

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

Oversight Hearing: Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers

Monday, January 27, 2025, 10:00AM – Committee Room, City Hall

Testimony Presented by NYC Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Laurie Cumbo

Good morning, Chair Rivera and members of the committee. I am Laurie Cumbo, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, here to testify in regard to today's topic: Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers.

This is a topic that is near and dear to my heart. I had an internship at the Metropolitan Museum of Art when I was 15 years old, and early work experiences at the Brooklyn Museum and Brooklyn Children's Museums shortly after that. These were formative years for me, which helped me to understand the power of the arts as a career path that offers good jobs that were also deeply rooted in our city's community. They were fun, they were exciting – and at many organizations, these are good, union jobs. We're inspired by the work happening across the cultural sector to cultivate the next generation of arts workers, but I know that there is still a stigma out there, especially throughout lower income and working class communities, that the arts don't offer a viable career path. We need to change this from both ends: make sure that our arts sector has the support it needs to offer good paying jobs, while also creating programs that connect residents to career paths in the arts, and show them that this is an extraordinary way to have a good job while giving back to your city and your community.

One very important way that we have really focused on developing under the Adams administration is the city's Summer Youth Employment Program. This is a rite of passage for so many of our city's young people – everyone who grew up here has a fond SYEP memory they're willing to share. Mayor Adams committed to providing an astounding 100,000 SYEP positions last year - an ambitious goal that we met! And I am so proud of our close collaboration with DYCD to get more cultural organizations involved as SYEP worksites. In fact, SYEP 2024 placements in the arts & culture industry grew nearly 28% over SYEP 2023. More than 3,000 participants were also placed in related industries including media, entertainment, and tourism – including museums, production companies, and television/streaming services. Members of the Cultural Institutions Group alone hosted nearly 400 SYEP participants. One leader in this regard in Snug Harbor Cultural Center on Staten Island, which hosted nearly 50 SYEP participants last year alone. At Snug Harbor, you'll meet SYEP graduates at every level of the organization, because they know that this program is a powerful way to tap into New York City's greatest resource – our young people. Through SYEP, NYC's young people get exposure to jobs in cultural organizations and across all sectors – and these organizations in turn get access to a remarkable pool of talent. The application period to serve as an SYEP worksite this summer are now open. So to all the cultural groups listening – visit nyc.gov/SYEP to learn more and apply!

Another program we're proud to support is the CUNY Cultural Corps. Inspired by the city's CreateNYC cultural plan, this program provides paid internship opportunities for CUNY students at dozens of cultural organizations across the city. There are currently 86 cultural partners for this

program, from the National Book Foundation, to the Bronx Council on the Arts, to Harlem Stage and Art Beyond Sight. CUNY students have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in fields including education and public programming, development, communications, production, and curatorial, all while receiving \$20 per hour. This is one key message we want to convey to people considering careers in the arts: the opportunities are endless! The outdated image of the starving artist does not apply here – the arts sector needs people who are good with their hands, who are interested in finance, who are good communicators. These are all skillsets that translate across industries. And the Cultural Corps gives these real-world work experiences to CUNY’s incredibly diverse student body, creating a pipeline that ensures that our cultural workforce reflects NYC’s diverse population. Of the more than 1,000 participants Corps members who have gone through the program since it was established, 78% identified as people of color. Cultural Corps alumnae can be found working in a wide variety of roles across our city’s vibrant arts sector.

DCLA supports more than 1,000 cultural nonprofits across the city each year. Many of these organizations have programs that are dedicated to fostering the next generation of talent and opening up doors for New Yorkers of all backgrounds.

The city’s Cultural Institutions Group have a particularly robust system of internships, fellowships, and other workforce development programs that utilize their world-class institutions to give residents access to a diverse range of professional paths. One key example of this is SCI Network NYC, a consortium of eight science-based members of the CIG who are committed to providing high-quality STEM internships to New York City youth. The network includes the Museum of Natural History, NY Hall of Science, Staten Island Zoo, New York Botanical Garden, Queens Botanical Garden, Wave Hill, Wildlife Conservation Society, and Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Each year, this consortium hosts nearly 1,100 interns who gained experience in a variety of fields, including animal care, horticulture, science communication, teaching, and administration. According to the network: “Internships are critical pathways to employment, but have historically been available only to those with financial resources and social capital. SCI Network NYC is working to ensure that youth from all backgrounds can participate in science internships. We partner with local organizations, council members, and schools to recruit youth and support them as they pursue the rich learning experiences at our institutions.” This commitment is borne out in the program’s impressive data: of the 1,100 participants, 84% identify as people of color; 59% speak a language other than English at home; and 67% identify as female. Interns earned \$2.4 million in stipends and wages, and many of the program’s graduates have gone on to full-time employment within the network.

This is an incredible program, and the CIG’s commitment to workforce development extends far beyond these exciting STEM programs.

- At Carnegie Hall, the B-Side is a program for young people age 14-22 that introduces different career opportunities in the music industry. This program provides industry related skills and connections, and offers participants the opportunity to learn the ins and outs of the music business from guest speakers, field trips, networking events, and more.
- The Bronx County Historical Society offers several research-based internships and professional development programs. Students from Fordham University and Lehman College get hands on archival experience through one of these programs. And through their “Mott Haven History Keepers” program, nine long-time community members in the South Bronx have received extensive training and resources in order to help preserve and tell their neighborhood’s history. These History Keepers have gone through a year of professional development training, and will be presenting their work at an international research conference in Montreal this March.

- Staying in the Boogie Down for our next example: The Bronx Museum’s Teen Council, created in 2005, is a paid internship that offers students age 14-19 the opportunity to engage deeply in the work of the museum. Applications for the Spring 2025 Session of Teen Council are due February 2 – so if there’s a teen in your life who might be interested, learn more at bronxmuseum.org!
- The Brooklyn Museum has a Museum Education Fellowship Program for emerging arts professionals. This paid, 10-month fellowship offers in-depth field work, teaching experience, and ongoing professional development from museum educators and curators. Alumni of this program have gone on to work at cultural institutions across the city and country – creating a vital pipeline for diverse cultural leaders.
- In 2023, New York City Ballet launched the Emerging Female Choreographers Workshop, which partners with the School of American Ballet to give three women choreographers an opportunity to develop new works with SAB students, fostering female talent in ballet.
- At Queens Botanical Garden, the Growing Justice program involves youth from the Flushing and Corona areas in weekly workshops, hands-on urban farming, running the QBG farm stand, and leadership development activities that open their eyes to the possibilities of food justice, environmental sustainability, community health, green careers, and climate change.
- The Staten Island Zoo offers a robust internship program for undergraduate and graduate students pursuing degrees in biology, zoology, veterinary medicine, or education. During the summer sessions, the Education Department conducts professional development workshops twice a week.

Through the Cultural Development Fund, DCLA supports more than 1,000 cultural nonprofits across the city each year. These grants support a range of professional and workforce development programs.

- The Stage Directors and Choreographers Society’s Professional Development Program creates paid opportunities for early-career directors and choreographers to observe or work with established artists throughout the production process. The program provides access, develops skills, and makes possible relationships that are otherwise hard to find.
- The Drama League offers a comprehensive career development for emerging directors. The activities in the program, collectively known as the Directors Project, offer talented and diverse artists hands-on instruction, mentorship, opportunities to create new work, and partnerships with established professionals. The work of theater directors often takes place out of the audience’s view, making their profession less understood and supported than others in the industry, such as actors or playwrights. The Directors Project provides critical career development resources to directors at the right moment in their career, along with industry-leading compensation.
- Teen Art Salon’s “Drawing All-Stars” program is a free, pre-professional development program for high schoolers focusing on New York City’s next generation of artists. The program supports teens to expand their drawing practices and amplify their artistic ambitions. Over six months, participants strengthen their observation skills, conceptual thinking, and technical proficiency using a variety of materials with the goal of pursuing drawing as a medium for experimentation and innovation.
- Hook Arts Media’s “Arts Forward” program offers a multi-phase media education pipeline, helping nearly 90 Brooklyn youth build skills and prepare for media careers through paid training in digital media production
- Beam Center’s Youth Projects connect youth to paid training and employment experiences that focus on the creation and teaching of public art projects. These experiences provide

work-readiness preparation and increase social-emotional learning through art-making that responds to the youths' diverse cultural backgrounds.

- UrbanGlass's "Bead Project" is a free program for 24 low-income women, femmes, non-binary, and gender expansive creatives to learn glass beadmaking and establish supplemental income sources. Students develop skills in jewelry fabrication, product marketing, and small business strategies.
- SoHarlem's "Creative Collective" builds on the organization's mission as a cultural industries incubator, working at the intersection of the arts and economic development. All Collective members are persons of color, ranging in age from 19 to 60. The group includes entrepreneurs with well-established, Harlem based micro-enterprises, artisans skilled at sewing and other related skills and young, aspiring designers at the start of their careers. Collective members work in SoHarlem's Designers' Studio on a regular basis, bringing into play connections in the arts, fashion, retail and entertainment while honing their craft.
- New York Theatre Workshop's Administrative Fellowship program, which represents one of several NYTW initiatives to address the economic barriers that may prevent talented individuals from pursuing careers in the theatre. For over 20 years, NYTW has honed an inclusive fellowship program for emerging theatre makers with a multiplicity of perspectives. These fellowships have taken many forms, supporting playwrights, directors, designers and administrators
- Irondale Ensemble "Tech Track" program teaches students about all aspects of theatre production, from costume and set design to marketing and lighting design through a variety of hands-on projects. Students collaborate with Irondale's Young Company acting ensemble to design, build and produce a final performance.

These are just a few of the programs specifically supported by CDF grants. But I'd like to note that many more organizations are deeply committed to creating equitable pathways into the cultural workforce in practices and programs they operate, whether or not these are specifically mentioned in their CDF applications. Groups like the Asian American Arts Alliance, Dance/NYC, New York Foundation for the Arts, Arts in Education Roundtable, and other service organizations also offer a range of resources for current and aspiring cultural workers to secure work and advance in their careers.

DCLA also works closely with agency partners on a number of programs that create pathways into the city's cultural workforce for people from diverse backgrounds.

The Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment has a number of programs dedicated to opening pathways into the city's creative workforce. Their Made in NY PA Training program prepares NYC residents age 18 and up for entry-level positions in the TV and Film industry. Unemployed and low-income New York City residents are eligible for the four week training and two years of job placement support as production assistants on film, TV, commercial and music video sets. A study released in 2023 found that, over the 15 years of the program, there was a marked increase in diversity within New York City's Film & TV industry, and a 128% increase in salaries over five years for program graduates. MOME's post-production training program, Made in NY animation project, MediaMKRS programs provide additional career support for people working across the city's creative sectors. MOME works with the Department of Small Business Services and Brooklyn Workforce Innovations to run these successful programs.

One partnership I'm particularly proud of is Roundabout Theatre's Theatrical Workforce Development Program. Created by Roundabout, MOME, and IATSE, and supported through our CDF, this program offers an incredible level of support for people who want to break into the city's performing arts industry – one of the backbone's of our city's vibrant creative economy. Training young people in multiple behind-the-scenes disciplines, this paid, three year program puts

participants on track to work in exciting, often unionized positions in the theater industry. This year, for the first time, Roundabout offered an administrative track – paving the way for participants to gain work experience in all fields that go into running a successful theater operation.

Roundabout's program has also contributed to the progress towards the Adams administration's moonshot goal of creating 30,000 apprenticeships by 2030. In November of last year, I joined MOME and NYC Talent at Roundabout to announce that the city was already ahead of schedule and halfway to achieving this ambitious goal, with 15,000 apprenticeship positions created through public and private partnerships across multiple industry sectors. Apprenticeships offer New Yorkers paid working and learning experiences as well as professional connections in a wide range of occupations that lead to a good career – and I'm thrilled that workforce opportunities in the cultural sector have been a key part of this effort.

Our partners at NYC Public School's Arts Office are also doing amazing work in preparing our students for careers in the cultural sector. Their new, work-based learning programs bring together arts partners and a DOE teacher to co-facilitate programming for students who are interested in early professional experiences in the arts. They pay students a stipend to create art projects and develop skills applicable for their post-secondary journeys, whether in the arts or otherwise. Last year, DOE piloted this program with three partnerships: choreography with Martha Graham School; music production with Building Beats; and performance poetry with Oye Group. This year, they plan to expand the program to a co-located school building in the Rockaways, and a transition center for young adults with special needs in Bed-Stuy.

Arts-focused public schools also offer robust and rigorous post-secondary prep programs:

- The High School of Art & Design in Manhattan offers a half-dozen majors in areas like film/video, graphic design, photo, illustration and more. They are the home of the Summer Design Institute which partners with Warner Brothers & HBO to offer students real-world project-based work.
- The new Motion Picture Tech in Queens focuses on below-the-line careers in film and TV. They are currently serving an inaugural class of 9th graders who will spend the February school break working with a production company to produce a short narrative film.
- Fordham HS for the Arts in the Bronx has certified programs in Drama and Technical Theatre, where students get professional training in stagecraft, lighting, carpentry, and more

Our very own Materials for the Arts program offers development classes that provide teachers with the tools to infuse the arts into a variety of subject areas. These programs allow Public School teachers to earn Continuing Teacher and Leader Education (CTLE) credit and +30 credit towards NYC Public Schools' salary differential program. MFTA also partners with the NYC Public Schools Office of Arts and Special Projects to host off-site professional development classes for teachers across the five boroughs. Classes have been held at a various locations including Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden in Staten Island, Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning in Queens, and the Arts Hub in Brooklyn. At these events, teachers learn how to create sustainable projects art projects and can take supplies from materials for the arts to use in their classrooms. In 2024, MFTA taught 11 teacher training courses reaching 344 teachers with intensive instruction.

In 2023, Materials for the Arts launched its Repair program in partnership with City-As-School High School. This pilot initiative introduces high school juniors and seniors to the concept of repair as a key element of the "reduce, reuse, recycle" philosophy. Through hands-on work with

reusable materials from MFTA alongside instructors, students gain valuable skills for sustainable careers. The program empowers students to restore damaged items from MFTA's warehouse, such as furniture, clothing, bikes, and mechanical devices. By transforming these items, students learn practical repair techniques to open opportunities within trade career paths.

Last year, Materials for the Arts launched its Young Designers program, a collaboration with BK Style Foundation supporting talented young designers between the ages 18 to 25. This program is designed to equip young talent with valuable career training, emphasizing sustainability in fashion. Participants gain unlimited access to MFTA's extensive supply warehouse, allowing them to create one-of-a-kind designs. In addition to materials, the program includes workshops, mentorship, factory tours, and a photoshoot. The experience culminates with the opportunity to showcase a collection in collaboration with the BK Style Foundation, providing a platform to launch their careers in fashion.

Culture is a pillar of our economy. In 2019, the city's creative sector had a \$110 billion total economic impact, generated \$30 billion in wages, and employed 300,000 workers. Culture is also the backbone of the city's tourism industry, which generates \$74 billion in economic impact with more than \$48 billion coming from direct spending. New York City attracted 62 million visitors last year, closing in on the 66 million high water mark achieved in 2019 and helping to drive the city's economic recovery.

Since the start of the Adams administration, the city has invested more than \$1 billion in expense and capital funding in the cultural sector, in collaboration with the Council and borough presidents. I'm so proud of the working partnership we have with the Council, which funds a range of essential cultural initiatives like Coalition of Theatres of Color, which are critical to smaller, BIPOC-led organizations, which are crucial to our city's cultural ecosystem and to fostering and cultivating talent.

Slowly but surely, we've seen major progress across our sector in opening up career pathways for people of all backgrounds in our cultural sector. One hopeful sign of this is the incredibly diverse class of leaders we currently see across the cultural landscape. We have people of color at the helms of AMNH, BAM, Wave Hill, Brooklyn Arts Council, the Perelman Center, Brooklyn Children's Museum, Bronx Children's Museum, Queens Library, and more. This doesn't even include the trailblazing leaders at organizations that are rooted in our communities of color, which continue to foster incredible talent across disciplines. The city is committed to building on our partnership with these institutions to invest in their work and support institutions that are reflective of and responsive to our communities.

Before I close, I also wanted to wish a happy "Jobs Week" to one and all. All week long, the Mayor's Office will be highlighting ways that the city is helping to get New Yorkers into good paying jobs across the city, one of the most critical ways we can make sure that working people can continue to live here and raise families here. We're proud that the arts provide one important pathway for these good jobs, and the city supports so many vital workforce programs for the arts.

There's clearly a lot of amazing work happening across the cultural sector aimed at opening up work opportunities. Culture offers an exciting, rewarding way to explore our world and serve our communities. But there are always new challenges arising, especially post-COVID, and new ways for us to meet those challenges. So I thank you again for the opportunity to discuss today's urgent topic, and I look forward to working in partnership with the Council to find ways we can continue to support this work.

