opportunities and experiences to thousands of children and families.

WCS recognizes New York City youth as future change makers and leaders who reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of our city. Thanks to City Council support, WCS has been able to fully implement and expand the *WCS STEM Career Lattice*, which is an innovative tiered engagement model that provides WCS youth, ages 14-





24, with paid leadership opportunities that scaffold their professional experience and prepare them to transition into paid positions in WCS and our industry.

As one of the largest employers of youth in the city annually, 1,900 youth are actively involved in a myriad of enriching programs as part of our WCS Career Lattice initiative across WCS's five New York City parks. Our youth reflect our communities – 82% identify as people of color, they speak 46 languages, and the majority are or will be 1st generation college students.

Since the inception of the Lattice in 2018, we've achieved significant milestones. Let me share some highlights from the past year alone:

1. **Fostering Interest in Science Careers:** An impressive 85 percent of the youth who completed our programs expressed their intention to pursue a career in science – this in part is due to our career awareness workshops and more importantly our efforts to introduce youth to the myriad of degree programs in our educational institution partners.
2. **Elevating Community Incomes:** Collectively, WCS youth earned over \$5 million at our parks, channeling crucial resources into local communities.
3. **Achieving Equity in Internships:** WCS has devoted substantial efforts to ensure equal access and equitable compensation in our internship programs.
4. **Job Creation:** In recent years, we've added over 100 positions to support our ongoing mission, all occupied by youth from our partner high schools and colleges in New York City.
5. **Expanded Partnerships:** We are leaders in the *SCI Network NYC* - a partnership with the city's other science based cultural institutions to support the advancement of diverse youth to the over 900 paid internship opportunities that our organizations offer.

However, our impact transcends mere statistics; it's about creating inclusive spaces where young individuals from diverse backgrounds feel seen, valued and inspired to pursue STEM and conservation careers. We firmly believe that to fully embrace opportunities, young people must feel that their culture, language, knowledge, and community are not just acknowledged but celebrated. This inclusivity is made possible through partnerships with STEM-based cultural institutions. We learn from each, share best practices, and do so in authentic ways.

This is a critical time for the cultural community. The \$20 million in cuts to the current year's cultural budget is detrimental to the continued success of all the community programs that we're able to put forth. We call on the City Council to continue to be a champion of arts and culture in our great city; reverse the November and Preliminary Budget cuts to culture, that's \$20 million in FY24 and \$15.5 in FY25 and restore and baseline the one-time addition for the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) and programs at \$45 million, and fully fund council initiatives.



IN THE KEY OF *love*

**Young People's Chorus of New York City®**

**Francisco J. Núñez, Founder/Artistic Director**

37 West 65th Street, 2nd Floor

New York, NY 10023

T: 212.289.7779 | F: 212.289.6918 | [www.ypc.org](http://www.ypc.org)

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## **Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries & Int'l Intergroup Relations Preliminary Budget Testimony**

**Submitted by:**

**Francisco J. Núñez, Artistic Director, Young People's Director of NYC**  
**March 12, 2024**

Thank you so much for this opportunity to provide testimony today. I am Francisco J. Núñez, Founder and current Artistic Director of the Young People's Chorus of New York City (YPC).

YPC has been in existence for over 27 years and currently provides 2,375 children aged 8-18 with life-changing music education, academic support and performance opportunities. We were one of the many organizations that saw our Cultural Development Fund (CDF) funding zeroed out, after nearly 20 years of significant support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. This reduction of nearly \$120,000 is going to have a significant impact on our operations.

YPC is a lifeline for our young participants who hail from low-income, underserved neighborhoods across the five boroughs. In addition to the amazing choral education programs that we provide, YPC offers a phone and screen-free environment where young people sing, dance, laugh, and connect with one another in person. Through our programs, children discover the power of their voice, forge lifelong friendships, and gain the confidence to pursue their dreams and aspirations. This connection is more important than ever as we see children continuing to struggle with the after affects of the pandemic and grapple with anxiety, self-esteem, and even suicidal ideation.

At YPC, we provide so much more than a world class music education. Through our College Bound initiative we provide individualized college preparatory services, resulting in 100% of participants graduating from high school on time and gaining acceptance to college. But perhaps even more importantly, we help children develop social skills, become well adjusted young adults, and provide a loving and caring environment where they can flourish.

Based on the fact that we received \$0 in CDF funding, we are currently evaluating to what extent we will need to roll back this program which provides such critical academic support to our students.

In addition to cuts to our College Bound program, we anticipate the following additional impacts:

- Reduced tuition subsidies for our choristers in the greatest financial need;
- Reduced summer tour subsidies for our choristers - giving fewer the opportunity to represent New York City culture on a global scale;
- Reduced fiscal stability for YPC as a whole - as we explore the need for potentially high interest loans to sustain our general operating reserves.