I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.



TESTIMONY FROM LYNDSAY WERKING-YIP DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNICATIONS

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Lyndsay Werking-Yip. I am the Director of Development & Communications for the American Composers Orchestra. ACO is a national accelerator creating pathways for New Yorkers to pursue careers in the arts. We provide artists paid work here in New York City. Then, we connect them to organizations across the country for future employment.

Our EarShot initiatives are the first ongoing, systemic program for building relationships between composers and orchestras across the Americas. Since 2020, we have tripled our national footprint, increasing from 6 to 26 partners across 17 U.S. states and Canada; all of these partners are providing jobs to our artists.

IMPACT

EarShot initiatives go **beyond representation** to address artist agency and belonging by investing in emerging talent, focusing on BIPOC, female, and non-binary composers. The June 2024 Equality and Diversity in the Global Repertoire report from *Donne - Women In Music*, which surveyed the repertoire of 111 orchestras across 30 countries in 2023-2024 in terms of composer demographics, ranked ACO **1st in racial diversity, 1st in representation of gender and racial diversity combined, and 5th in gender diversity**. In 2024, we employed over 200 artists working in New York City to fulfill roles as composers, musicians, and teaching artists. Our composer workforce reflects the NYC population: 77% self-identify as individuals of color and 55% as women or nonbinary.

EARSHOT ACTIVITIES

EARSHOT READINGS: For **composers with orchestral scores**, Readings cultivate relationships between composers and orchestras, providing composer advancement and professional development over 8 months before a 2-4 day in-person Readings process with a professional orchestra, resulting in a recording for continued study and promotion. For orchestral partners, ACO provides targeted recruitment aligned with partner goals, selection, mentorship, professional development, and production of the Readings. [5-MINUTE VIDEO](#)

COLABORATORY RESIDENCIES: advance the work of **composers whose work is experimental** or rooted in musical traditions underrepresented in the orchestral repertoire. CoLABoratory addresses systemic barriers in orchestral commissioning, fostering equitable, inclusive, collaborative processes that generate adventurous work. Fellowships include a commission generative workshop sessions that foster co-learning over 12 months, readings and public performances of the

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resulting work. Residencies also advance composers' programming and curatorial skills, positioning them as catalysts for change. For orchestral partners, ACO provides targeted recruitment aligned with partner goals, selection, project planning, artistic collaborators, and production of workshops and events. [5-MINUTE VIDEO](#)

EARSHOT PUBLISHING: **administers the rights for select orchestral works** developed through EarShot Readings, CoLABoratory Fellowships, and other commissioning opportunities. ACO has **partnered with Boosey & Hawkes**, an international leader in classical music publishing, to administer the EarShot Publishing catalog worldwide. Through this initiative, ACO extends composers' EarShot experience by providing access to artist-centric publishing agreements and connections to its national network of orchestras. In the initiative's first two years, and with support from the **Sphinx Organization**, ACO will publish the works of 16 Black and Latine composers, commission 16 education modules to accompany each work, and commission 8 new works for youth/school orchestras.

SUSTAINABLE CAREERS & LIVING WAGES

To make a sustainable living, a freelance artist must cobble together many different gigs, as performers, composers, and teaching artists. American Composers Orchestra provides opportunities for artists to work here in New York City while also connecting them to organizations across the country for future employment.

ACO uses the W.A.G.E. fee calculator (<https://wageforwork.com/fee-calculator#top>), which uses an organization's operating budget to determine how much to pay artists when hiring.

W.A.G.E. (Working Artists and the Greater Economy) works to establish sustainable economic relationships between artists and the institutions that contract labor and introduce mechanisms for self-regulation into the art field that collectively bring about a more equitable distribution of its economy. The W.A.G.E. fee calculator is a 3-tiered system that determines fair compensation, establishing an industry-wide minimum in 15 fee categories. It scales these fees from the floor using a fixed percentage of an organization's total annual operating expenses.

Depending on the scope of work, an artist may earn anywhere from \$250-\$4,500+ per engagement. According to the MIT wage calculator, an individual with no children working full-time should make \$33.31/hour to earn a living wage in New York City. (source: <https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/36061>). This amounts to annual earnings of \$69,282. To make a living wage, an artist will be looking to secure between 3-6 gigs in a month. Some of those, like teaching roles, will be recurring. Others will be one-off performances, speaking engagements, or other types of work.

PIPELINE & FINDING OPPORTUNITIES

Just to get a job, these artists are expected to function as entrepreneurs – needing skills in pitching, marketing, networking, and fundraising.

American Composers Orchestra provides training that will advance every part of an artist's career, gives them agency to direct the creative process, and pays them a living wage.

We begin this work at the start of the talent pipeline: in New York City public schools. In the past decade, nearly 100 ACO students have entered competitive post-secondary music programs.

For emerging artists like Trevor New - who joins me here today - we provide ongoing opportunities over multiple years. Since his two-year residency with ACO, we have connected Trevor to dozens of career opportunities.

CAREER MILESTONES FOR ARTISTS

EarShot Readings composers have won every major composition award, including the **Pulitzer, Grammy, Grawemeyer, American Academy of Arts and Letters, and Rome Prizes**. Alums include some of the most visible artists in the field: Jesse Montgomery, Carlos Simon, Courtney Bryan, Jennifer Higdon, and more.

Anecdotally, composers have shared what an invaluable (and impossible to obtain) resource it is for an emerging composer to receive an orchestral recording; the diversity of the ensemble and quality of ACO's playing continue to be significant drivers of interest; at the same time virtual professional development webinars have transformed the way participants approach the business side of their work.

Surveys indicate that **50%+ of EarShot composers receive a commission or performance** due to connections and industry notice during a reading.

TESTIMONY FROM TREVOR NEW 2021-23 COLABORATORY FELLOW ACTIVE TEACHING ARTISTS & ORCHESTRA MUSICIAN

My name is Trevor New. I am a violist, composer, educator, and developer of music technology.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today.

As an artist in New York City, I could choose a career of primarily commercial gigs where I recreate music that has been around for centuries, music of another time. Orchestras are known for playing music that speaks to another time and place.

But as a composer, I'm interested in writing music that speaks to who we are now. And I encourage this committee to support artists who are creating new work.

I create artistic experiences that connect communities across the world in real time using existing technologies in live performance. The solution to distance and connection isn't a technical one but a creative one. In this case the solution is music. The American Composers Orchestra has enabled me to do this work in a way that no other organization has.

Working with ACO, I have become more myself as an artist. ACO gave me one mandate: "Write what you want and we'll do our best to make it happen." They let me take risks and it was amazing to collaborate with other artists who were being paid a living wage.

ACO-COMMISSIONED WORKS

ACO commissioned me to write two works: *Cohere* (premiere: October 2021) and *Cohere Touch* (premiere October 2023).

COHERE 1: ACO co-presented this work with the Groupmuse Foundation on October 16, 2021. The event, titled *New Canons*, experimented and played with internet latency — in this case, the time it takes for sound to be transferred between its original source and its destination — in two separate ways: celebrating it through Ray Lustig's *Latency Canons*, and witnessing its elimination with my work *Cohere*. For the October 2021 performance, ACO supported the synchronous performance of an orchestra located in Hudson Yards, three string quartets located in Murray Hill and the United Kingdom, and soloists in different locales across the world. [Watch Cohere 1 on YouTube](#).

COHERE TOUCH: Expanding on *Cohere 1*, I built an A/V Playground system that produces visuals and audio that react to the audience, allowing artists working remotely to “play” with the concepts of latency, lag, and delay. The commission was developed via ACO’s EarShot CoLABoratory program, which provided 2 working rehearsals with musicians, and resources to test new technologies. [Watch Cohere Touch on YouTube.](#)

IMPACT

Not only did we create something unique and beautiful, but I gained a new mindset.

I came out of the program feeling more experienced and empowered. And the work I created was introduced to many other individuals in a position to hire me.

As Lyndsay mentioned, my ACO fellowship led to dozens of new gigs in the past 4 years. With ACO, I have continued to play with the orchestra at Carnegie Hall, teach music to NYC students, have my work published with Boosey & Hawkes, an international publisher, and have a commercial recording planned for future release.

Below, I have listed the many opportunities I’ve gained as a result of my work with ACO:

- \$10,000 commission grant from New York State Council on the Arts
- Residencies with University of Tennessee Knoxville and Alfred University Institute for Electronic Arts
- Adjunct Faculty position teaching Electronic Music at Drew University
- Founded my own nonprofit called [En.J.inn Arts](#)
- Multi-year NYSCA grant of \$15,000 for En.J.innArts
- Gigs as a violist with the American Composers Orchestra for 4 workshops and concerts
- Featured violist on the 2023 Grammy-winning Best Instrumental Composition “Refuge” by Geoffrey Keezer
- Performances of *Cohere 1* with University Tennessee Knoxville and Symphony of Northwest Arkansas
- Professional recording of *Cohere Touch* will be released on Platoon, Apple Music's record label
- *Cohere Touch* is published by the American Composers Orchestra's Earshot Publishing, in partnership with Boosey & Hawkes, an international leader in music publishing.
- Virtual and in-person events for Make Music Day 2023, presented by Trevor New, EnJinn Arts, the ART Effect, Supported by the Poughkeepsie Public Arts Commission
- Secured an ongoing position within ACO’s Sonic Spark educational programs as a teaching artist
- With ACO and Detroit Symphony Orchestra, created a Sonic Spark Lab residency linking students from NYC and Detroit using *Cohere Touch*, the interactive technology system developed via his CoLABoratory fellowship, as a networked learning environment

I echo Lyndsay’s request for the council to support the American Composers Orchestra with a \$50,000 grant. These funds will enable composers to pursue different ways of making music, share this creativity with New York City residents, and secure future employment across the country. This is an orchestra that truly speaks to right now.

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 submitting written testimony on behalf of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) at this hearing today.

New York City is a world-class cultural hub and leader in science education. Workforce development programs within the cultural sector are vital in cultivating the next generation of talent, providing young people with opportunities to explore and pursue careers in the arts and sciences. By introducing youth to these dynamic fields, workforce development programs not only spark lifelong engagement but also lay the foundation for meaningful career pathways in the cultural sector and scientific field. Workforce development programs in cultural institutions are not just about building individual careers; they are vital for maintaining vibrant, resilient, and inclusive cultural ecosystems.

SCI Network

At the forefront of these efforts to create pathways in the cultural sector 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 2025, SCI Network NYC funding supports AMNH's Science Research Mentorship Program (SRMP) and the Museum Education Experience Program (MEEP), two flagship workforce development initiatives.

SRMP is an intensive one-year program, with a \$1,500 stipend, for high school students to conduct original scientific research alongside Museum biologists, astrophysicists, earth and planetary scientists, and anthropologists. Students are placed with research mentors at the Museum where they work on an authentic project after school during the academic year. AMNH typically serves about 60 students per year through this program. In addition to this work, AMNH leads a citywide consortium of high school research mentoring programs that has reached over 5,000 students in the past decade.

MEEP prepares 60 New Yorker City college students aged 18-24 years old, for careers in education, science communication, and museum careers more broadly through a 150-hour internship program with a \$2,500 stipend provided. MEEP equips interns with visitor-centered communication skills, scientific facilitation techniques, and professional development opportunities. Interns learn to balance content delivery with questioning strategies that emphasize scientific practices and phenomenon-based inquiry, while also fostering meaningful interactions by inviting visitors to share their own knowledge. Through this experience, interns develop expertise in exhibit-specific content, engage in critical reflection, and prepare for museum and related careers by addressing challenges like imposter syndrome and enhancing visitor engagement. By the program's conclusion, participants are adept at facilitating dynamic, meaningful conversations about science, contributing to the Museum's mission of promoting public understanding of science and culture. The skills gained through MEEP are highly transferable, benefiting careers in cultural institutions and other sectors that require strong communication and facilitation abilities. Next fiscal year, we plan to expand our impact by doubling the number of students served through a high school adaptation of this program. Our mission is to inspire New York City's youth at an earlier stage, introducing them to museum careers and equipping them with essential skills to pursue opportunities in the science and cultural sectors.

In Fiscal 2026, along with our partner institutions, AMNH requests \$2,000,000 from the City Council to continue to support this network, an increase of \$1,000,000 compared to the current fiscal year.

High School Internships

In addition to SRMP, AMNH offers two impactful programs that provide high school students with paid, hands-on, professional experience to prepare them for careers in STEM education. The long-standing Science Communication Internship (SCI) Program immerses students in 150 hours of science facilitation, where they engage the public in conversations about museum objects. Through this experience, students develop expertise in fields such as geology, anthropology, biology, and astrophysics, while receiving professional training in visitor engagement. This program not only equips students with valuable communication skills but also includes career brokering - guiding students to consider future career options and supporting them in pursuing their next internship. Our "Enhancing Exhibits" Internship (60 hours) prepares students for careers at the intersection of

informal science education and technology. Through Extended Reality (XR)-based design projects, participants engage in user experience design, problem framing, and audience engagement while students grapple with issues of cultural representation as they develop new stories for Museum exhibits.

Additional Workforce Development Programs at AMNH

The Museum's Master of Arts in Teaching Earth Science (MAT ESRP) trains Earth science teachers for high-needs public schools in New York City and beyond. Since the program's first cohort began in 2012, it has prepared 185 science teachers, reaching approximately 93,000 students in high-needs schools. Between 2014 and 2023, **50 percent of all newly certified NYC Earth science teachers were prepared at AMNH**. Furthermore, schools that have hired our graduates have seen an increase in the number of students taking the Earth Science Regents Exam. Findings from our first nine cohorts indicate that 93 percent of graduates have stayed in teaching for 3 or more years and 85 percent have stayed in teaching for 5 or more years, indicating that our retention rate is on par with, and even exceeds the average retention rate reported by residency programs - and is far above the national average. This success underscores the program's ability to meet critical workforce demands while fostering long-term educator commitment, particularly in STEM fields where shortages are most acute.

Challenges

Youth completing internship programs in the cultural sector often encounter significant challenges when transitioning from internships to secure employment. To bridge this gap, it is essential to provide additional support to connect these young professionals with employment opportunities across various industries—not only within the cultural sector but also in fields like hospitality, tourism, and industries that prioritize data analysis and other STEM-related skills. We think that government can help bridge this gap and facilitate connecting institutions like AMNH with various industries so that youth can engage in meaningful employment opportunities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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

Hon. Carlina Rivera, Chair

Hearing: Oversight - Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers

January 27, 2025

Thank you to Chair Rivera and the City Council for your support of cultural workforce development in New York City. My name is Kim Olsen, and I am the Executive Director of the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable. We are an arts education service organization working to improve and advance arts education in NYC through professional development, advocacy, regranting, and community-building.

I'm writing as part of the *It Starts with the Arts* coalition to testify on the importance of workforce development opportunities in the arts and culture sector.

According to the [Comptroller's most recent Creative Economy Dashboard](#) (2022), together NYC's Creative industries employed an estimated 274,000 people in 2022—up 3.4% from (265,000 in) 2017, and modestly exceeding the 2.2% increase in total employment in the city. A staggering 12.3% of our country's creative workforce jobs are based here in NYC alone. That's a lot of creative workers and creative jobs — that ultimately enable the creative sector to account for [13% of the city's total economic output](#).

At the Roundtable, we consider workforce development through the lens of continuing professionalization from recruitment and training into entry-level positions through leadership development opportunities. We don't want to just prepare folx to enter the workforce, we want to support their development and training into more senior level positions so that they can continue to work and grow in the sector.

For us, that takes the shape of working with CUNY Cultural Corps to provide professional development to their cohort in addition to hosting an intern. As a service organization, we work with hundreds of organizations and thousands of arts workers each year, providing professional development opportunities to support growth at all points of the workforce. These opportunities, including our NYS Teaching Artist Mentorship Program, offer skills- and network-building as vehicles for career advancement and sustainability. We also host an annual Arts and Cultural Jobs Fair each May, featuring 40-50 hiring organizations - helping connect jobseekers with opportunities in the field.

When talking about arts and workforce development, I would be remiss if I did not also mention how critical arts education opportunities are to preparing our city's workforce of tomorrow.

[Research](#) shows arts education programs prepare students for the 21st century workforce, by developing the skills necessary to acquire and retain a job. Such key competencies developed through arts education including: problem solving, attention to nuance, adaptability, empathy, visualization of goals and outcomes, decision-making, and more.

In addition to supporting general workforce competencies, arts competencies in themselves can be highly marketable skills in today's economy. It's for all of these reasons that we recommend arts education be present at all NYC schools and that our city works to facilitate more intentional interaction between education, economic development, and arts policy leaders.

Workforce development programs are critical to providing hands-on experience, fostering professional networks, and bridging the gap between education and employment. Meaningful workforce development programs today, means a strong cultural workforce tomorrow.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Kimberly Olsen
Executive Director
NYC Arts in Education Roundtable
Email: kolsen@nycaieroundtable.org

SOURCES

- Spotlight: New York City's Creative Economy:
<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/spotlight-new-york-citys-creative-economy/>
- The Creative Economy: Art, Culture and Creativity in New York City:
<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-creative-economy/#:~:text=Altogether%2C%20the%20sector%20is%20responsible,part%20of%20the%20knowledge%20economy>
- The Impact of Arts Education on Workforce Preparation:
<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100867>



To Whom it May Concern:

The Brooklyn Academy of Music's Education Department champions our organizational mission to be "The home for adventurous artists, audience, and ideas." Our department takes seriously the mission's concept of home. Home can be a contentious word for some. Its meaning varies for all, but it is our hope at BAM to attempt to define and redefine its meaning based on the young people's, families', and educators' needs in our spaces. This definition extends far beyond what happens on our stages and in our classrooms.

Home for us is what happens in the in between. It's how right before a class Sarina or Amari can come to our offices and get advice, complete homework, discover the space. It's the deepening of the love of the art form that happens after seeing a show and the way our Arts & Justice devised theater program ensemble talks about the direction of the performance and the actors' choices on stage. It's the idea that is sparked from seeing professional artists excelling at their craft and informing the staging of our students' own work. It's the participants being able to see themselves as artists. Them taking seriously the ideas they cultivate in and outside of our spaces. It's the coming to fruition of their scenes and crystallizing as a full performance on our stages. This is home, or an extension of it—a new definition of which we attribute our own meaning. This is the impact of art.

What is art? The Oxford Dictionary defines it as, "the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination. Works [are meant] to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power." How can community not only foster, but be, art, a home? The answer is an undertaking BAM Education seeks to explore and employ in our work with schools, families, and youth. That expression of the human imagination, or art, also exists in the ways in which our participants envision their role at BAM and in our larger society. From recruitment, to application, to acceptance into our programs, from concept to final showing to program completion, our participants always come back home.

Art is the conduit for what is possible, and the community fostered in those spaces keep our programs full and engaged. I am reminded of a stellar young person who matriculated through several facets of BAM's programming. Her name is Patreece Jackman. Patreece started as an intern in BAM's Brooklyn Interns for Arts and Culture (BIAC) program.

Back in 2016 when she was a high school junior, the program prepared her for a career in arts administration, paired her with a BAM staff mentor, and supported her workforce development skills through her appointment as an intern for our president's office (all twelve students in her cohort were placed in various departments throughout BAM to cultivate their exploration into administrative arts careers). Patreece then graduated from the program and began her tenure as

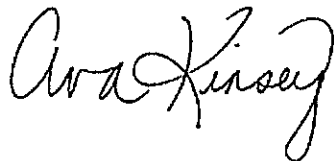
the Education Department's Alumni Intern. After her internship contract ended Patreece was then hired as the Program Coordinator for BIAC, the very program that piqued her interest in arts-based careers. During her time in the program, she made art, maintained her tasks and responsibilities in her assigned BAM department, and sought opportunity after opportunity with BAM. When asked why she continued with BAM well after her program ended, she expressed that BAM was, you guessed it, home. What was poured into her, she wanted to pour back into the institution. This space nurtured her. We were an extension of her community.

Her involvement in our programs led to her improving and extending the reach of the BIAC program. Patreece led several focus groups to gauge students' thoughts on how programs could shift and grow. During the pandemic she led one such focus group where she uncovered that students graduating from BIAC wanted to continue working with BAM to specifically hone their artistic skills as emerging artists. After hearing this specific feedback from the participants, Patreece pitched the development of our alumni arts incubator, Creative Career Collective, where alumni from any of BAM's program can apply for a paid fellowship to build their portfolio, develop their artistic voice and skill, and receive professional mentorship in their discipline. This program has successfully seen five cohorts matriculate since 2022. This is an example of how one young person helped to shape and inform the landscape of our program as a direct result of the nurturing and support she was given while at BAM.

This proves that BAM *is* a home. And that home is informed by the people that dwell within its four walls. That artistic home's impact is determined by the programs it produces. Those programs that give space to the next generation of arts administrators, like Patreece, who will take the mantle and keep New York an artistic home for us all. Please keep programs like BIAC that exist at so many cultural institutions alive. For every Patreece, there are scores of young people waiting to have similar opportunities and to find comparable communities. We need experiences such as this for our current generation of young people now more than ever.

I submit this letter humbly to your committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ava Kinsey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ava Kinsey
Director of Education
Brooklyn Academy of Music
E: akinsey@bam.org



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

Hon. Carlina Rivera, Chair

Hearing: Oversight - Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers

January 27, 2025

Thank you to Chair Rivera and the City Council for your support of cultural workforce development in New York City. My name is **Juan Castaño, Executive Director & Co-Founder of Calpulli Mexican Dance Company** based in Queens, NY. I'm writing as part of the It Starts with the Arts coalition to testify on the importance of workforce development opportunities in the arts and culture sector.

The mission of Calpulli Mexican Dance Company is to celebrate the rich diversity of Mexican cultural heritage via dance including live music. We accomplish our mission by producing professional performances via our international touring company, designing arts in education experiences for students of all ages and learning abilities, and leading donation-based community classes that offer training and enrichment in the performing arts to all ages. Artists, Teaching Artists, and Arts Administrators/ Mission Support Staff are essential to making all this possible.

Our organization is delivering the following to promote pathways for careers in the arts and culture:

- Continuous training of artistic staff especially Dancers
- Shadowing and on the job training for Teaching Assistants who develop into Teaching Artists
- Apprenticeships in traditional garment making and in dance
- Career development that connect community classes to intensive training to hiring by the professional Company
- On the job training and shadowing of Arts administration roles to train more Program Coordinators and Program Managers

Our efforts have led to the following for our organization:

- 7 Performing Artists (Dancers & Musicians) working more fully in the arts as Performers, Teaching Artists, and Arts Administrators
- 4 long time Community Students transitioning to and joining the professional Company of dancers
- 12 Community students in intensive weekly training sessions

Externally, they have led to the following in 2024 alone:

- \$430K paid to artists in fees and salaries
- 40 part time jobs in the arts
- 76,000 audiences reached
- 17,000 students served
- Over 300 community classes, over 1,000 of performing arts training
- 145 weekly community students
- And much more, please see the following visual summary -



915,000
Views across all platforms



\$430,000
Paid to Artists



76,000
Total audiences



13,000
Student audiences



300
Calpulli Community classes



145
Calpulli Community students



83
School-time assemblies



50
Company performances



40
Artists employed by Calpulli



2
Strategic plans

www.calpullidance.org | 718.507.2617 | 2512 77th St., East Elmhurst, NY 11370

Workforce development programs are critical to providing hands-on experience, fostering professional networks, and bridging the gap between education and employment. Meaningful workforce development programs today, means a strong cultural workforce tomorrow.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,



Juan Castaño, MBA
Executive Director & Co-Founder
Calpulli Mexican Dance Company
castano@calpullidance.org
Mobile: 917-693-8265

Testimony of Rachel Neches
Data Researcher, Center for an Urban Future
Before the NYC Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers.
January 24, 2024

Good morning! My name is Rachel Neches. I am the Data Researcher at the Center for an Urban Future, an independent research organization focused on building a stronger and more equitable New York City.

I'll be sharing testimony prepared for today's hearing by our Editorial and Policy Director, Eli Dvorkin. Thank you for the opportunity.

I'd like to begin by commending Chair Rivera and the committee for highlighting the importance of strengthening the city's creative economy and expanding pathways into the arts and culture workforce for New Yorkers.

The creative economy—including advertising, film and tv, fashion, architecture and design, and independent artists—employs more than 300,000 New Yorkers, has grown significantly over the past two decades, and pays well above the citywide median wage. But these industries have a long way to go before they look like New York City.

Our recent report found that Black workers hold fewer than 8 percent of the city's advertising jobs, while comprising nearly 21 percent of the city's total workforce. In fact, New Yorkers of color are underrepresented across the creative economy.

There are a number of actions that the city should take to help expand access to careers in culture and the broader creative economy. One of the most important next steps should be to launch a Creative Economy Talent Pipeline initiative aimed at boosting career pathways for underrepresented New Yorkers into the city's creative sector.

This effort should incubate and expand initiatives in partnership with creative economy employers and nonprofits, many of which receive little if any city funding today; replicate the success of CUNY 2X Tech for the creative sector through a "CUNY 2X Creative" initiative; and build on innovative partnerships developed by some of the city's Career and Technical Education high schools.

The city also has an opportunity to put artists to work by addressing some of New York's big challenges, harnessing their creativity to advance solutions in housing, education, climate change, and more. A renewed, ongoing version of the NYC Artists Corps could help do just that.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and for bringing attention to the importance of expanding pathways to creative careers.



**Remarks to NYC City Council's
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Hon. Carlina Rivera, Chair
Hearing: Oversight - Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers**

January 27, 2025 (Expanded comments for written submission)

Good afternoon. I'm Karen Jolicoeur, Executive Director of Creative Art Works, and it's my pleasure to speak with you today about the vital need for—and positive impacts of—our creative workforce development programs.

CAW is a 39-year-old youth development nonprofit working in the visual and multimedia arts. Our longstanding [Public Art Youth Employment](#) programs are provided in direct alignment with our mission to equip NYC's young people with essential tools and skills; to connect them to their communities, academic lives, and career opportunities; and to inspire new possibilities for the future.

Each year, among other things, we provide nearly 300 teens and young adults with apprenticeships in the creation of large-scale public art, and multimedia, like documentary film and character design. These are offered in partnership with companies commissioning youth-created art; city and state agencies like DYCD and the Family Courts; Career and Technical Education high schools, and more.

These programs—the most cost- and labor-intensive that we run, with critical support from Cultural Affairs, City Council, and private foundations—not only enhance art and design skills, but also develop collaboration, client, communication and leadership skills—those coveted “soft skills” so sought by employers. And they provide remuneration and real work experience on a résumé.

In New York City, it really does “start with the arts”! Comptroller Brad Lander's recent [Spotlight on NYC's Creative Economy](#) observed that it is a “defining economic sector for [the city] – on par with finance, real estate or law.”

And yet these pathways can be opaque or exclusionary to the young people we serve. Programs like ours develop a pipeline for teens and young adults to learn about, and gain access to, creative and adjacent careers. (They also provide meaningful work for some of New York's fine teaching artists.) A former Youth Apprentice is our full-time program coordinator, and several have become teaching artist assistants.

Approximately 73% of organizations surveyed for the World Economic Forum's 2023 [Future of Jobs](#) report stated that creative thinking skills were a top priority for them, and that this skill set is increasing in relevance and importance. Further, a [Statista survey](#) published in September of that year reported that more than 70% of companies consider creative thinking and analytical thinking to be the skills most expected to rise in importance between 2023 and 2027.

The skills our Youth Apprentices learn therefore serve them well wherever they may go: This past summer, 90% of participants said they applied skills they learned to other parts of their lives, 100% felt well prepared for their client pitch, and 99% felt their creative skills improved over the course of the program. We also saw a 41% increase in those professing comfort with public speaking.

It's encouraging that these pathways have garnered your attention here today; we look forward to working together to sustain and expand these essential opportunities for NYC youth, our future workforce.

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

Hon. Carlina Rivera, Chair

Hearing: Oversight - Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers

January 27, 2025

Good morning, Chairperson Rivera and members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs. My name is Sarah Calderon, Executive Director of Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

CRNY is a three-year, \$125 million statewide initiative funded by private philanthropy to promote the financial stability of New York artists and the organizations that employ them. We believe artists are workers who deserve equitable, sustainable support structures, and whose wellbeing is vital to New York's social and economic well-being. We provided Guaranteed Income for 2,400 artists and worked with 100 community-based organizations to provide artist employment and benefits for 300 artists throughout the State.

Despite their outsized impact on the economy, artists often live on the edge of hardship and economic uncertainty. 60% of artists in New York are making less than \$25K, and in a CRNY-survey conducted of more than 2,300 artists, more than half of respondents have no financial safety net and carry unmanageable debt.

Our work promotes the need for a sustainable creative economy through research, advocacy, and policy. CRNY partnered with HR&A Advisors to convene policymakers, policy experts, funders, advocates, and artists in a series of collaborative virtual and in-person workshops to advance targeted policy efforts that support the livelihoods and financial security of artists as workers. The playbook includes nineteen policy recommendations. We will focus on two of the Playbook's four workforce development recommendations: expanding accessible internship and apprenticeship opportunities within cultural institutions and developing training programs to increase access to fast-growing creative industry jobs.

Our first proposal, concerning internships and apprenticeships: There are significant barriers to employment in non-profit arts administration, specifically high educational requirements, low pay, and relatively few opportunities for on-the-job training, such as paid internships and apprenticeships. We recommend advancing a set of parallel efforts to expand accessible internship and apprenticeship opportunities in New York's cultural institutions, beginning with growing the capacity of the CUNY Cultural Corps program. The CUNY Cultural Corps program is an internship program that pays CUNY students to work at various cultural institutions across NYC.

A parallel effort focused on apprenticeships and supporting arts organizations to design apprenticeship curricula is recommended. Several cultural institutions offer apprenticeships, including the New York City Center and the Brooklyn Museum. The programs have proven successful, and there are opportunities to expand the number and diversity of New Yorkers who can benefit from these kinds of experiences. City Council should support cultural institutions across the city to design apprenticeship curricula and to develop programs that align with New York State Department of Labor certifications, or to propose new ones. The key is to begin with organizations that have already developed robust training programs.

Our second proposal, concerning fast-growing creative industries: The Film/Television, Software/Digital Media, and Advanced Manufacturing industries will generate thousands of jobs in the coming years that will afford New Yorkers opportunities to earn a living in ways that align with their creative interests and talents. We recommend the City invest in and facilitate the development of specialized workforce development programs that provide opportunities for creative workers to learn the specialized skills and emerging technologies that can complement the valuable creative skills they already possess to prepare them for employment opportunities within select high-growth creative industries.

Analysis of the specific industry niches, employers, occupations, and skills that should be targeted for this effort, informed by the approach in NYC's Green Economy Action Plan, can help develop a pilot program involving selecting training providers and target employers that can be informed by other pilots happening across the country. Arts Alliance Illinois is in the process of developing an Arts-Tech Workforce Pilot that aims to provide artists with opportunities to learn new software skills and connect them with employment opportunities in Chicago's software/digital media industry. Though still in development, a key lesson emerging from this initiative is that a set of prominent employers need to be early champions of the project and that those employers must proactively inform training programs but would also benefit from guidance and training about how to successfully work with artists/creatives that are making career transitions.

In conclusion, we believe strongly that expanding accessible internship and apprenticeship opportunities in NYC's cultural institutions and supporting training programs to increase access for creative New Yorkers to fast-growing creative industry jobs are integral to creating economic security for our creative workers.

Thank you.

Testimony to City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations

Submitted to the City Council Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations on January 30, 2025

Prepared by Melinda Wang, Research and Advocacy Manager of Dance/NYC

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony, submitted on behalf of Dance/NYC (Dance.NYC), 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.

In 2022, we **launched our Dance.Workforce.Resilience Initiative (DWR)**. The DWR initiative aims to address economic inequity and strengthen the dance ecology by reducing the gap between dance workers and the resources they need to thrive. **Through the work of the initiative, we learned that workforce development must go beyond training for the point of entry.** The obstacles that dance workers face throughout their career are immense, ranging from financial precarity to lack of union protections to lack of professional development opportunities. **As such, arts workforce development doesn't just mean developing individuals for the workforce— it means developing the larger workforce infrastructure that is necessary to support the individuals within it.**

The DWR Initiative seeks to advance economic justice in the dance workforce through a few key elements:

- **Action-oriented research through our State of NYC Dance 2023 Report** that allows us to understand the issues in the workforce
- **Advocacy through our Our New York City Dance Campaign**, which provided dance workers and entities with the tools to create a more equitable dance workforce.
- **Free and accessible resources through our Dance.Workforce.Resilience Hub** to support dance workers in sustaining and advancing their careers. The hub includes a resource library, our newly launched Dance Workforce Directory to help connect the dance ecosystem, and a compensation tool to advance fair wages.

The *State of NYC Dance 2023: Findings from the Dance Industry Census*, is Dance/NYC's most recent sector-wide study. It includes a first-of-its-kind effort to gather a critical mass of

information on the economic realities of individuals and entities working in the sector, to better understand their relationships to one another, and to more accurately capture their stories. We surveyed 27% of the estimated 6,000 dance workers and 23% of the estimated 1,700 entities. In addition, nearly 250 dance workers provided input at nine roundtable discussions. It was supported by two advisory groups.