In light of this devastating cut, I wanted to provide you with our FY25 Discretionary requests:

- \$100,000 Speaker Request (*All programming; New Horizons chorus*)
- \$30,000 Cultural Immigrant Initiative (*New Horizons chorus*)
- \$20k in Delegation Funding (*School Chorus programs in Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, Bronx*)

All of this funding would go towards sustaining our current operations. We would also like to implement a new choral after school program for newly arrived immigrants to New York City. This pilot program, called *New Horizons* will not move forward without additional support from the Council.

Additionally and standing in solidarity with all of our arts and culture colleagues, we support the FY25 \$45M ask of baselined funding and a complete restoration of all initiative funding. We currently have 4 CASA partnerships and would very much like to renew those partnerships and secure additional ones in FY25.

We thank you for your consideration of this request. With your support, we hope to have a Queens Museum that better serves the growing needs of the Queens community.

Thank you for your time.

Cultural Affairs Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget, and urge the Council to hold the line on #CareNotCuts.

I am demanding that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal – and if he does not, I demand that my council member, Speaker Adrienne Adams and Finance Chair Justin Brannan use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that a budget will not pass unless it reflects these priorities.

Mayor Adams has proposed more than \$2.55 billion of budget cuts that could have devastating consequences on essential services such as libraries (\$36M), early educational 3-K programs (\$567M), CUNY (\$60M), education (\$1B), adult literacy (\$24M) and more. Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC budgets go up. NYPD is slated to spend 2x its overtime budget at \$740M. DOC budget is going up by \$35M, and spending \$138M a year on staff mismanagement.

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

New Yorkers need #CareNotCuts at a minimum so they can continue to have access to the crucial city services they rely on. #CareNotCuts means:

\*No cuts to school budgets. Restore funding and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Invest in student mental health, community schools, and restorative justice programs.

\*No cuts to CUNY. Restore funding, faculty, and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Increase funding for advisors, ASAP, and MetroCard access for student support and retention.

\*No cuts to libraries. Restore funding cut by Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts.

\*No cuts to adult literacy programs. Restore and baseline funding to keep programs whole and invest in greater resources, services, and supports for adult literacy students.

\*No cuts to 3K. Recommit to universal 3K. Fulfill salary parity for the early childhood workforce.

\*No cuts to the provision of social services, such as housing services and health or mental health services. Invest in social safety net and housing solutions for low-income New Yorkers.

\*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.

\*Reduce DOC's bloated budget. Invest in supportive housing and alternatives to incarceration.

By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

Alia Ganaposki

[queenalia@hotmail.com](mailto:queenalia@hotmail.com)

New York, New York 11102

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Amelie Gould <amelieg1008@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 22, 2024 1:37 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] New York City's Appaling Death of Libraries

[REDACTED]

I don't think I love anything more than reading. It sickens me to see the budget cuts happening in New York City, especially with how they are affecting our libraries. These libraries are more than just places for learning, they are sanctuaries. But recently, that has not been the case. I am urging you for your help. When I think of a quiet and safe place, my local public library is first to come to mind. My friends and I spend hours in there as an escape from the reality of life. There is so much that a library can provide for our community, and these libraries need the funding that is being given to the SRG and other similar groups. Please, PLEASE reconsider your decisions with knowledge-seeking children, teenagers, and adults who need a safe third space in mind. We need it more than you think.  
Thank you.

Cultural Affairs Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget, and urge the Council to hold the line on #CareNotCuts.

I am demanding that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal – and if he does not, I demand that my council member, Speaker Adrienne Adams and Finance Chair Justin Brannan use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that a budget will not pass unless it reflects these priorities.

Mayor Adams has proposed more than \$2.55 billion of budget cuts that could have devastating consequences on essential services such as libraries (\$36M), early educational 3-K programs (\$567M), CUNY (\$60M), education (\$1B), adult literacy (\$24M) and more. Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC budgets go up. NYPD is slated to spend 2x its overtime budget at \$740M. DOC budget is going up by \$35M, and spending \$138M a year on staff mismanagement.

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

New Yorkers need #CareNotCuts at a minimum so they can continue to have access to the crucial city services they rely on. #CareNotCuts means:

\*No cuts to school budgets. Restore funding and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Invest in student mental health, community schools, and restorative justice programs.

\*No cuts to CUNY. Restore funding, faculty, and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Increase funding for advisors, ASAP, and MetroCard access for student support and retention.