We found that the dance workforce is contending with systemic inequity, changing audience participation, and ever-evolving revenue models. **On average, dance workers earn about 15% below NYC's living wage, while dancers and choreographers earn about \$23K. Immigrant and transgender/gender-expansive (TGE) dance workers earn even less.** This is making work in dance increasingly unsustainable, causing **54% of dance workers to have to work outside of dance to make ends meet.**¹ Our workers are holding jobs in education, healthcare, wellness, and hospitality, all while attending classes, scrambling between rehearsals, and making meaningful art that contributes to the fabric of our civic life.

Yet, dance workers continue to persist. 70% of workers consider dance work to be a permanent career, and the most common feeling people report having towards their dance career is fulfilled. All of this research shows we must do more to support our workers throughout their career. **If dance workers cannot find dignified work with living wages and benefits, it becomes very difficult for low-income and marginalized students to enter the dance workforce. Economic justice is workforce development, because without it, even the most skilled dancer or administrator cannot sustain a career.**

Dance workers cannot be left behind in the decisions that affect their lives and impact NYC's cultural community. A sustainable, resilient, and thriving dance workforce in New York City isn't just about access to training— it requires us to take action to make dance an attainable profession that workers can thrive in. **We ask City Council to join us to advance the dance and broader arts workforce by:**

- 1) **Creating thriving and living wage standards for dance and other arts workers across roles.** This might include allocating funding for organizations to raise wages for artists and workers, setting prevailing wage requirements for city-funded arts projects, and piloting guaranteed income programs for artists.
- 2) **Ensuring benefits and workplace protections for dance and other gig workers.** According to our research, 37% of dance workers have no health insurance and 82% have no access to mental healthcare. Much of this is due to dance's role in the gig economy— 29% of dance workers have worked 5+ jobs in dance over the past year.¹ A **city-run**

¹ State of NYC Dance

portable benefits program for cultural workers could help make work in dance more attainable and safe.

- 3) Supporting fair hiring practices in dance and the arts that address systemic inequities and accessibility.** This might include continued data collection on the arts workforce, like the Department of Cultural Affairs's 2016 Cultural Workforce Demographics study. It might also include supporting programs that convene arts employers to share best practices, or that make job opportunities more accessible to all, like our Dance Workforce Directory.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Council and organizations across the city to create a stronger dance workforce across the whole life cycle of a dance worker.



**New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce Hearing Testimony
January 27, 2025**

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 serves over 6,200 people each year from all 51 City Council Districts and beyond, and we invest nearly \$1M in employing over 100 local artists and arts workers each year.

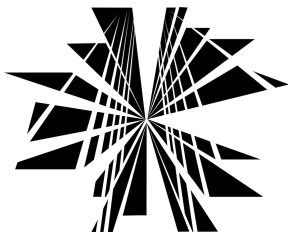
Our five key service programs support pathways to careers in arts and culture, especially for youth from underrepresented communities. [Dancewave Through College and Beyond](#) (DTCB), is the nation's only workforce development program for dance of its size and scope. DTCB aims to ensure that professional training and collegiate dance programs reflect the breadth and diversity of the field, and provides year-round education and resources to support youth with their first steps towards professional careers in the arts. DTCB has facilitated over 3,000 successful transitions into higher education and training in the arts with over \$16M in college scholarships awarded through our program alone.

Dancewave is uniquely positioned to provide focused career development support, helping youth to understand, prepare for, and navigate the vast arts career options available to them. We intentionally prioritize outreach to our vast network of NYC School partners, where we engage thousands of students each year, as well as peer arts organizations such as Jamel Gaines Creative Outlet, MOVE|NYC|, and more. We provide free access to DTCB for NYC youth who otherwise would not have access to the program, or who may not feel that a career in the arts is possible.

With the arts generating over 117,000 jobs in the NY metropolitan area and providing a \$5.6B impact on the local economy, connecting young artists with workforce development programs like DTCB will only help to strengthen our city. I encourage the Committee to consider how local community-based organizations like Dancewave can serve as a resource for the NYC City Council, including, but not limited to, informing and supporting proposed legislation like the jointly-sponsored Int. No. 700, a Local Law to establish a college admissions counseling program, requiring the Department of Youth and Community Development to establish a program that provides counseling, resources and other support to these prospective college students and their families in applying to college. These initiatives should be fully inclusive of local efforts like DTCB that support college preparation and career development in the arts.

Thank you,

Nicole Touzien
Executive Director



DANCEWAVE

Through College & Beyond

Dancewave Through College & Beyond (DTCB) is the nation's most comprehensive workforce development program for young artists.



750+
Students
and families
served annually



100%
of Students
accepted to
higher education
institutions



\$1 million
in College
Scholarships
generated for
Students
annually

DTCB PROVIDES ESSENTIAL RESOURCES FOR YOUNG ARTISTS THAT DO NOT OTHERWISE EXIST. WE SEEK SUPPORT TO EXPAND THE CAPACITY OF THIS PROGRAM TO ENSURE THAT THE MOST VULNERABLE NEW YORKERS ARE GIVEN PRIORITY ACCESS TO THIS FUTURE-AFFIRMING PROGRAM.

Learn more about how DTCB is revolutionizing college admissions for young artists in New York state by visiting dtcb.dancewave.org or reaching out to our team at dtcb@dancewave.org.



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

Hon. Carlina Rivera, Chair

Hearing: Oversight - Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers

January 27, 2025

Good morning Council Members,

Thank you to Chair Rivera and the City Council for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Stephanie Nantell, and I serve as Senior Director of Programs at Education Through Music (ETM), a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing music education to underserved students in under-resourced schools in New York City.

For over 30 years, ETM has been committed to improving the quality of education in New York City public schools by integrating music education into the core curriculum. ETM partners with 54 schools to support 20,000 students each year in all five boroughs and in almost every community in the city. We provide trained music teachers, instruments, a comprehensive music curriculum, and one hundred hours of teacher professional development to ensure a thriving music program at all of our partner schools.

Today, I am here to highlight our role in workforce development for music teachers and our efforts to help them achieve certification to teach in the New York City public school system.

The shortage of qualified music educators in New York City schools is a significant barrier to equitable access to arts education. According to the most recent NYC Department of Education Annual Arts in Schools [report](#), over 700 NYC public schools still do not have a music teacher. And, sadly, the children at these schools are overwhelmingly [low-income](#) and children of color.

ETM directly addresses this challenge by providing quality teachers because of our robust professional development programs, mentorship opportunities, and a clear pathway for aspiring teachers to achieve state certification. Through our workforce development initiatives, we aim not only to prepare exceptional music educators but also to create stable, fulfilling career opportunities for individuals passionate about teaching and the arts.

Our teacher training and certification programs are designed to meet the needs of educators at various stages of their careers. This includes:

- **Professional Development:** ETM offers extensive training in music pedagogy, classroom management, and culturally responsive teaching practices. Our

workshops and seminars are tailored to prepare teachers for the unique challenges of working in diverse, high-need schools.

- **Mentorship and Support:** Each teacher in our program is paired with a dedicated mentor—an experienced music educator who provides guidance, feedback, and encouragement. This mentorship ensures that our teachers are well-equipped to inspire and engage their students.
- **Certification Assistance:** ETM collaborates with higher education institutions and other stakeholders to help teachers navigate the certification process, including meeting New York State requirements and passing necessary exams. Our support system includes test preparation, coursework recommendations, and financial assistance for certification fees.

We thank the City Council for prioritizing arts education and continuing to support initiatives that strengthen the workforce development opportunities for teachers.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with the City Council to allow programs like ours to provide more teachers with the opportunity for training and certification support which will help expand access to music education to more underserved schools.

Together, we can ensure that every child in New York City has access to the transformative power of music education while also building a strong, diverse workforce of skilled educators.

Thank you for your time and for your continued support of arts education.

###

EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO NEW YORK

Testimony to the New York City Council

Testimony to the New York City Council: Oversight - Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers

Dear Honorable members of the Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Cynthia Carrión, and I am here representing El Museo del Barrio, an institution with over fifty years of history in amplifying and celebrating Latino, Caribbean, and Latin American culture in New York City. El Museo del Barrio is committed to fostering a cultural workforce that is as diverse and vibrant as the communities it serves.

As one of the nation's most influential Latino cultural institutions, we know firsthand how important it is to create and sustain pathways into the arts and cultural workforce for individuals from underrepresented communities. Our programs, exhibitions, and initiatives reflect the richness and diversity of our city, and we remain deeply committed to continue to serve as a pipeline for aspiring artists, curators, administrators, and other cultural workers.

Institutions such as El Museo del Barrio, because of their anchor status in communities like East Harlem and their longstanding role as bastions of Nuyorican and Latino traditions and cultural production, have been essential gateways to the arts and cultural workforce for individuals from historically marginalized backgrounds in the arts. For many Latinos interested in pursuing a career in the arts, El Museo del Barrio has been a formative starting point, and countless individuals are part of the museum's informal alumni network. Simply by its existence, El Museo empowers young people to envision themselves as leaders in the cultural field and provides tangible opportunities to actualize that vision.

I want to take a moment to highlight the impact of El Museo del Barrio's former staff, whose careers continue to shape the cultural landscape in profound ways. Many leaders in the arts began their journeys at El Museo, finding not only professional opportunities but also a deep commitment to cultural advocacy and equity. For instance, former NYC Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Gonzalo Casals started his career at El Museo before going on to lead major institutions. Suzy Delvalle, now Interim Co-Chief Executive Officer of Americans for the Arts, also has roots at El Museo. Former El Museo curators such as Deborah Cullen-Morales, now Senior Program Officer for Arts and Culture at the Mellon Foundation, and Rocío Aranda-Alvarado, Senior Program Officer for Creativity and Free Expression at the Ford Foundation, exemplify the museum's role in nurturing leaders in the field.

El Museo's commitment to fostering the next generation of arts professionals extends beyond its staff to initiatives like its partnership with CUNY Cultural Corps, which provides internship opportunities for emerging professionals. Among them, Chelsey Pellot transitioned from an intern to El Museo's Government and Community Affairs Manager before moving on to the Whitney Museum of American Art, where she now serves as Assistant Manager of Foundation and Government Relations. These individuals—and many others—demonstrate how El Museo serves as to uplift diverse talent, empowering cultural leaders who continue to advance the arts and amplify Latino voices in institutions across the country.

However, we cannot do this alone. To ensure that the cultural workforce reflects the full spectrum of New York City's communities, the City must prioritize and invest in organizations rooted in diverse neighborhoods.

EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO NEW YORK

Institutions like El Museo del Barrio are uniquely positioned to bridge gaps in access and equity, but we require targeted support to scale these efforts effectively.

We respectfully ask the Council to consider the following actionable ideas to strengthen cultural workforce pathways:

1. **Invest in Pipeline Development Programs:** Establish dedicated funding for internship, fellowship, and apprenticeship programs within community-rooted cultural organizations. This funding should support stipends, mentorship opportunities, and skills training to ensure equitable access for participants from low-income households.
2. **Enhance Partnerships with DOE and CUNY:** Develop stronger collaborations between cultural organizations and schools, particularly in underserved neighborhoods, to provide early exposure to careers in the arts and cultural sector. Programs could include field trips, artist residencies, and mentorship opportunities tied to arts curricula.
3. **Support Workforce Development Grants:** Create a workforce development grant program for cultural organizations that focuses on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives in hiring, training, and leadership development.
4. **Expand DCLA Capacity-Building Initiatives:** Increase resources for capacity-building programs offered by the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) to help smaller and mid-sized institutions design and implement workforce diversity programs tailored to their communities.
5. **Leverage Public Space and City-Owned Assets:** Provide free or low-cost access to city-owned spaces for arts education and workforce development programming, ensuring these spaces are easily accessible to communities of color and underserved populations.

El Museo del Barrio has long served as a model of what is possible when cultural institutions are deeply embedded in their communities. We are committed to continuing this work, but meaningful progress toward a diverse cultural workforce will require the City's partnership and investment.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your commitment to fostering a more equitable and inclusive cultural landscape for all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Carrión
Director Government and Community Affairs
El Museo del Barrio
1230 Fifth Avenue NY, NY 10029
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January 27, 2025

**Testimony to New York City Council
Irondale Ensemble's Tech Track Program**

Of the many programs we run for children and youth, that pass on the knowledge of a theatre ensemble with a 40+ year history, is the Irondale Tech Track. A semester-long program that enables students to study and practice the crafts of theatre production: scenic design, lighting design, costume design, stage management and all the elements that make the onstage theatrical production possible.

When we think about theatre education our minds immediately go to getting our students to act, to improvise to move, to write. And for over 40 years, in almost every borough of the City, in almost every school, Irondale did just that. We left our footprint.

But when we moved into our first permanent home now called The Space at Irondale, in the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church in Ft. Greene and when we established youth ensembles of students 10-18 years old, we were presented with a new challenge. We found that some of our students, who thought of Irondale as an artistic home, really preferred being behind the scenes. They still wanted to make theatre, but they wanted to do it from backstage as designers, builders, producers and so, first as an experiment, then as a regular part of our season, we brought our resident design team and our technical staff into the mix. And the kids responded.

We were lucky. We had and have a fully equipped theatre for them to play with. A fine grid and lighting system and a sound system that is going to get even better thanks to City Council Capital Funding. We had actors, in our professional ensemble that they could talk with and watch rehearse and we had our youth ensembles: The Young Company Teen Ensemble and the Junior Company Middle School ensemble that the Tech Trackers could design, build and crew for in the end of year public performances.

We found that so many of the life-skills that we were used to developing in our young actors could also be developed in Tech Track. Namely, teamwork, critical thinking, theatrical literacy and the ability to see the physical designs they imagine become realities.

Plus they become pretty proficient creating models, building scenery and designing costumes and they learn the technology of theatre making. These skills will benefit them throughout their lives, whether they continue in theatre or not.

Howie was a student who showed up one day looking like he'd been sent to Tech Track as punishment. He expressed no interest whatsoever, but at least he stayed. The next I heard

about Howie, he was very vocally and very passionately expressing his visions of stage design and letting the others know what they were doing wrong. He was heard to say about another student's design: "I don't get it. That's dumb. You're building a set with 4 walls ,but there's an audience, right? How can they possibly see through the 4th wall? – Of course he was right. He is still expressing himself and still thinking critically about the work he is creating in Tech Track.

The program is small and has room for growth. Currently it is budgeted at \$25,000 for a semester and we hope to expand it into a full year program with guest instructors and additional opportunities for them to create, learn to produce, market and budget theatrical productions.

Terry Greiss

Executive Director, Irondale Ensemble Project

Good day,

I bring you greetings from the Jamaica Center for Arts And Learning, located on Jamaica Avenue, in Southeast Queens. We are the only CIG in this part of Queens. We operate out of two buildings, serving our community in the discipline of dance, theater, music, visual arts, and arts education. Today I will avoid speaking of our mission or glowingly about our freshly minted five-year strategic plan. What I will tell you about is Daniel. Daniel, JPAC, he apprehensively asked to see the manager. The manager, yours truly at the time, saw a young black boy filled with bewilderment. His name was Daniel, he lived with his three older brothers and one younger sister with their mom next to the 40 Projects. "Can I work here?" He asked, while admiring the lights in the grid. "Can I volunteer?" He paused. "I'll do it for free." He left his number and promised to come back for a visit. A week later, we hired Daniel as an usher. He was affable, astute and inquisitive. By proximity and observation, he learned how to set up and operate our mobile audio system. He then became proficient at operating our space sound system. In six months, he became proficient at creating lighting cues for professional productions. He was learning these skills by sitting next to our tech staff. "I got skills yo!" Daniel would remark after solving a problem.

What happened with Daniel was not planned or strategically thought out. It was pure luck, but luck can be divine. By happenstance, perhaps even providence, we had the making of a Workforce Development program.

Where are we now?

In October 2023 JCAL, in partnership with the Jamaica YMCA, will launch a new workforce-development initiative called the **Stage and Screen Technical Apprenticeship (SSTA) program**. SSTA

will take place in the two venues operated by JCAL: the 400-seat Jamaica Performing Arts Center (JPAC) and the 94-seat studio theater at the Jamaica Arts Center (JAC). Both are located within walking distance of the Jamaica Y. SSTA will welcome its inaugural cohort of three apprentices in Fall 2023, followed by three more apprentices in Spring 2024. SSTA is funded, in part, through a grant from the Association for a Better New York.

SSTA consists of two main components: classroom instruction and practicum. During classroom sessions, apprentices will receive more intensive training on backstage and technical requirements, and front-of-house duties such as box-office management and ushering. They will also have expanded opportunities throughout the busy spring season.

Omayra Casiano will return to facilitate more advanced A/V workshops. Ms. Casiano plans to invite guest technicians and designers to give the apprentices varied viewpoints and experiences.

Workforce Development in arts and culture teaches transferable skills. It fosters opportunity and serves the interest of our local, global and multicultural community.

Let's keep the sound and lights on. Go Daniel!

My Name is Courtney Ffrench, Artistic Director, Jamaica Center for Arts And Learning

Thank you for listening.



International Intergroup Relations
Councilmember Carlina Rivera, Chair
Re: Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers

January 26, 2025

Dear Councilmember Rivera and Committee Members,

Thank you, Chair Rivera and members of the Committee, for taking the time to explore the deeply important topic of Pathways into the Arts and Culture Workforce, and for the opportunity to share testimony. My name is Tony Mazzocchi and I am the Executive Director Designate at Kaufman Music Center, as well as the Director of the John J. Cali School of Music at Montclair State University. Kaufman Music Center, located in Lincoln Square, is home to a concert hall (Merkin Hall), community arts school (Lucy Moses School), and K-12 public school (Special Music School). From our building at 129 West 67th Street, our programs provide accessible, affordable music education and performances to approximately 50,000 community members each year, including 5,000 students of all ages from across the five boroughs.

Musical training, a vital element of human enrichment and development, remains largely inaccessible to those without financial means. While community programs and arts exposure initiatives introduce students to basic music concepts, they oftentimes lack the immersive, personalized instruction critical for developing technical expertise and pursuing advanced studies. The prohibitive costs of such training—especially in cities like New York—along with additional expenses for instruments, travel, and resources, create significant barriers, particularly for youth from under-resourced communities. Ensuring broader access to musical immersion benefits not only aspiring musicians but also fosters creativity and emotional growth essential to all humans.

The consequences of this inequitable system extend beyond individual musical outcomes. When young people are denied access to rigorous musical training due to financial or cultural barriers, they lose not only the chance to develop technical expertise but also the profound benefits of a strong musical foundation. Musical study is unique in its ability to nurture collaborative skills, build resilience, and foster creativity—qualities that contribute to the development of well-rounded, empathetic individuals who are invested in their communities.

Through music, individuals learn to work together, communicate effectively, and find common purpose, creating bonds that transcend cultural and socioeconomic divides. When opportunities for such growth are withheld from historically underserved communities, the ripple effects are substantial, limiting pathways to higher education and professional careers in music. This exclusion diminishes the cultural and social fabric of our society, as diverse voices are underrepresented in the arts and, by extension, in our communities.

The statistics bear this out: only 8% of students entering top American conservatories between 2017 and 2020 identified as Black, 13% as Hispanic/Latinx, and 10% as Asian, according to

publicly available data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. Similarly, the proportion of American Indian, Asian, Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latinx students receiving degrees in visual and performing arts ranged from 0.5% to 17.5% in 2021-22, compared to 51.6% of White students. These disparities underscore the urgent need for greater accessibility to high-level musical training.

By addressing these barriers, we can create a more equitable system—one that not only empowers individuals to achieve musical excellence but also builds stronger, more inclusive communities where shared passion for the arts fosters connection, understanding, and collective progress.

As the Council well knows, creative solutions are needed to combat these circumstances and create pathways to musical achievement for those in underserved communities. And, at Kaufman Music Center, we are using innovative partnership models that help target students most in need of support.

Special Music School, founded in 1996 as a partnership between Kaufman Music Center and New York City Public Schools, provides daily music instruction alongside NYC Public Schools' academic curriculum, all within the school day. The Center fully funds the School's Music Program, thereby making a sequential music education free for around 300 K-12 students from across the five boroughs annually (at a cost of \$10,300 per student). Roughly one third of graduates go on to pursue music as a major in college, one third minor in music, and one third go on to other meaningful pursuits.

Our recently established Pathways program aims to address inequities in music education by identifying talented and motivated middle school students and helping them overcome barriers that might otherwise hinder their musical growth. Each student receives a personalized support plan, updated annually, and access to free music training, instruments, transportation stipends, and other essential resources—valued at approximately \$6,600 per participant. Students are selected in collaboration with public schools across the five boroughs and local community-based organizations. Following a highly successful pilot year, the Pathways program is poised for continued growth in the years ahead.

Innovative approaches like these are essential to combatting systemic inequities and building pathways to the arts for young people in our community, and we hope that the City will continue to invest in these types of models. We thank you, Council Member Rivera, for your interest in recognizing this challenge and exploring creative solutions that support the next generation of musicians.

Such that we can serve as a resource in the Council's efforts, we would welcome the opportunity to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Mazzocchi', written in a cursive style.

Tony Mazzocchi
Executive Director Designate

Lincoln Center

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Pathways for New Yorkers into the Arts and Cultural Workforce

Testimony submitted represents the resident organizations at Lincoln Center, including Chamber Music Society, Film at Lincoln Center, Jazz, The Juilliard School, Lincoln Center Theater, The Metropolitan Opera, New York City Ballet, New York Philharmonic, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, and School of American Ballet
January 27, 2025

Thank you, Chair Rivera and members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations for accepting testimony on creating pathways for New Yorkers into the arts and cultural workforce.

At the founding ceremony of Lincoln Center, John D. Rockefeller, III defined it as a place where “the arts are not for the privileged few, but for the many. Their place is not on the periphery of daily life, but at its center. They should function not merely as another form of entertainment but, rather, should contribute significantly to our well-being and happiness.” In bringing these leading institutions with different artistic disciplines together, we foster an appreciation of the arts, create pathways to an engaged workforce from porters to catering to line producers to the artists, and cultivate the next generation of arts leaders. As a high-impact cultural magnet in New York City, it takes thousands of employees to support the eleven vibrant organizations on the Lincoln Center campus. It is essential that our organizations and city invest in the trajectory of varied direct and indirect artistic careers within the cultural sector.

The curation of this talent pool starts with sparking a curiosity about the arts in the youngest New Yorkers. Annually over 50,000 New York City students are served by the Lincoln Center campus through the work of the resident organizations with hundreds of schools. Here is a snapshot of how the Lincoln Center campus supports the creative lifecycle:

Instilling an Appreciation of the Arts

- Education is at the heart of everything **Jazz at Lincoln Center** does, advancing the appreciation, understanding, and performance of jazz among toddlers, teens, and adults alike. **The Middle School and High School Jazz Academies** offers free and low-cost instrumental jazz instruction to New York City middle school and high school students, enhancing their musical education with the finest professional training and performance opportunities along with emphasizing the importance of teamwork, creativity, and self-expression.
- Each year the **New York City Ballet** brings the world of ballet to more than 20,000 individuals of all ages and abilities through education programs, including in-school dance residencies for 5,000 public school children in over 50 schools across all five boroughs. Additionally, workshops for those with physical and cognitive disabilities, behind the scenes presentations and tours, and free performance tickets continue to make ballet more accessible for New Yorkers.
- **Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts** is building new and expanded approaches to training the next generation of arts leaders through an inquiry-based, student-centered learning approach. **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 fall 59 students in grades 5th and 6th from 31 DOE schools, primarily Title 1 schools, attended 12-weeks of weekend sessions hosted at LaGuardia High School. Students developed their skills in dance, theater, vocal music, instrumental music, or visual art, learning about the professional arts world,

and preparing for a specialized education in their chosen art form. The Spring session starts soon with a growing cohort of new and returning students.

- Education has been a key part of **Film at Lincoln Center's (FLC)** mission since its founding in 1969 and currently presents high-quality educational cinema programming to the youth of New York City with our **free Student Screenings with artist Q&A's**. Engaging middle, high school, and college aged students, FLC's Student Screenings are designed to connect a diverse range of youth from throughout the five boroughs of New York City to the artform of cinema, engaging students with historical events, while fostering empathy and cross-cultural understanding. All films are age appropriate, aligned with current programming, and are typically followed by Q&A's between participating students and an artist involved with the film or aligned arts professional, offering students a unique opportunity to engage directly with professionals in the creative industries.
- **Lincoln Center Theater's** Education Department has partnered with the six high schools within the Martin Luther King Jr. Educational Campus, located across the street from Lincoln Center, to produce a multi-school production of the rock musical **THE LIGHTNING THIEF**. For the second year they have partnered with teachers and theater professionals to mentor 43 students throughout the entire production, supporting students on stage, constructing and painting sets, and running tech backstage.
- **The Metropolitan Opera** is the largest performing arts organization in the country. From this unique position, it enthusiastically promotes appreciation and participation in the arts by people of all ages and backgrounds. Free and steeply discounted tickets and public programs make it possible for more than 80,000 New Yorkers to access world-class performers and performances every year. Met programs include **Access Opera** for NYC students and educators who attend final dress rehearsals at the opera's home; **HD Live in Schools** which reaches students across NYC in their schools with the Met's award-winning Live in HD streaming performances; the **Summer HD Festival**, which draws audiences to the Lincoln Center campus to screen operas from the Met's Live in HD series for free over 10 nights in August; **Summer Recitals** which present musical masterworks sung by up-and-coming stars of the stage in the city's public parks, and ticket subsidies and discounts for students, audiences under 40, and the public via the **Met Rush Ticket Program**.

Developing the Artists of Tomorrow

- The **Chamber Music Society** serves students from ages 3 to 17 through a wide range of educational programming that nurtures a love of music and deepens an appreciation for classical music, and over 8,000 youth and family members participate each season. For emerging artists, the **Young Musicians Concert**, celebrating its 41st anniversary, features exceptional chamber ensembles from middle schools and high schools across New York City, selected from a competitive pool of applicants. Student participants receive special coaching sessions from CMS artists, stage presence and performance workshops, and the opportunity to perform at Lincoln Center all while networking with chamber music professionals and fellow young musicians.
- **The Juilliard School** is a world leader in performing arts education, providing the highest caliber of artistic education for gifted musicians, dancers, and actors from around the world so that they can achieve their fullest potential as artists, leaders, and global citizens. In addition to their undergraduate and graduate academic programs, the **Music Advancement Program** offers a tuition-free music education for elementary, middle school, and high school students across the five boroughs who demonstrate a strong commitment to artistic excellence. Through a rigorous curriculum, performance opportunities, and guidance from an accomplished faculty, MAP students gain the necessary skills to pursue advanced music studies, developing their talents as artists, and preparing for careers in the cultural field. Alumni have gone on to study in community

music schools, conservatories, and prestigious universities. Many have chosen music as their profession while others have gone on to be successful in a variety of fields.

- The **New York Philharmonic's Youth Mentorship Program** is designed for pre-professional musicians developing musicianship and ensemble-playing skills. Through two-hour workshops music-makers work with New York Philharmonic musicians and the Phil's network of music professionals to develop specific areas of technique, performance, and interpretation.
- At the **School of American Ballet**, their mission is to train the next generation of preeminent ballet dancers and connecting them with careers as working artists. Since its founding 90 years ago more than 17,000 students have trained at SAB, with alumni now performing across 80 dance companies, and 93 currently dancing with the New York City Ballet. Today more than 800 students, ages 6 to 18 and 50% identifying as a people of color, receive a rich learning experience which teaches not only the fundamentals of classical ballet but also the discipline and focus that are key to success in all of life's endeavors.
- Since 2014 **Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts** has partnered with the NYC Department of Education to host **Middle School Arts Audition Bootcamp**, welcoming more than 400 students from 173 public schools across the five boroughs. Through the program students further their artistic training with audition coaching, masterclasses, performances, and workshops preparing for auditions for specialized artistic schools.
- **Film at Lincoln Center (FLC)** is committed to diversifying the cinema arts pipeline by presenting FLC Academies, a free workforce development and networking program with an emphasis on participation from historically underrepresented communities. **FLC Academies** are divided into two areas: **Artists Academy**, which engages early-career filmmakers and craftspeople, and **Critics Academy**, which engages early-career film critics. Participants engage in a curated series of workshops featuring working professionals and Academies alumni, and are embedded into FLC's tent-pole film festival, **the New York Film Festival**, attending industry events, press screenings, and artist Q&A's.
- **The Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program (LYADP)** invites 10-15 gifted emerging singers and collaborative pianists from all over the country and the world to train with the Met Opera in a highly competitive and rigorous three-year program. Supported with living stipends and all training expenses covered, Lindemann artists perform supporting roles and cover principal roles in a range of Met productions. They receive unparalleled, personalized training from master teachers and coaches. Notable alumni discovered and trained through LYADP include the likes of Paul Appleby, Benjamin Bliss, Stephanie Blythe, Christine Goerke, Ryan Speedo Green, Nathan Gunn, Lisette Oropesa, and Sondra Radvanovsky, among others.
- Additionally, **Jazz** hosts the **Band Director Academy**, a multi-day professional development workshop for band directors led by prominent jazz educators focused on the essentials of teaching jazz and preparing students for a future in the arts.

Access to Practice Skills

- Through the **Lincoln Center Internship Program**, college students gain substantive work experience in various departments across the Lincoln Center constituent organizations. Year-round and Summer Interns are placed within various departments, gaining work experience in development, marketing, IT, guest experience, programming, and education. This year's cohort of 21 interns, a majority of which are women and people of color, are students from 11 New York City area universities. Interns work 15 hours a week and are paid \$25 an hour. Throughout the program interns hear from and engage with leaders across Lincoln Center, participate in bi-weekly workshops on career development and the arts sector, and complete a Capstone Project presenting an innovative solution to an issue in the cultural field. Past projects have gone on to become Lincoln Center initiatives. Alumni have gone on to work for Madison Square Garden, the

Laundromat Project, and Goldman Sachs, and some have continued their careers at Lincoln Center, managing education programs, IT operations, and artistic services.

- **Access Ambassadors** is designed to help combat the high unemployment rate for people with disabilities, providing weekly lessons on job readiness for high school students with disabilities along with onsite experience greeting guests at Lincoln Center performances. This year 27 Student Ambassadors recruited through District 75 schools and The Urban Assembly School for Media Studies participated in the year-long program. We also partnered with the NYC Department for Youth and Community Development's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and the Manhattan Transition and College Access Center to host an additional 6 **SYEP Ambassadors** over the summer. Participating students attend workshops on workplace skills, build up confidence in their own professionalism, learn about the wide range of jobs at a performing arts organization, navigate applications and interviews, and how to translate their experience at Lincoln Center to their future career. Alumni of the program have gone on to work for Lincoln Center as Guest Experience representatives. The program provides valuable experience for all employees in working with people who have disabilities, creating a more welcoming and inclusive workplace and increasing inclusive hiring practices across the organization. Lincoln Center's Director of Accessibility, Miranda Hoffner, has recently joined the City's Center for Workplace Accessibility and Inclusion (CWAI) Advisory Council, providing valuable insight on how cultural organizations and private sector businesses can be more inclusive and accessible in the recruitment, hiring, training and promotion of people with disabilities.

Investing in Candidates and Ongoing Professional Growth

- Across our campus we have a longstanding track record of employing **union professionals**, from stagehands to construction workers. When jobs were needed most during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, Lincoln Center accelerated its timeline for the new David Geffen Hall, supporting 6,000 jobs during construction with 43% of construction contracts awarded to MWBE firms and developed a **workforce development program with Turner Construction**. In that bespoke program 30 participants graduated from a five-week, full-time paid in-classroom course to introduce program participants to the construction industry. They also received one-on-one mentorship and trained onsite at David Geffen Hall. The graduates all went on to full-time employment with two working in management positions with Turner Construction and 28 working with full union membership with one of their trade partners.
- **The Met Opera's Bank of America Internship and Fellows Program** offers paid summer internship opportunities at the Metropolitan Opera to a diverse group of 12-15 undergraduate students, recent graduates, and early-career professionals. Providing access to all aspects of opera production and offering skills development and mentoring opportunities with the company's professionals, the program reflects the Met's ongoing commitment to helping opera lovers find their way to a career in arts management. In addition, interns enjoy performances, network with fellow interns, attend weekly seminars featuring special presentations by Met senior staff; and focus on a specific area such as production and season planning, marketing and communications, finance, and development, staffing and HR, and education.
- This fall Lincoln Center hosted the **Curriculum for Change Conference: Innovating Access in the Performing Arts**, a convening ground for educators, administrators, and artists to collectively imagine creative approaches to current issues of access in the arts. With a focus on fostering inclusivity, enhancing accessibility, and embracing novel practices for impact, the conference invited Lincoln Center constituents and artistic partners beyond Lincoln Center to gather and discuss how collectively we are expanding access in the arts.

It takes an ecosystem of artists, arts administrators, operational roles such as human resources and finance, and creative workers to keep New York City's cultural organizations running at peak performance. It also requires intentional investments of funding and resources to invest in developing existing talent and cultivating the next generation of diverse talent in the arts and cultural workforce. From the initial planting of the artistic seed of possibility to incubating a workforce devoted to the arts is about knitting a network that is maintained and supported at each stage in the lifecycle.

Respectfully, thank you again for your time on this critical issue. Lincoln Center is committed to New York City as a place where everyone is welcome, where they belong, and where entry is offered to play a vital role in making sure the show goes on.