- \*No cuts to libraries. Restore funding cut by Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts.
- \*No cuts to adult literacy programs. Restore and baseline funding to keep programs whole and invest in greater resources, services, and supports for adult literacy students.
- \*No cuts to 3K. Recommit to universal 3K. Fulfill salary parity for the early childhood workforce.
- \*No cuts to the provision of social services, such as housing services and health or mental health services. Invest in social safety net and housing solutions for low-income New Yorkers.
- \*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.
- \*Reduce DOC's bloated budget. Invest in supportive housing and alternatives to incarceration.

By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

Andrea Castellano  
[firstcastellano@gmail.com](mailto:firstcastellano@gmail.com)  
RIDGEWOOD, New York 11385



Cultural Affairs Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I believe all New Yorkers deserve access to housing, livelihood, and resources to thrive. And I am OUTRAGED that Mayor Eric Adams continues to slash the budgets of and underinvest in programs my neighbors and I depend on.

I demand that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal. If he does not, I demand that my council member and Speaker Adrienne Adams use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that any budget that passes reflects key People's Budget priorities.

This includes:

- Investing in capital infrastructure for public and affordable housing, schools, and CUNY colleges
- Investing in and protecting public education, CUNY, childcare, libraries, social safety nets, and housing from budget cuts and restoring previous cuts
- Divesting from wasteful spending at the NYPD and DOC, and directing funds to community safety, supportive housing, mental health, and alternatives to incarceration

Our full list of People's Budget demands are here: <https://peoplesplan.nyc/2024-peoples-budget-campaign/>

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' previous and proposed cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, less parents with the childcare support they need to stay in the city, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams, and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

April Billips

[aprillbillips26@gmail.com](mailto:aprillbillips26@gmail.com)

New York, New York 11221

Cultural Affairs Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I believe all New Yorkers deserve access to housing, livelihood, and resources to thrive. And I am OUTRAGED that Mayor Eric Adams continues to slash the budgets of and underinvest in programs my neighbors and I depend on.

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This includes:

- Investing in capital infrastructure for public and affordable housing, schools, and CUNY colleges
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Arcadio Borrero

[arcadioborrero298@gmail.com](mailto:arcadioborrero298@gmail.com)

New York, New York 11103

March 11, 2024

To: NY City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

C: Councilmember Shaun Abreu

Fm: Brian Reilly, Resident, NYC

### Riverside Dr  
NY. NY 10025

SUBJ: Opposition to Cuts to Library and Arts Organizations

Please accept the following testimony to the Tuesday March 12, 2024 12:00pm Hearing:

As a concerned resident, I would like to voice my displeasure at 6 successive budget cuts to NY Public Libraries. One of the most democratic and broadly beneficial innovations in the United States, public libraries produce far more benefits to residents, the economy of New York City and New York State , and the well-being of our society.

In “the greatest city in the world” we should not be cutting funding to libraries. Ever.

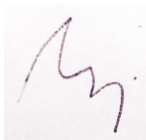
I urge the committee, the council and the mayor to immediately take actions to reverse the cuts but, moreover, convey the value of the public library system to all in public service—particularly elected officials. That this has happened six times during this administration shows not a justifying fiscal crises but a lack of priorities, and dare I say the patterns suggests a systemic failure in leadership.

It is not enough to engage residents to reverse such cuts, it is incumbent on policy makers, staff, and leadership to understand the value of such a service and give it due priority when *developing* a budget.

If data cannot be found to validate my claim—I would suggest it should be sought by staff and widely disseminated internally. I believe the former Bloomberg administration was adept at data-driven government and that organization could surely help to quickly find appropriate and actionable data.

Please act within your power to reverse these cuts, keep libraries open on Sunday, and to communicate to your constituents the reason for the reversal, its benefits, and your commitment to policies that benefit, not hurt, members of our community.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brian Reilly', is written on a light-colored background.

Brian Reilly

Cultural Affairs Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

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I demand that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal. If he does not, I demand that my council member and Speaker Adrienne Adams use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that any budget that passes reflects key People's Budget priorities.

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Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams, and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

Diane Aronson

[dianabrooklyn15@yahoo.com](mailto:dianabrooklyn15@yahoo.com)