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

Hon. Carlina Rivera, Chair

Hearing: Oversight - Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers

January 27, 2025

Thank you to Chair Rivera and the City Council for your support of cultural workforce development in New York City. As Executive Director of Manhattan Theatre Club, I'm writing as part of the It Starts with the Arts coalition to testify on the importance of workforce development opportunities in the arts and culture sector and to ask that the City offer new, dedicated funding to support such critical programs.

Founded in 1970, MTC is a non-profit theatre company dedicated to developing and producing new plays and musicals, both on and Off-Broadway, and we strive to make this work accessible to New Yorkers of all ages and walks of life. For over 35 years, MTC's vibrant Learning and Community Engagement program has ignited the imaginations of young people around New York City by connecting them to theatre and playwriting.

Since 1989, MTC's Paul A. Kaplan Theatre Management Program has provided college students and recent graduates opportunities to build careers as arts administrators through internships and traineeships that offer intensive, paid, on-the-job training. In addition to working on projects and responsibilities that contribute to the day-to-day running of the organization, interns and trainees participate in weekly educational seminars led by MTC's staff to learn about careers throughout the organization. They also receive career development coaching from our human resources staff and are assigned mentors based on their interests to provide further career advice. MTC also offers producing and marketing fellowships for recent graduates and graduate students, and internships for aspiring theatrical lighting, sound, and costume designers. All of these opportunities center participants from backgrounds historically underrepresented in theatre to help increase the diversity of MTC's workforce, as well as the theatre field in general, over the long term.

I speak from experience when I say that MTC's workforce development program is a proven pathway to arts careers, as I began my own career as a graduate fellow at MTC. I'm just one of the hundreds of program alumni working in the New York City creative economy today; the majority of our interns and trainees find permanent jobs within the arts less than six months after finishing their tenure at MTC. Program alumni can be found at nearly every major non-profit theatre in New York, as well as throughout the commercial theatre industry—in casting offices, production companies, and theatrical advertising agencies—and in other arts and cultural organizations around New York City. Currently, 26% of MTC staff began their careers as MTC interns.

While our workforce development programs are critically important, they are also expensive, as fairly compensating interns and trainees is vital to making these programs accessible to people from underrepresented backgrounds. Like many organizations, we are still struggling to rebuild our income in the wake of the pandemic. As a result, we have been forced to scale back the size of our workforce development program. New, dedicated funding from the City of New York for workforce development would make a real difference in our ability to restore the full scope of this program.

MTC has always strived to be a "teaching hospital," in which the next generation of arts leaders can learn on the job. We know that workforce development programs provide invaluable hands-on experience, foster the development of professional networks, and offer a critical bridge between education and employment. Thus, we hope that the City of New York will support meaningful workforce development programs in the arts to help ensure our creative workforce remains strong.

Chris Jennings, Executive Director



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

Hon. Carlina Rivera, Chair

Hearing: Oversight - Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers

January 27, 2025

Thank you to Chair Rivera and the City Council for your support of cultural workforce development in New York City. My name is Julie Hirsh, and I work at the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in Lower Manhattan. I'm writing as part of the It Starts with the Arts coalition to testify on the importance of workforce development opportunities in the arts and culture sector.

The mission of the Museum of Jewish Heritage is to educate diverse visitors about Jewish life before, during, and after the Holocaust. As a place of memory, the Museum enables Holocaust survivors to speak through recorded testimony and draws on rich collections to illuminate Jewish history and experience. As a public history institution, we offer intellectually rigorous and engaging exhibitions, programs, and educational resources. Our educators teach the dangers of intolerance and challenges visitors, including 60,000 schoolchildren a year, to let the painful lessons of the past guide them to envision a world worthy of their futures.

The Holocaust Educator School Partnership is a paid internship for select college students who benefit from a peer-to-peer training program that equips them with tools to deliver enriching Holocaust education to high school students. While Holocaust education is mandated in NYC public schools, many teachers lack the resources to provide a more nuanced understanding of why and how the Holocaust happened, followed by the Jewish people's historic recovery in its aftermath. The program relieves the most cited barriers to Holocaust education by offering supportive tools and guidance for teachers, fully funded transportation to and from the Museum, and capturing the shorter attention spans of teenagers. This year, 14 interns are enrolled.

In our High School Apprenticeship Program, a cohort of 15 NYC public school students learn work readiness skills and Holocaust history. Feedback consistently shows that the program advances knowledge of the Holocaust and of the museum profession. Students' interactions with fellow apprentices, staff, and survivors are essential to their learning. They frequently report that the opportunity to work on projects with a member of the Museum's Speakers Bureau of Holocaust survivors is the most impactful part of the experience.

Workforce development programs are critical to providing hands-on experience, fostering professional networks, and bridging the gap between education and employment. Meaningful workforce development programs today lead to a strong cultural workforce tomorrow. Thank you for your attention and consideration,

Julie Hirsh
Senior Director, Institutional Giving
Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

New York City Council Oversight Hearing
Pathways to the Cultural Workforce
The Honorable Carolina Rivera, Chair

Good Morning Chair Rivera and Distinguished Committee Members:

Thank you for holding today's hearing on pathways to the City's dynamic cultural workforce. We applaud the fact that this City Council celebrates and sustains our creative workforce in NYC, most notably through the \$53M in budget restorations made in the adopted FY25 budget.

At NYBG, we're plant people—dedicated horticulturists, enthusiastic educators, and scientific adventurers—committed to helping nature thrive so that humanity can thrive. We believe in our ability to make things better, teaching tens of thousands of kids and families each year about the importance of safeguarding our environment and healthy eating. Our expert scientists work across the city, the nation, and the globe to document the plants and fungi of our world—and find actionable, nature-based solutions to our planet's dual climate and biodiversity loss crises. And our eyes are always looking forward as we train the next generation of botanists, gardeners, landscape designers, and environmental stewards, ensuring a green future for all.

Training our Garden successors could not be more important. As we enter a time when science and scientific research is once again under attack and marginalized at the federal level, it is programs like NYBG's Explainers, SOPH, and the SCI Network that need City and State investments that are sustainable and targeted to best engage our young people. Here are two NYBG pathway programs that could be grown, expanded or enhanced given sustained, multi-year funding from the Council or Administration.

NYBG Teen Explainers: In FY24, Children's Education at NYBG provided programming to over 340,000 students, kids, teens, and teachers; the highest ever recorded at the Garden. Central to this work are the Garden's Teen Explainers, a program that provides science enrichment and paid educational training for 115 teens each year. Throughout the year, Teen Explainers teach at the Everett Children's Adventure Garden (ECAG), a 12-acre children's garden that provides hands-on programs that encourage children to actively investigate plants and science. Their training, like all programming offered within ECAG, is aligned with the NYC Department of Education's science curriculum, playing a major role in the science learning of 12,000 students each year. The Garden's Teen Explainers provide active engagement with guests of ECAG throughout the year—over 185,000 kids, teens, and parents, accounting for over 50% of the Children's Education visitation. Our most recent survey of explainer alumni that 99% of participants since 2004 have graduated high school and 80% have gone on to four-year universities. A full appendix B of data is provided.

NYBG's School of Professional Horticulture was established in 1919 as a horticulture vocational training program for returning war veterans. In 1932, distinguished horticulturist Thomas H. Everett expanded the School into a professional gardener training program regarding the program as an advanced training program to "broaden their knowledge and fit them for positions of greater responsibility." Today, the School of Professional Horticulture is the oldest (91 years) and only accredited hands-on horticulture school of its kind in the country, offering a two-year, full-time, year-round diploma program that combines rigorous academic and practical training from the Garden's renowned experts. As part of the SoPH program, students become familiar with the cultural needs of more than 1,000 plants and their common pests and diseases. Students learn about native plants, ecological restoration, conservation, urban agriculture, composting, and sustainable practices in their coursework, during their horticulture rotations, on plant walks and field trips, and by attending special lectures and symposia. A full appendix of data is provided below.

Thank you for the opportunity to share just a small glimpse into what NYBG does to train the next generation of botanists, gardeners, landscape designers, and environmental stewards, ensuring a green future for all.

Respectfully submitted,

Aaron T. Bouska
Vice President for Government and Community Relations,
New York Botanical Garden
abouska@nybg.org

The New York Botanical Garden's School of Professional Horticulture

Overview of the Program The School of Professional Horticulture (SoPH) at the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) - established in 1932, is a premier program designed to train the next generation of horticulture professionals. The program is a rigorous two-year, full-time, year-round curriculum that combines academic coursework and hands-on training to provide students with a comprehensive horticultural education through the world-class institution of the New York Botanical Garden.

The NYBG's School of Professional Horticulture represents the oldest and only accredited hands-on horticulture of its kind in the country.

- **Academic Courses:** Students complete over 600 hours of academic coursework, covering topics such as plant science, pruning principles, ecological landscape design, land stewardship, pest and disease control, and ecological restoration.
- **Hands-On Training:** The program includes over 1,800 hours of hands-on training within NYBG's 250-acre landscape, encompassing diverse collections such as native forests, ornamental gardens, and conservatories. Students develop skills in propagation, garden maintenance, landscape construction, and plant health care.
- **Skills Learned:** Graduates gain expertise in areas such as sustainable gardening practices, plant identification, irrigation systems, and advanced pruning techniques, equipping them for leadership roles in the green industry.
- **Ecological Leadership:** Integrating various leadership aspects into its program, the School of Professional Horticulture prepares graduates for influential roles in the horticulture industry through team building, strategic thinking, professional communication, adaptability, and development of an entrepreneurial mindset.

Job Placement Rate The School of Professional Horticulture boasts an impressive job placement rate of 100% with over 90% of graduates pursuing a career in horticulture. Alumni are highly sought after for their extensive practical experience and academic knowledge, making them valuable assets in the horticulture field.

Alumni Employment SoPH graduates have gone on to work in a wide range of prestigious and impactful positions. Examples include:

- **Public Gardens and Arboreta:** Positions at institutions such as The High Line, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and World Wildlife Foundation.
- **Parks and Municipal Organizations:** Roles in urban forestry and park management with the New York City Parks Department and other city agencies.
- **Private Estates and Landscaping Firms:** Leadership positions in estate management and ecological landscape design.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Establishing their own horticultural businesses, including specialty nurseries and landscape firms.

January 27, 2025

Dear Committee Members:

On behalf of the staff and trustees of New York City Center, I am delighted to share the following testimony on how our organization engages in workforce development through our education and community engagement programming. My name is Tia Powell Harris and I am City Center's Vice President of Education and Community Engagement. I have been a part of City Center's senior staff since 2022, having previously served as the Chief Executive Officer of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts Project and the Ellington Fund (Washington, D.C.) and as the Executive Director and President of Weeksville Heritage Center (Brooklyn, NY).

City Center's mission is to be New York City's leading center for dance and musical theater. Dedicated to making the arts accessible to the broadest possible audience, City Center seeks to create a welcoming environment and engage all audiences with inspiring programming that reflects the eclecticism, energy, and spirit of New York City. To best uphold this mission, City Center commits to organizational values of curiosity, collaboration, accessibility, and inclusivity. In our most recently completed fiscal year, City Center served an audience of over 120,000 individuals through our dance, musical theater, and education and community engagement programming.

We are a proud member of the Cultural Institutions Group, a coalition of 34 organizations housed within historic properties owned by the City of New York, and which provides countless positive benefits to its citizens. This includes employing over 11,000 staff members and providing countless hours of world-class programming at low- or no-cost to participants. CIGs also serve as key drivers of workforce and economic development, which spurs growth throughout all five boroughs.

City Center's Education & Community Engagement is built around three pillars: arts education programs that take place in schools and community centers across the City; community engagement programs built in partnership with other nonprofits throughout the five boroughs; and a robust network of career pathways programs that provide people at various stages of their professional lives with skills-based training that prepares them for a variety of jobs in and out of the arts and culture sector. Our career pathways programs include High School Externships, Administrative Apprenticeships, and Creative Fellowships. While each program serves a different population, all three are united in their goal of providing unparalleled opportunities for professional growth and workforce development, especially for individuals from communities that are not well represented in the arts and culture industry.

We offered a pilot version of our High School Externship Program last year. Externships are designed for current high school juniors and seniors and take place in three, weeklong sessions during breaks in the school year. Each session focuses on a different cluster of performing arts opportunities: administrative careers; production careers; and creative careers. City Center staff led seminars focused on topics related to each career cluster, discussed their own career trajectories, and supported participants in the creation and presentation of a final project. Sessions frequently emphasized creative problem solving and collaboration as invaluable skills to building a career, no matter the sector. Across the three sessions, City Center engaged 43 current high school students. We are currently in the planning phases for the second year of this program, with the first week-long session set to take place next month.

For over 15 years, our Administrative Apprenticeship program has provided recent college graduates with a season-long, part-time and paid opportunity to embed within a department at City Center for on-the-job training and network building. Apprenticeships have historically been offered in various departments, including Dance

New York City Center

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Programming, Development, Education and Community Engagement, Finance, and Marketing/Graphic Design. Apprentices supported the day-to-day operations of their respective departments, while also completing a season-long individual project that is shared with the administrative staff at the conclusion of their time at City Center. These season-long projects are an opportunity for Apprentices to build new systems and solutions to increase the efficiency and efficacy of their respective departments, and are often integrated into department operations, even after the Apprenticeship has concluded. Each apprentice is managed by a senior member of their respective department, receives mentorship from a staff member in a different department, and attends weekly seminars with arts leaders from peer organizations. Alumni of the program have gone on to full-time positions at Carnegie Hall, Serino-Coyne, and New York City Center.

Creative Fellowships are paid opportunities for early-career artists to work alongside the established professionals who bring our musical theater productions to life each season. These roles help emerging artists gain a new perspective on their personal artistic sensibilities while also developing a solid professional network. Last season, we offered a single Directing Fellowship who worked alongside acclaimed directors Lear deBessonet, Robert O'Hara, and Anne Kauffman. Additionally, we launched the inaugural Ann Reinking Encores! Choreography Fellowship. This extraordinary opportunity allowed an emerging female-identifying choreographer to work on all four musicals in our season, while also contributing significantly to curriculum development in partnership with our Education and Community Engagement department. This year's Fellow, Niani Feelings, was an enormous resource to the organization. As part of her time at City Center, she completed a final project focused on dance as a storytelling tool, created in partnership with professional artists and emerging musical theater writers from New York University. Since completing her Fellowship, Ms. Feelings has made her Broadway debut (Assistant Choreographer for the Broadway transfer of *Once Upon a Mattress*) and has consistently found work as a performer, teaching artist, and choreographer. In future seasons we will expand the Creative Fellowships program to include other artistic roles, such as Music Direction or Stage Management.

Finally, City Center also engages in workforce development work through our community engagement initiatives with other nonprofit organizations in the five boroughs. Entitled Career Pathways Community Residencies, these offerings are highly customizable and are tailored to suit the specific needs and interests of the constituencies served by our partners. Within each residency, City Center staff lead a session at the community organization to share information about the various career pathways in the arts (including creative, technical, administrative, and front-of-house options). This is followed by a site visit to City Center that includes a tour and the opportunity for the community organization's constituents to meet with individuals who are working in the careers that they learned about at the initial session. Partner organizations this year included Queens Community House, Brownsville Recreation Center, and iHope.

City Center's workforce development initiatives are a vital component of our commitment to serving all New Yorkers. The breadth and impact of these programs is evocative of the eclectic and dynamic programming that occurs on our mainstage and are grounded in our institutional values. We are immensely proud to support people at various stages of their careers through skills-based and collaborative workforce development programs, which we are certain supports economic growth throughout the city.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your leadership and service in providing for an equitable arts and culture sector that can serve all New Yorkers.

Best,

Tia Powell Harris
Vice President, Education & Community Engagement
New York City Center



Lucy Sexton

Executive Director

New Yorkers for Culture & Arts

lucy@ny4ca.org

###-###-####

NY City Council Cultural Affairs Committee Hearing on
Pathways to Workforce

January 26, 2025

Thank you Chair Rivera, and the Council's Cultural Affairs Committee for holding this critically important hearing addressing the cultural workforce. I also want to thank the Chair for your new bill supporting the NYS legislature's Art Space bill. Access to space at below market rate for longterm leases is a critical first step in stemming the tide of loss of cultural spaces that do so much to anchor our communities.

As far as workforce, we need to look at the current state of those workers. The 2022 Portrait of New York State Artists survey data is stark: 57.3% of respondents reported prior-year income

under \$25,000 and 85.7% earned less than \$50,000. Over 60% characterized their financial circumstances as “unstable” or “extremely unstable”.

Cultural organizations need funding to hire more and pay more, particularly to young people from disinvested communities who don't have the luxury of working for less than living wage.

A few ideas: We propose a new Council Initiative for Workforce Development, specifically to help cultural organizations attract, train, and retain a diverse workforce. We are also advocating for a city backed health fund that would allow cultural workers to access portable benefits in moving from job to job, and provide cultural organizations access to a more affordable group health plan for their employees. We know there is support for this in the administration and would love to share more details with you.