New York, New York 11218

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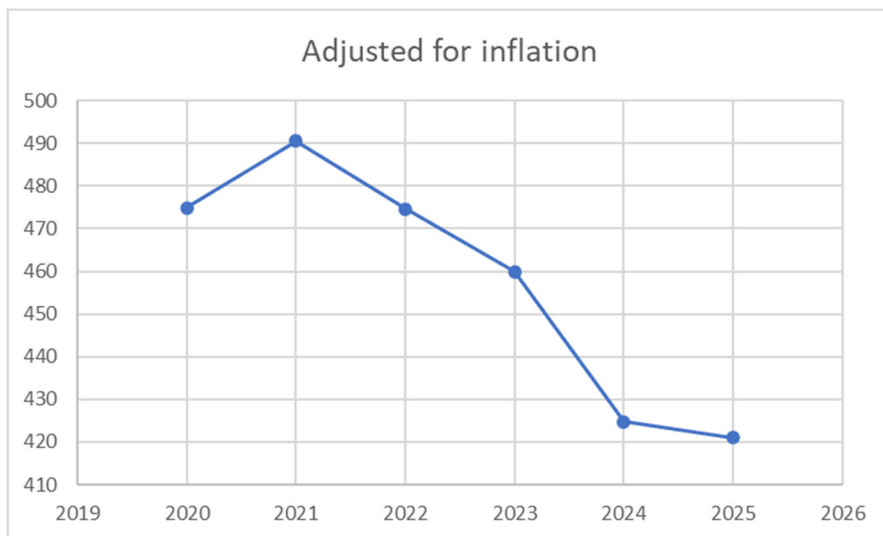
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Donnalyn Washington  
[donnawashington@gmail.com](mailto:donnawashington@gmail.com)  
Brooklyn, New York 11226

in January, when the upcoming fiscal year proposal was dropped by Eric Adams, every newsroom headline about libraries was that they were spared or "saved" from cuts, I feel like they were just parroting his administration's language.

The graph below shows the last 6 years of city-funding for the library systems as proposed in each annual January/February Preliminary Budget from the mayor. This isn't the actuals, it's the proposed amount, but that's what all the articles were about when I was calculating this. I adjusted from the source docs for inflation to December, 2023 dollars (using the All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) U.S. city average series for all items). The graph has the proposed city-funding for public libraries on the Y axis (in millions) and fiscal year they were proposed for on the X axis. It shows the last 6 Preliminary Budgets (the most recent three are Eric Adams):

- <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/tech2-19.pdf>
- <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/tech1-20.pdf>
- <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/tech1-21.pdf>
- <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/tech2-22.pdf>
- <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/tech1-23.pdf>
- <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/tech1-24.pdf>
- image.png



This is not just Eric Adam, even Bill De Blasio's admin is guilty of coming out the budget negotiation gate with lower proposed amounts for public libraries.

Obviously what matters is the ACTUAL amounts that result from these negotiations, and that is why I think it's critical that City Council comes out with a strong first rebuttal that does more than just restore historic baselines. You need to demand MORE as libraries

are carrying more and more weight in our society. Libraries keep us safe in so many more ways than police (who actually make us less safe) do.

Expand funding for public libraries.

Dylan Flesch

Elizabeth Hemming-Spier  
For the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and Interpersonal Intergroup  
Relations  
March 15, 2024

I am Elizabeth Hemming-Spier, a long-time resident of Sunset Park and a proud parent of a public school student. I am submitting written testimony today to advocate for additional funding for the city's libraries.

New York's libraries are vital to the wellbeing of our city and the recent drastic cuts to service are negatively impacting communities across the city. I have been visiting my local branch for years, but it wasn't until my child was born that I began exploring library programming. Through it my child has been involved in early literacy initiatives, learned of the various cultural groups and traditions that make Sunset Park so special, and he has met friends he may not have otherwise known. We visit our branch several times a week and he considers library staff like family.

During these regular visits I witness the magic of libraries, not only as places to explore the world through books, but as a means to provide resources like homework help for students, social groups for senior, and language classes for recent immigrants, among many others. However, the recent budget cuts to libraries have meant programming and services have been reduced or eliminated entirely, and everyday New Yorkers are suffering for it. Communities rely on the library for programming when kids are out of school, to connect to WiFi, to utilize community meeting space, and much more. I ask that the City Council work to not only restore the cuts to library funding, but increase funding levels so that programming can resume and libraries are able to share their magic with all of New York. Libraries are brimming with ideas and community need is great; the only obstacle to realizing the amazing potential of our libraries is a lack of funding. Thank you for your time and advocating for this vital community resource.



Cultural Affairs Council Committee,

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Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams, and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

Ellie Safran  
[elstar123@gmail.com](mailto:elstar123@gmail.com)

New York, New York 11218

Cultural Affairs Council Committee,

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I believe all New Yorkers deserve access to housing, livelihood, and resources to thrive. And I am OUTRAGED that Mayor Eric Adams continues to slash the budgets of and underinvest in programs my neighbors and I depend on, and then blame his choices on asylum seekers - claiming that people who have the least are taking up all the resources in such a rich city, enthusiastically participating in the racist scapegoating of immigrants for political gain at a time when fascism is growing stronger in the US and around the world.