Finally the council, the administration, and our state government need to do all they can to protect immigrant artists struggling to stay in our city. We must pass New York for All in Albany; we must protect cultural funding which is already under attack by the right; New York City must lead the way in saying NO to the

shutdown of DEI A initiatives, and YES to our wildly diverse and vibrant city of culture and community.



New York City Council
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroups Relations
January 27, 2025

Title: *Oversight - Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers*



Good morning, Chairperson Rivera and members of the City Council Culture Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the critical topic of workforce development in New York City's arts and culture sector. This hearing represents a pivotal opportunity for our community to address both the significant contributions of the arts to the city's economy and the urgent need for robust workforce development initiatives tailored to our sector.

The arts and culture sector is not only a cornerstone of New York City's identity but also a major economic engine, employing tens of thousands of residents across a diverse range of creative disciplines. From performing artists and museum curators to technical stagehands and cultural educators, our workforce is as dynamic and multifaceted as the city itself.


At the New York Hall of Science (NYSCI), our mission is to nurture passionate learners, critical thinkers, and active citizens through our innovative approach of ***Design, Make, Play***. As a cornerstone institution in Queens, NY—one of the most multicultural and diverse communities in New York City—we are committed to creating a world where diversity fuels innovation. NYSCI provides a platform for individuals to use science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) to address and solve complex challenges of the 21st century.

Community Context

NYSCI is located in Corona, adjacent to Elmhurst, within a vibrant community district distinguished by its diverse immigrant population. Nearly two-thirds of residents are foreign-born, with a significant portion hailing from Latin American countries such as Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and the Dominican Republic. While this community's resilience and rich cultural heritage are undeniable, many families face systemic challenges, including incomes that fall below the federal poverty level, limited access to consistent healthcare, and significant barriers for undocumented residents in accessing critical resources.



These challenges are mirrored in the arts and culture sector, where many professionals—particularly those in the early stages of their careers or from historically marginalized communities—struggle to secure stable employment, equitable wages, and meaningful professional development opportunities. As the sector continues to evolve with emerging technologies and platforms, there is a pressing need to equip the workforce with the skills required to navigate and excel in this dynamic environment.




To address these issues, robust workforce development initiatives are vital. Programs that emphasize paid internships, apprenticeships, technical training, and mentorship can help cultivate a more inclusive and sustainable talent pipeline. Such efforts not only open pathways to careers in the arts and STEM fields but also ensure that these careers are accessible and viable for all New Yorkers. Collaborative partnerships between cultural institutions, city agencies, and private organizations are critical to scaling these programs, driving innovation, and fostering equitable opportunities.

According to a report by the Citizens' Committee for Children, residents of Corona have identified critical needs such as affordable housing, early childhood education, and accessible after-school programs. They also highlighted key community assets, including libraries, parks, and cultural institutions like NYSCI, which play a vital role in addressing these challenges by providing essential services and fostering inclusive, engaging spaces for learning and connection.

Workforce Development Initiatives

NYSCI is deeply committed to creating pathways for students to enter STEM fields and fostering opportunities for successful STEM careers. At the heart of this commitment is the **Alan J. Friedman Center for the Development of Young Scientists**, which serves as a cornerstone of the institution's workforce development initiatives. As well, this commitment was fortified through the SciNetwork NYC program, which is a consortium of eight science-based cultural institutions that are committed to providing high-quality STEM internships.

- **The Friedman Center:** The Alan J. Friedman Center for the Development of Young Scientists serves as a hub for youth and workforce development. Its flagship program, the Science Career Ladder (SCL), offers young people from underrepresented backgrounds paid employment, mentorship, professional development, and STEM career exposure. Over the
- 



years, this initiative has empowered nearly 4,000 participants, equipping them with critical skills and confidence to pursue STEM careers.

- In a typical year, the program engages 125 diverse high school and college students, 87% of whom come from Queens, with over 40% from Corona and Elmhurst.
 - Participants gain hands-on experience through roles as Explainers, fostering visitor engagement, co-creating exhibits, and developing communication, teaching, and leadership skills essential for college and career success.
- **SCI Network NYC:** This city-funded initiative expands NYSCI's reach by supporting school communities through professional learning opportunities and science internships. By connecting students with professionals and resources, SCI Network NYC builds pathways for young people to explore careers in science, technology, and the arts.



Testimonial

Laura Velazquez, NYSCI STEM Coordinator, who began her career at the Wildlife Conservancy and recently joined the NYSCI team. Her story reflects the transformative power of initiatives that connect young people to education and career pathways while fostering community engagement.


“Good morning, Chairperson Rivera and members of the City Council Culture Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to share my story. My name is Laura Velázquez, and I am the STEM Engagement Coordinator at the New York Hall of Science. Before this, I served as the Youth Engagement Assistant Coordinator at the Queens Zoo. Prior to that, I held roles as Visitor Engagement Associate at Prospect Park Zoo, Visitor Experience Associate at the New York Hall of Science, and Conservation Educator at Alley Pond Environmental Center—three titles I proudly balanced simultaneously as I pursued my passion for STEM education fresh out of college. But it all began as a Discovery Guide at the New York Aquarium, an opportunity that would go on to shape the rest of my life.

I first discovered the Discovery Guide Program through the Wildlife Conservation Society’s Job, Internship & Volunteering Expo, better known as JIVE. Without the hard work of WCS’ Youth Development team in organizing this event, I may have never had the breakthrough that ignited my passion for STEM education. Back then, the JIVE I attended was held in a small classroom on the Coney Island Boardwalk with just a few tables. Today, the event has grown tremendously into its 9th annual installment, hosted in the Bronx Zoo’s Schiff Great Hall with multiple workshops, panel



discussions, and resume help stations. It now reaches hundreds of NYC youth every year, offering the same transformative opportunities that once inspired me to pursue this path. I was even able to help facilitate the event during my time in Youth Development at WCS, inspiring the next generation of changemakers—a meaningful full-circle moment in my career.

From that point on, I sought out every opportunity that would allow me to continue down this path. I've had the privilege of working at incredible institutions, with each role building upon the last and propelling me further in my career. I owe much of this growth to the opportunities provided by the SCI Network—opportunities I might never have accessed otherwise.



In my current role as STEM Engagement Coordinator at the New York Hall of Science's Friedman Center, I'm responsible for planning and executing STEM-based events and professional development workshops for NYC high school and college-aged youth. These events cover a wide range of topics, from climate change and sustainability to career expos and college essay bootcamps. They provide invaluable experiences for the community and serve as crucial gateways for the hundreds of students we welcome each year. Being able to pay it forward and introduce young people to the expansive and inspiring world of STEM has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my career.

The work we do is essential, yet we face increasing budget cuts year after year. These cuts limit our ability to expand our reach and provide vital services to the communities that need them most. While we've done our best to maximize the resources we have, I'm concerned that as funding for cornerstone institutions continues to decline, the quality of these transformative experiences may also be at risk.

Despite these challenges, I remain deeply hopeful and committed to the mission of NYSCI, The Friedman Center, and the SCI Network. As youth today face mounting challenges across all sectors and the overwhelming responsibility of inheriting systems that often fail to prioritize their needs, these programs are more critical than ever. Youth today deserve the same opportunities that shaped my journey, and I am determined to ensure they have access to them. Thank you for allowing me the chance to continue doing so."





IMPACT

Laura's story exemplifies the vital need to expand youth and community programs. NYSCI empowers young people, like our Explainers, to become confident STEM contributors, using their diverse backgrounds to enrich STEM learning. As the museum's public face, Explainers are STEM ambassadors and essential to NYSCI's mission. They boost visitor engagement and gain valuable skills and confidence for their future. This dual benefit strengthens both individuals and the community.

NYSCI's commitment to workforce development and community engagement aligns with cultural institutions citywide. Continued investment in these programs is crucial for nurturing future leaders in STEM and other fields. Sustained city funding, public-private partnerships, and grants are essential, enabling institutions like NYSCI to serve as pillars of learning and inspiration. New Yorkers rely on these organizations for engagement and educational opportunities, especially during challenging times. NYSCI's mission to make STEM accessible and inclusive depends on this support.

With the Council's continued support of \$2 million in the FY26 budget, NYSCI and other cultural institutions can empower diverse young New Yorkers to build successful STEM careers.

Respectfully submitted by:

Frances Escano

Associate Vice President of Government Affairs

New York Hall of Science

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New York Hall of Science



New York City Council
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroups Relations
January 27, 2025

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New York Hall of Science



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Submitted by:

Laura Velázquez

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

Hon. Carlina Rivera, Chair

Hearing: Oversight - Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers

January 27, 2025

Thank you to Chair Rivera and the City Council for your support of cultural workforce development in New York City. My name is Kim Olsen, and I am the Executive Director of the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable. We are an arts education service organization working to improve and advance arts education in NYC through professional development, advocacy, regranting, and community-building.

I'm writing as part of the *It Starts with the Arts* coalition to testify on the importance of workforce development opportunities in the arts and culture sector.

According to the [Comptroller's most recent Creative Economy Dashboard](#) (2022), together NYC's Creative industries employed an estimated 274,000 people in 2022—up 3.4% from (265,000 in) 2017, and modestly exceeding the 2.2% increase in total employment in the city. A staggering 12.3% of our country's creative workforce jobs are based here in NYC alone. That's a lot of creative workers and creative jobs — that ultimately enable the creative sector to account for [13% of the city's total economic output](#).

At the Roundtable, we consider workforce development through the lens of continuing professionalization from recruitment and training into entry-level positions through leadership development opportunities. We don't want to just prepare folx to enter the workforce, we want to support their development and training into more senior level positions so that they can continue to work and grow in the sector.

For us, that takes the shape of working with CUNY Cultural Corps to provide professional development to their cohort in addition to hosting an intern. As a service organization, we work with hundreds of organizations and thousands of arts workers each year, providing professional development opportunities to support growth at all points of the workforce. These opportunities, including our NYS Teaching Artist Mentorship Program, offer skills- and network-building as vehicles for career advancement and sustainability. We also host an annual Arts and Cultural Jobs Fair each May, featuring 40-50 hiring organizations - helping connect jobseekers with opportunities in the field.

When talking about arts and workforce development, I would be remiss if I did not also mention how critical arts education opportunities are to preparing our city's workforce of tomorrow.

[Research](#) shows arts education programs prepare students for the 21st century workforce, by developing the skills necessary to acquire and retain a job. Such key competencies developed through arts education including: problem solving, attention to nuance, adaptability, empathy, visualization of goals and outcomes, decision-making, and more.

In addition to supporting general workforce competencies, arts competencies in themselves can be highly marketable skills in today's economy. It's for all of these reasons that we recommend arts education be present at all NYC schools and that our city works to facilitate more intentional interaction between education, economic development, and arts policy leaders.

Workforce development programs are critical to providing hands-on experience, fostering professional networks, and bridging the gap between education and employment. Meaningful workforce development programs today, means a strong cultural workforce tomorrow.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Kimberly Olsen
Executive Director
NYC Arts in Education Roundtable
Email: kolsen@nycaieroundtable.org

SOURCES

- Spotlight: New York City's Creative Economy:
<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/spotlight-new-york-citys-creative-economy/>
- The Creative Economy: Art, Culture and Creativity in New York City:
<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-creative-economy/#:~:text=Altogether%2C%20the%20sector%20is%20responsible,part%20of%20the%20knowledge%20economy>
- The Impact of Arts Education on Workforce Preparation:
<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100867>

Testimony of the Queens Botanical Garden NYC Council Hearing Notice: Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers



January 27, 2025

My name is Eryn Hatzithomas and I'm the Assistant Director of HR & Engagement at Queens Botanical Garden, one of the 8 cultural institutions that make up the Sci Network NYC. Throughout the coalition Sci Network NYC organizations have been committed to contributing to the City and to New Yorkers by supporting high-quality STEM internships to New York City youth. Thank you, for providing this opportunity to offer testimony on the impact of the Garden in our borough.

Queens Botanical Garden (QBG) is located on 39 acres of city-owned land in Flushing. We are the place **where people, plants, and cultures meet**. We demonstrate this through our inspiring organic gardens, innovative educational programs, and real-world applications of environmental stewardship. QBG is a stabilizing organization that offers environmental education, engaging programming, and cultural activities. QBG also provides an essential resource for people who do not have a yard, giving them access to trees, flowers, plants, and open space. But above all, the Garden's most important undertaking is to foster sustainable choices—decisions that protect and nurture our environment and our community.

In FY24, the Garden served approximately 282,000 visitors, including 22,000 schoolchildren. We also hosted almost **200 youth internships** to help keep the Garden green and growing. With volunteers and interns from all different age groups in Horticulture, Education, Public Programs, Maintenance, Compost, Urban Farm and Administration, they learn valuable skills to help them grow. This would not be possible without the support of funding for our horticulture, visitors services, farm, compost public programs, education, and maintenance mentors.

Education

A leader in environmental education, Queens Botanical Garden welcomes groups from across New York City to learn about a myriad of topics- both onsite and virtually. Last year in 2024, due to grant support, the Garden launched **Growing Justice**- a yearlong, paid internship program at Queens Botanical Garden for high school students in the Flushing and Corona areas.

The program offers hands on experience exploring environmental justice, food justice policy and advocacy, and sustainable agriculture. 30 interns reached thousands of community members through food production and distribution, peer education workshops on food justice and nutrition, and advocacy on food policy and sustainability.

Community Engagement

Every summer, QBG is proud to host up to **50 Summer Interns** alongside seasonal volunteers annually. Over the program, we strive to provide meaningful job skills and experience that will position the youth for success in their future careers. Reaching all corners of the Garden, the interns learn alongside staff to learn the mechanics of

sustainable gardening, farming and composting. Still other interns assist our Human Resources and Visitor Services teams, as well as our Children's Garden programs.

The Garden partners with local organizations and diversity programs to give these opportunities to the youth. Over **20 Community Partners** work with the Garden to provide these internship opportunities including:

SYEP COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Chinese Planning Council (CPC)
- Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS)
- Commonpoint Queens
- Culture, Service, Career Corp, Spring Forward and SilverCorps
- Ladder for Leaders
- Learning to Work
- Frank Sinatra School – 993
- Lexington School for the Deaf
- ACCES-VR/Goodwill/S:US
- John Bowne High School
- Flushing High School
- Queens College
- Queens Community House
- International High Schools

Compost & Farm

Because of funding support, internship opportunities also expanded in our Farm and Compost teams in the last couple of years. The QBG Farm is a one-acre farm that bridges sustainable agriculture, community, and education. The Farm invites the public to learn about the importance of urban agriculture and soil health. QBG is proud to have a closed-loop system where horticulture waste is processed into compost and used on the farm as organic fertilizer. The Farm utilizes compost made on-site by QBG out of food scraps, yard clippings, woodchips, and leaves. Opportunities to engage are available through internships, volunteering, tours, and seasonal workshops.

Queens Botanical Garden is committed to expanding access to STEM and environmental focused internships to our community. The continued and new support from elected officials will ensure that QBG remains a source of environmental education and job skill building opportunities for the youth of New York.

The City Council Testimony – Career Pathways in the Arts

Jennifer DiBella

Thank you, Chair Rivera, and members of the Cultural Affairs Committee for inviting me, Jacob, Manny, and Hannah to testify this morning. I'm Jennifer DiBella, Director of Education at Roundabout Theatre Company. Today's hearing centers a topic I am very passionate about: removing barriers of access to meaningful careers for New Yorkers.

The Theatrical Workforce Development Program— or TWDP— is a three-year vocational training fellowship for New Yorkers ages 18-24. Roundabout created TWDP in 2016 in partnership with the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees. TWDP addresses systemic inequities within the arts workforce by supporting pathways for young people who are underrepresented in technical theatre. It also addresses an urgent need within the theatre industry for trained technical theatre workers.

Each year, TWDP trains up to sixty fellows for careers in technical theatre. They complete a rigorous curriculum of progressive skills development, along with job placements at a network of over 50 partner organizations. They earn wages through all three years of the program, and their rates increase as they gain experience.

Based on the program's success, we expanded TWDP this year to include five paid fellowships for early career arts administrators like Jacob Smith, who is with us today.

The most important contributions to TWDP's success come from the fellows themselves. Through their hard work, talent, and passion, they have turned TWDP into a nationally recognized incubator for in-demand technicians. They have given the American theatre a boost during a time of precarity and put our industry on a path to greater equity and sustainability.

Theatre is essential to New York City's identity, and TWDP connects our industry with the local talent it needs to thrive. With the city's partnership, TWDP has trained over a hundred fellows. I'm so grateful to be here today celebrating that with you, and I'm excited to pass the mic to Jacob and Manny. Thank you.

*Staten Island Museum testimony by Janice Monger, President & CEO,
to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International
Intergroup
Relations for Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New
Yorkers.
January 27, 2025*

The Staten Island Museum, founded in 1881 and a NYC Cultural Institutions Group member, maintains collections in natural science, history and art. Piloted in 2022 with private foundation support, SIM offers apprentice-style opportunities as Museum Fellow. The Museum Fellow program is designed to provide an opportunity to access paid work at the museum and to offer mentorship for those pursuing a career in arts and culture as SIM's effort to help diversify the cultural pipeline. This apprenticeship-type opportunity is for college students and those early in their career to gain meaningful experience working in a local museum to develop pertinent skills for their career path.

The inaugural Museum Fellow focused on Exhibitions and Public Programs work, delivering support to public programs and even moderating a virtual program. The Exhibitions and Public Programs Fellow assisted with planning and production of in-person, hybrid, and virtual programming to participation in research and production related to exhibition initiatives, along with receiving a comprehensive introduction into the daily operations of a 21st century museum.

Most recently, SIM has appointed two fellows - an Archaeology Fellow and an Archives Fellow, thanks to grant funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and National Park Service. This year the Archaeology Fellow will assist with a large-scale cataloging project of the museum's Staten Island archaeology collection in consultant with Lenape representatives. The Fellow will gain hands-on experience with a museum collection, assisting staff with record creation in the museum's collections management system and document scanning. The Archives Fellow will gain hands-on experience with a museum archive, assisting staff with inventory, rehousing, and cataloging 185 linear feet of collections.

The Staten Island Museum has committed to offering this unique learning opportunity and aid in the creation of a diverse pipeline for SIM and the larger NYC Arts and Culture sector. SIM has seen the benefits of this workforce development program in cultivating and diversifying the next

generation of cultural stewards. We have been able to offer employment opportunities to interns and Fellows beyond their initial appointment. SIM is excited to continue to grow these opportunities in the coming years. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,
Janice Monger

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Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Oversight - Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers
Monday, January 27th, 2025
The 92nd Street Y, New York

Thank you to the New York City Council and this Committee for the opportunity to share testimony on pathways into the arts and cultural workforce for New Yorkers. My name is Ariel Savransky and I am the Director of Government and Community Relations at The 92nd Street Y, New York (92NY), a nonprofit cultural and community center in Manhattan.

Since 92NY's founding more than 150 years ago, we have offered services for children, their families and caregivers. We strive to provide high quality, innovative educational, cultural and developmental experiences that empower children and youth who will most benefit from them. While 92NY is based on the Upper East Side, we reach children and youth in all five boroughs.

For 35+ years, 92NY's School Engagement in the Arts (SEA, formerly 92NY Center for Arts Learning and Leadership) has played an increasingly outsized role in bringing the arts to public school students in NYC. SEA serves nearly 10,000 students and teachers across all five boroughs with in-depth classroom visits from top teaching artists and innovative curriculum design. Students participating in SEA programs also interact with 92NY mainstage talent and get unparalleled access to professional internships and other early career opportunities that provide a crucial foothold into a life in the arts. Through sustained engagement with school communities, SEA connects students with celebrated artists and thought leaders from around the world.

92NY increases access for teens to further their skills in the arts through free classes and workforce development at 92NY. Three particular 92NY programs through which teens are building professional skills, a professional network, and friendships with peers from schools across the city are:

- Teen Gems offers professional trade skills training for teens through semester-long courses in basic jewelry-making techniques. This three-year-old program expands professional opportunities, diversifies the arts industry pipeline, and supports teens without financial means through an opportunity to embark on a path forward into a jewelry or design industry career with confidence and entrepreneurial knowledge. Conversations with arts professionals foster a professional network to support students as they progress through their high school art design experience and navigate selecting a career path. Each year, about 20 teens participate. The current cohort includes students from six public schools around the city.
- Teen Producers is a paid, two-year-long career exploration and mentorship program that helps high school juniors and seniors acquire the tools they need to pursue careers in the creative industries, develop as artists and contribute to programming at 92NY.
 - Each year, 10-20 students from historically underrepresented backgrounds build technical, management and production skills through internships in 92NY departments, gaining practical, hands-on experience.

- Participants also receive individual college application advisement and a range of career-readiness workshops; have the opportunity to develop their technique through yearlong classes and private study with 92NY faculty; and can attend a range of performances and exhibitions at 92NY and other NYC-based arts organizations. All costs are covered by 92NY.
- Teen Arts Week, a Citywide celebration of the arts created for teens, by teens. This week of free programming for teens creates collaborations between 92NY’s Teen Producers, arts organizations across New York City and arts-interested teens.
 - The program enables teens to expand their own cultural understanding and artistic skills and explore their interests.
 - Student achievements are recognized through the Community Artist Awards given to 5 teens annually, one in each borough, for their creative services to their communities.
 - During the 2024 celebration, 33 leading cultural organizations across all five boroughs offered 64 classes, workshops and performances that were free for teen participants, of which there were over a thousand, who registered from 150 schools Citywide.

Public funding is crucial for our organization to be able to provide New York youth with experiences that expand thinking and expression and open up pathways into the arts and cultural workforce. 92NY remains committed to fostering the development of the next generation of artists and arts administrators through continued investment in programs that prepare public high-school students for careers in the creative industries.

Teen Testimonials:

“Being a part of the Teen Producer Program at 92NY has been an incredible experience that has opened so many doors for me. The opportunities I've had to work in the arts and dance center while collaborating on creative projects have helped me build valuable skills and confidence. Through this program, I've met inspiring peers and mentors who have truly shaped my artistic and professional journey. Most significantly, being involved with 92NY has connected me to amazing opportunities, including being nominated for the Posse Scholarship. This program has been instrumental in preparing me for college and a future in the arts as I pursue law and dance, and I'm so grateful to be part of this vibrant community at the 92NY.”

“As a Teen Producer at 92NY, I have explored the arts, met amazing people, and prepared for the future in ways that I wouldn't be able to otherwise. I had access to hundreds of unique and interesting art classes that helped me channel my creative side. I gained a new appreciation for the arts through the courses and galleries in the 92NY. Everyone I have met has been so friendly, understanding, and uplifting throughout the high school and college process. The Teen Producers Program has truly been a place of growth and support that is difficult to find in high school.”

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. Please reach out to me (asavransky@92ny.org) with any questions.



229 W 42nd Street, 10th Floor
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646.223.3000

January 27, 2025

Testimony from The New 42nd Street and the New Victory Theater: Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers

At New 42 and New Victory Theater, we take deep pride in fulfilling our mission: *to make extraordinary performing arts a vital part of everyone's life from the earliest years onward.*

Since we opened the New Victory's doors in 1995, our entire front of house team has always been young New Yorkers in a paid workforce development program called the [New 42 Youth Corps](#). It is important that we welcome our student and family audiences into a theater with staff who reflect New York City - but it has been a long, uphill battle to welcome those same Youth Corps staff members into a cultural field that reflects them. The creative economy of New York is one of the city's epicenters, but jobs in the cultural sphere are often filled by staff that are not representative of the city we serve. Only 34% of workers in the creative economy are people of color, as opposed to 68% of the city's population. New 42's Youth Corps programs have traditionally been over 90% people of color.

Recent research shows that economic progress can be drastically influenced by a few things - early mentorship, pursuing and completing a degree, and a first job that has opportunities for advancement - Commissioner Cumbo's introduction of her own background is a perfect example of this research. These kinds of programs that we run have a proven track record - and if we want the creative heart of New York City to beat with the full spectrum of New Yorkers - we have to support these pathway programs that will keep the cultural sphere vibrant and diverse.

The over 1,500 young people who have taken part in the New 42 Youth Corps since 1995 now work all over the city - from Disney to Roundabout to St. Ann's Warehouse to New Group and beyond! Almost 20% of our own current full time staff started their first cultural job in the Youth Corps.

Almost 10 years ago, we expanded the program from mostly high school students to create a dedicated partnership with CUNY - we hire community college students and support their college success all the way through their degree seeking (including helping

them transfer to 4-year CUNY institutions). We also added a full time fellowship program (with benefits) for New 42 Youth Corps alumni and the alumni of CUNY Cultural Corps to better bridge the gap from college into full time arts employment.

We are committed to a creative economy filled with ALL New Yorkers and we hope the City Council will be a partner toward that goal. We have lost a large portion of our dedicated funding for these programs over the last few years and are struggling to maintain the same level of workforce program as we had pre-pandemic.

After attending the hearing, we would also love to identify that we would LOVE a youth cultural job fair as part of our recruitment process. We used to attend and hire from the big SYEP end of summer job fair but since that ended, it's been much more challenging to recruit and find the right young people - especially high school aged. We also would love a field-wide impact study that helps us understand where our young people go throughout their careers. Finally, as we continue to seek potential public/private partnerships, it would be incredibly helpful if the City Council was treating Creative Economy jobs as vital to the larger workforce development goals for the city, it often feels we aren't invited to apply for these programs because they don't put the creative economy in the same bucket as more traditional fields - and therefore their grant requirements are written in ways that the cultural field has a hard time navigating - an example is a large grant that requires a guaranteed hiring partner inside the private sector that meets criteria that don't align with most creative industries.

Referenced:

[Capital Mapping Dashboard - Mobility Experiences](#)

[Spotlight: New York City's Creative Economy :Office of the New York City Comptroller Brad Lander](#)

[Creative Economy Dashboard :Office of the New York City Comptroller Brad Lander](#)

[The Creative Economy :Office of the New York City Comptroller Brad Lander](#)



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

Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers

Monday, January 27, 2025

Dear Members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations:

Founded in 1804, The New York Historical conveys the stories of the city and nation's diverse populations, expanding our understanding of who we are as Americans and how we came to be. Ever-rising to the challenge of bringing little or unknown histories to light, The 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 for audiences underrepresented in cultural institutions.

Internships at The New York Historical

The New York Historical is committed to ensuring New Yorkers of all ages have access to cultural institutions at every level, enabling them to consider careers in the arts and culture field. Our internship program offers museum-based work experience in both our Museum and Library divisions for high school, college, and graduate-level students. From modeling creative exhibition layouts to researching with our curators and educators, our interns experience unparalleled career development and cultivate fruitful professional relationships.

For high school students, our [Student Historian Internship](#) program provides 50 teens per year the opportunity to conduct research in our expansive collections and create public-facing digital projects around our exhibitions. Over two cohorts, one during the academic year and the other during summer break, interns meet with professional staff to learn about the museum, library, digital humanities, and history fields; and work collaboratively with fellow students to develop their historical thinking, communication, and digital media skills. The program involves substantial research and writing, allowing interns to deepen their understanding of American history and the digital humanities, while also gaining insight on museum careers. To ensure students don't pass up the opportunity in lieu of other paid work, all interns receive a \$700 stipend.

For college and graduate-level students, our robust [internship program](#) places interns within museum departments, including Collections, Development, Family Programs, Education, and Exhibitions. Prospective interns choose to apply to whichever department best matches their interests, providing more substantial and specific work experience as it relates to their professional goals. Within these departments, interns are exposed to museum conservation work, fundraising, programming development, and curatorial efforts, gaining vital experience

and working directly alongside museum professionals. Internships are offered during the fall and spring semesters, as well as the summer breaks. Interns may work up to 120 hours during their tenure and are compensated \$16/hr.

Master of Arts in Museum Studies at CUNY SPS

To ensure pathways into the arts and cultural workforce are available across the City and not just at The New York Historical, we developed a Master of Arts in Museum Studies program offered through City University of New York's School of Professional Studies (CUNY SPS). Launched in 2019, the program was created, in part, to address a 2015 national study conducted by the Mellon Foundation, the Association of Art Museum Directors, and the American Alliance of Museums that found that, at the time, only 16% of leadership positions at art museums were held by people of color. Scholarships are available to students, especially those who are from historically underrepresented groups or who can demonstrate a professional commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion. Scholarship recipients are named President's Fellows.

The program leverages The New York Historical's world-class Museum and Library collections, as well as our curatorial and educational expertise, to prepare participants for meaningful careers in New York City's thriving arts and culture economy. By blending online programs with a hands-on practicum component onsite at the Museum, the program offers both flexible scheduling and in-person experience, accommodating individuals whose many existing responsibilities may not allow for a traditional academic experience, including those with full-time employment. Fall 2024 applicants held positions ranging from teachers, Executive Directors, gallery managers, and marketing professionals. Of the 328 students in the program's 2024-2025 academic year, 5% identified as Asian, 12% as Black or African American, 9% as Hispanic, and 8% as multiracial.

Graduates have joined museums and cultural organizations across New York such as the American Museum of Natural History, Kupferberg Holocaust Center, the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum, MoMA, MoMA PS1, the South Street Seaport Museum, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, and The New York Historical.

Conclusion

Ensuring that all New Yorkers find accessible pathways into the arts and cultural workforce is fundamentally aligned with our institutional mission, and The New York Historical remains grateful for the City's investment in our work.

Funding from the City Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs ensure that our programs have a sustainable future, and we thank you and your fellow City Council Members for your exceptional service.

Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Monday, January 27th, 2025
NEW YORK SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL dba THE PUBLIC THEATER Testimony

Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers

Good morning, Chair Rivera and committee members and staff. Thank you for calling this important hearing. The Public Theater is pleased to share testimony on our work concerning this topic. There are many critical issues currently facing the entire culture and arts community. One of these issues is the the cultivation of a skilled, diverse workforce for the American theater.

It is no secret that choosing a career in the Theater comes with taking risks both artistically and economically. A plethora of barriers preclude countless artists from ever realizing their artistic aspirations. These hurdles include, low paying or unpaid internships and entry level positions, scarcity of said internships or entry level positions, and, most prevalent, a lack of institutional connections. Other systemic roadblocks include racial and educational prejudice. Due to these barriers, many artists wait a lifetime for their 'breakthrough' into the industry.

The Public Theater's mission is to operate on the principles that theater is an essential cultural force, and that art and culture belong to everyone. The Public continues the life work of our visionary founder Joe Papp as a civic institution engaging, both on-stage and off, with some of the most important ideas and social issues of today. Our institution recognizes the systemic barriers that prevent fresh and diverse talent to emerge within the American Theater and we are committed to offering not only justly compensated part-time fellowships and full-time resident artist positions but also ensuring impartial and equitable selection of individuals to these positions. Each of our programs offers an encompassing curriculum that ensures both administrative and artistic development. Currently The Public Theater is host to six part-time CUNY fellows and, and three artists in residence.

The Public Theater's three artists in residence include: Ife Olujobi, Ryan J. Haddad, and Julian Goldhagen. The Public Theater's leadership team and Creatives Rebuild New York afford these resident artists the time, resources and space to create. Playwrights Ife and Ryan focus on writing as their primary paid occupation. During their residencies, both artists premiered new plays at The Public – Ryan's "Dark Disabled Stories" (2/28/23 – 4/9/23) and Ife's "Jordans" (4/11/24 – 5/19/24). Furthermore, as a part of his residency, Ryan supported The Public in its exploration of more expansive accessibility offerings for audiences and artists with disabilities and held a workshop of his new, yet-to-be produced play, "Good Time Charlie." As a part of their residency, Ife organized and moderated two panels on just labor practices for arts workers and successfully advocated for an increase in playwright compensation at The Public. Julian is embedded with Public Works, our major community engagement initiative, and uses their expertise as a licensed social worker to help participants build community across interpersonal differences. They also developed a series of storytelling classes and created a sweeping oral history project documenting the first ten years of Public Works. After this residency period all artists will move on to other endeavors with strong experience and The Public Theater will as a home base.

In 2023 The Public Theater launched a partnership with the City University of New York's (CUNY) network of undergraduate theater training programs to help us teach, train, and employ a new generation of professional theater staff. Over the past two years, The Public Theater developed our

relationship with CUNY, focusing specifically on Brooklyn College and Hunter College as inaugural partners, to build a robust workforce development program with a three-pronged approach that includes fellowships, artist residencies and masterclasses. We onboarded our 2024/25 cohort of six CUNY fellows in October 2024. Each of these fellowships will offer practical experience in each student's chosen discipline, provide robust professional development and network building opportunities to help launch their careers, and offer resources to fellows to build a portfolio of work. These fellowships included positions in: Marketing, Community Programs, Development, Producing, New Work Development, and Production Management. The purpose will be to meaningfully advance each Fellow's career, and at the end of their time with The Public the goal for each participant will be permanent employment at an arts organization. These programs are funded through donations from private funders and foundations including the Miranda Family Foundation.

In all, The Public Theater aims to dismantle the racial, economic, and classist barriers that artists and prospective cultural workers face when pursuing a career in the arts. The Public Theater is exploring ways to expand and improve upon our commitment to cultivating diverse talent. For example, although traditional higher education prepares individuals to enter the workforce in many fields, discounting individuals who may have gained experience without a traditional diploma is a way of enforcing classist and economic barriers. Positions and opportunities within the theater that do not require a traditional university BA or MFA degree are needed and should not