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Emily Rinck

[rinckemi@gmail.com](mailto:rinckemi@gmail.com)

[rinckemi@gmail.com](mailto:rinckemi@gmail.com)

Brooklyn, New York 11218

Cultural Affairs Council Committee,

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Mayor Adams has proposed more than \$2.55 billion of budget cuts that could have devastating consequences on essential services such as libraries (\$36M), early educational 3-K programs (\$567M), CUNY (\$60M), education (\$1B), adult literacy (\$24M) and more. Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC budgets go up. NYPD is slated to spend 2x its overtime budget at \$740M. DOC budget is going up by \$35M, and spending \$138M a year on staff mismanagement.

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\*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.

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By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

Erin Lawson

[elawson703@gmail.com](mailto:elawson703@gmail.com)

New York, New York 11691

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Georgette Thomas

[georgetterhomas76@gmail.com](mailto:georgetterhomas76@gmail.com)

New York, New York 10457

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Gisele Hearne  
[tcamille395@gmail.com](mailto:tcamille395@gmail.com)  
Ny, New York 10039

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Kadisha Davis

[Kdidteam@aol.com](mailto:Kdidteam@aol.com)

New York, New York 11201

Keren Abreu

Re: Preliminary Budget Hearing, Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations (March 12th, 2024)

March 15th, 2024

Thank you Chair Rivera and the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations for the opportunity to testify in support of our libraries.

My name is Keren Abreu and I'm writing as a resident of Brooklyn, a lifelong New Yorker, and a member of the Friends of Sunset Park Library Group.

As a child growing up in the Bronx, the library was my safe haven. My newly arrived immigrant parents were tired and overworked, trying to make a better life for us here. The only place they felt comfortable leaving me for hours at a time was the library. I would spend my weekends tucked away in the NYPL Mosholu Branch, reading Junie B Jones, the Chronicles of Narnia, and the entire Alice series; using the computers to print out my homework assignments; and reading through travel guides for places I could only dream of one day seeing. The library inspired my love of travel and language, and taught me about the importance of neighborly community.

As I got older, I began to appreciate the library for all of the incredible life-changing services it offers, like ESOL classes and Citizenship Preparation courses, both of which hold a special place in my heart, as both of my parents learned English as adult immigrants to the US, and had the privilege of becoming naturalized citizens in recent years.

When I learned that BPL, QPL and NYPL had to eliminate seven-day service across the city, including ending Sunday service at the vast majority of branches that currently offer it, I was heartbroken. I thought of all the Sundays that the children of New York would now be robbed of. When I learned that further proposed cuts would potentially eliminate weekend service altogether, I thought of parents like my own, working hard to support their families, with no place for their children to go on the weekends.

In a city as expensive and inaccessible as New York, libraries are the only truly free space we have, and they are a haven for all residents of our city to feel welcome, safe, and supported.

Please restore funding to our libraries, and consider investing even more funds into these safe havens, as they are the cornerstones of our communities.

Sincerely,  
Keren

Cultural Affairs Council Committee,

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- \*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.
- \*Reduce DOC's bloated budget. Invest in supportive housing and alternatives to incarceration.

By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

Lupe Hernandez  
[lupe.figuera@gmail.com](mailto:lupe.figuera@gmail.com)  
New York , New York 10013

Cultural Affairs Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget, and urge the Council to hold the line on #CareNotCuts.

I am demanding that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal – and if he does not, I demand that my council member, Speaker Adrienne Adams and Finance Chair Justin Brannan use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that a budget will not pass unless it reflects these priorities.

Mayor Adams has proposed more than \$2.55 billion of budget cuts that could have devastating consequences on essential services such as libraries (\$36M), early educational 3-K programs (\$567M), CUNY (\$60M), education (\$1B), adult literacy (\$24M) and more. Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC budgets go up. NYPD is slated to spend 2x its overtime budget at \$740M. DOC budget is going up by \$35M, and spending \$138M a year on staff mismanagement.

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

New Yorkers need #CareNotCuts at a minimum so they can continue to have access to the crucial city services they rely on. #CareNotCuts means:

\*No cuts to school budgets. Restore funding and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Invest in student mental health, community schools, and restorative justice programs.

\*No cuts to CUNY. Restore funding, faculty, and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Increase funding for advisors, ASAP, and MetroCard access for student support and retention.

\*No cuts to libraries. Restore funding cut by Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts.

\*No cuts to adult literacy programs. Restore and baseline funding to keep programs whole and invest in greater resources, services, and supports for adult literacy students.

\*No cuts to 3K. Recommit to universal 3K. Fulfill salary parity for the early childhood workforce.

\*No cuts to the provision of social services, such as housing services and health or mental health services. Invest in social safety net and housing solutions for low-income New Yorkers.

\*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.

\*Reduce DOC's bloated budget. Invest in supportive housing and alternatives to incarceration.

By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

Martina Meijer  
[martina.meijer@gmail.com](mailto:martina.meijer@gmail.com)  
Brooklyn, New York 11225



Cultural Affairs Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I am the father of a four-year-old who has benefited profoundly from universal 3K and PreK. It was a tremendous boon for our family, who previously alternated between struggling to pay for childcare -- as much as our rent-stabilized apartment -- or trying to juggle our baby between us with two parents working from home. Universal 3K and PreK allowed me to find a new job that had more in-person hours and higher pay. My daughter has thrived in her care settings, even though her 3K was beset by the city's repeated failure to pay them under Mayor Eric Adams's tenure.

I want all children and families to have access to this resource. It keeps working parents and families like mine here in NYC.

The recent budget cuts led by Mayor Adams have already affected my family. Although we are in PreK, we do so at a public school, where my daughter's school lunch has changed following recent decisions. Our main library is closed on Sundays, which baffles and confuses my daughter. The real composting options have closed. We are relatively privileged, middle-class people -- these are inconveniences and frustrations for us, rather than devastations, but we know that the cuts fall heavier on our neighbors who are less fortunate.

We know from non-mayor assessments that our city has a uniquely large BUDGET SURPLUS right now. Our city deserves an investment in childcare, public schools, public pools and parks, housing, food assistance, and more. These are investments in the best our city has to offer: existing and future generations.

I support the demands of the People's Plan for a budget built on Care Not Cuts. Please reject Mayor Adams's proposed austerity budget and fight for New Yorkers.

Shay O'Reilly  
[shay.g.oreilly@gmail.com](mailto:shay.g.oreilly@gmail.com)  
Brooklyn, New York 11225

## FOR THE RECORD

I'm Ted Stabile, a resident of Sunset Park, Brooklyn, testifying for the protection of the Sunset Park Library on 4th Ave. Growing up, I relied heavily on libraries. They were and are a sanctuary of free, safe internet access, and self-paced study. The helpful staff and late-night hours at these libraries ensured I didn't fall behind academically.

The Sunset Park Branch is competent, modern, and accessible. This library too serves as a sanctuary for curated learning, growth, and offers diverse, multi-lingual community enriching programs, accessible for all individuals at any stage of their studies, career, or community involvement.

This library helps connect people to resources that can optimize their financial and social standing; from tax prep, citizenship exam prep, and affordable, vital utilities such as internet access.

Protecting the budget now is a stable investment; The time spent by citizens in libraries translates into a workforce equipped with more competent skills, enabling more fulfilling, lucrative and productive careers. The knowledge gained from the library converts into dividends that a person then returns to their employer and community.

Moreover, budget protection serves as a preventive measure, mitigating situations where children lack safe, enriching options outside the home to nurture passions and improve socialization. Avoiding damage to the library's budget now is a prevention of avoidable but crippling social and economic loss that a future with a gutted library would create, from children falling behind in school to citizens fighting through unnecessary barriers while looking for employment.

Finally, with the current age of AI, robust media, digital, and civic literacy will be vital to adapting to the imminent future. The potential of AI and its use cases do not minimize the relevance of a library in a community. Rather, it cements its importance as an effective resource to grow literacy in these capacities. The library serves as the optimal space outside of school for individuals to improve themselves in the capacity they choose without the overhead of needing to filter out misinformation, worry about their privacy, or face distractions from invasive advertisements.

Libraries are not just buildings to rent books; they are cornerstones for communities.

Securing adequate funding and expanded hours will empower many to thrive and contribute to Sunset Park library's local community and NYC at large. Thank you.

Cultural Affairs Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I believe all New Yorkers deserve access to housing, livelihood, and resources to thrive. And I am OUTRAGED that Mayor Eric Adams continues to slash the budgets of and underinvest in programs my neighbors and I depend on.

I demand that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal. If he does not, I demand that my council member and Speaker Adrienne Adams use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that any budget that passes reflects key People's Budget priorities.

This includes:

- Investing in capital infrastructure for public and affordable housing, schools, and CUNY colleges
- Investing in and protecting public education, CUNY, childcare, libraries, social safety nets, and housing from budget cuts and restoring previous cuts
- Divesting from wasteful spending at the NYPD and DOC, and directing funds to community safety, supportive housing, mental health, and alternatives to incarceration

Our full list of People's Budget demands are here: <https://peoplesplan.nyc/2024-peoples-budget-campaign/>

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' previous and proposed cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, less parents with the childcare support they need to stay in the city, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams, and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

Trevor Nathan

[trevornathanphoto@gmail.com](mailto:trevornathanphoto@gmail.com)

New York, New York 11231

Dr. Xi Kathy Chu

Regarding the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations

March 12th, 2024 at 12pm

My name is Dr. Xi Kathy Chu and I am a primary care physician in Sunset Park as well as a proud Sunset Park resident. I am testifying on the lack of funding for libraries which has limited a valuable resource for the patients that I take care of.

Many of my patients speak to the library as a safe space in which they can spend time reading with their children, or helping their children with homework. They speak of the library as a place where they can get access to valuable resources that help improve their lives for the better - access to language help, tax services or computer access. As healthcare becomes increasingly digital, with communication with your doctor being online and access to health information online, the library serves as an important space for ensuring digital health equity. I also work with medical trainees as an associate program director of an internal medicine residency program, and we have been working with the Brooklyn Public Library to deliver online health education workshops on a monthly basis. The feedback on these workshops has been immensely positive, with follow up from community attendees often being about how to be more engaged in their health.

As a physician, I wanted to provide testimony because I want to share my strong belief and firsthand perspective that libraries are a resource that lead to better health outcomes, and I know that we all value the individual and shared health of our communities. I believe we must not cut funding to our libraries that provide valuable access to these resources and in fact, invest more in these vital programs.

Thank you for reading my testimony and your consideration of continued investment in our libraries and in our communities is much appreciated.

Cultural Affairs Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

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Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams, and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

Ximena Frankel  
[ximena.hihnyc@gmail.com](mailto:ximena.hihnyc@gmail.com)  
Forest Hills, New York 11375

March 15th 2024  
Yukiko Izumi

I am writing to you as a resident of Sunset Park who deeply values our local library. Having moved here from Japan in May 2020 due to marriage, I can attest to the immense importance of libraries in our community.

When I first arrived, I had no acquaintances in New York. Moreover, attending English classes was financially out of reach for me. It was during this time that I discovered the library card's hidden gem: free access to e-books. With a sense of excitement, I promptly visited the library. Even before vaccines were widely available, I could safely explore English literature through e-books on my computer and smartphone.

As the pandemic eased and physical books became accessible again, I expanded my horizons. I borrowed art-related picture books alongside English language materials. These colorful illustrations and diverse content were unlike anything I had encountered in my native Japan.

My library visits led me to explore community boards and flyers. Two significant events unfolded:

**Friends Group Recruitment:** As someone with no local connections, I eagerly joined the Friends Group. Through volunteering and utilizing my design skills, I've not only contributed but also learned about American culture. The group's diverse membership provides a wealth of perspectives and information.

**ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Classes:** Desiring stronger conversational English skills, I faced financial constraints. Fortunately, I discovered ESOL classes. Despite the challenging prerequisites and high demand, I successfully enrolled. These classes have been invaluable, allowing me to learn about business concepts in English and interact with a diverse group of fellow learners.

For me, the library is more than just a repository of books. It's a place where I connect with people, explore new worlds through classes, events, and volunteering. I implore you to reconsider any further budget cuts to our libraries. Let us continue to invest in these vital community spaces.

Thank you for your attention and commitment to our neighborhood.

Cultural Affairs Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget, and urge the Council to hold the line on #CareNotCuts.

I am demanding that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal – and if he does not, I demand that my council member, Speaker Adrienne Adams and Finance Chair Justin Brannan use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that a budget will not pass unless it reflects these priorities.

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As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

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\*No cuts to libraries. Restore funding cut by Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts.

\*No cuts to adult literacy programs. Restore and baseline funding to keep programs whole and invest in greater resources, services, and supports for adult literacy students.

\*No cuts to 3K. Recommit to universal 3K. Fulfill salary parity for the early childhood workforce.

\*No cuts to the provision of social services, such as housing services and health or mental

health services. Invest in social safety net and housing solutions for low-income New Yorkers.  
\*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.  
\*Reduce DOC's bloated budget. Invest in supportive housing and alternatives to incarceration.

By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

zakiyah shaakir-ansari

[Zakiyah@aqeny.org](mailto:Zakiyah@aqeny.org)

Valley Stream, New York 11203



Cultural Affairs Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I believe all New Yorkers deserve access to housing, livelihood, and resources to thrive. And I am OUTRAGED that Mayor Eric Adams continues to slash the budgets of and underinvest in programs my neighbors and I depend on.

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Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams, and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

Zara Nasir  
[zaran03@gmail.com](mailto:zaran03@gmail.com)  
Jackson Heights, New York 11372

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Todd Seward

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Universal Temple of The Arts

Address: 425 Jersey Street S.I., NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: March 12

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Levone Davis - Symphony Space

Address: [Redacted] Central Park West

I represent: Symphony Space

Address: 95th + Broadway, NY, NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3-12-24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shannon Rockett

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Carnegie Hall

Address: Manhattan

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/3/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Halsborg Halber

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Staten Island

I represent: Canvas Institute

Address: 183 Victory Rd Staten Island

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Arts and Culture  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bobby Diggs Oliss

Address: Canvas Institute

I represent: Canvas Institute

Address: 183 Victory Blvd St NY 10301

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: GREGORY J MORRIS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ BKLYN NY 11217

I represent: NEW YORK CITY EMPLOYMENT TRAINING COALITION

Address: 121 6th Ave, NYC 10013

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Norah Yahya

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Manhattan Borough Vice Chair - Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Aaron Bouska

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Bronx Borough Vice Chair - Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jessica Phillips

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Staten Island Vice Chair - Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/24

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Coco Killingsworth

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Chair, Cultural Institutions Group

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/24

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Jose Ortiz

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Queens Borough Vice Chair - Cultural Institutions Group (CID)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/24

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Gina Tribotti

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: International Studio and Curatorial Program

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms*



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Juliana Lope (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Mind Builders

Address: Bronx

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: March 12 2024

Name: RYAN GILHAM (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: [REDACTED] BKlyn NY 11218

I represent: FOURTH ARTS BLOCK

Address: 70 East 4th St NY NY 10003

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/24

Name: Commissioner Laurie Cumbo (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: PCLA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

CULTURE

Date: 3/12/24

Name: DANCE POZANOVIC (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: DCLA Hall

Address: 201 7<sup>th</sup> Ave

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/24

Name: Andrea Louie (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: DCLA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/2024

Name: MELODY CAPOTE (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 120 EAST 125 ST., NYC 10035

I represent: CARIBBEAN CULTURAL CENTER

Address: AFRICAN DIASPORA INSTITUTE



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: MAR 12 '24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: FRAN GARBER-COMEN

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: the Regatta Opera Co.

Address: BK NY 5902 6<sup>th</sup> ave  
11220

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3.12.24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lisa Albert

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ BK NY 11222

I represent: Greenwood Cemetery

Address: Brooklyn BK NY 11211

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lenore Davis

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Symphony space, Board Chair

Address: 2537 Broadway, New York, NY 10025

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

CULTURE

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David Friedenthal

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ CPS

I represent: Carnegie Hall

Address: 881 7th Ave

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lauren Comita

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ BK, NY 11222

I represent: Urban Librarians Unite

Address: 87 Richardson St BK, NY 11211

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: March 12, 24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: TRACI BARROW

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Brooklyn Public Library

Address: 617 Dekalb Ave.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: TOM ANGELLO

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Brooklyn NY 11216

I represent: Brooklyn Public Library

Address: 10 Grand Army Plaza BK NY 11238

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Theodore Stabile

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Brooklyn NY, 11220

I represent: Sunset Park, Brooklyn Public Library

Address: 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 11220

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dennis M. Walcott

Address: 89-11 Merrick Blvd

I represent: Queens Public Library

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tony Mart

Address: 476 Ed Ave NY NY 10018

I represent: New York Public Library

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: GABRIELA SANDOVAL BEQUENA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NEW DESTINY HOUSING

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LINDA JOHNSON

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

*Culturals*

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Leonard Paul

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: President, Local 374 DC37

Address: (Brooklyn Botanical Gardens)

*Libraries*

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: George Olken

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: President, Local 1482, DC37

Address: (Brooklyn Public Library)

*Libraries*

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Leonard Paul

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: President, Local 374, DC37

Address: (MPL security guards + custodians)



Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms





*Libraries*

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor     in opposition

Date: 3/22/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Deborah Allman  
Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007  
I represent: President Local 1930, DC37  
Address: NYPL workers

*Libraries*

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor     in opposition

Date: 3/12/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: John Hyslop  
Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007  
I represent: President Local 1321, DC37  
Address: Local Library Guild

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor     in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Benjamin Spierman  
Address: [REDACTED] Bronx 10463  
I represent: Bronx Opera  
Address: 5 Minerva Place 2J Bronx 10468



Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: GONZALO CASALS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: CULTURE & ARTS Policy

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: RISA SHOUR

Address: 420 8th AVE #319 NYC 10018

I represent: A.R.T. / NEW YORK

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kate Madigan

Address: 425 Lafayette St.

I represent: The Public Theater

Address: Culture & Arts

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LISA GOLD

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: FOR AN AMERICAN ARTS

Address: ALLIANCE

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Constance Thompson-Zachery

Address: New York, NY

I represent: Dance/NYC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Judith Insell

Address: [REDACTED] NY, NY 10031

I represent: Bronx Arts Ensemble

Address: 80 Van Cortlandt Park So. #7M3

Bx, NY 10463

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/12/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ~~Kimberly Olsen~~ Kimberly Olsen

Address: [REDACTED] LIC, NY 11109

I represent: NYC Arts in Education Roundtable

Address: 219 West 19th Street NY, NY 10011

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lucy Sexton

Address: New Yorkers for Culture

I represent: 160-6th Ave #ARTS

Address: NYC 10013

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms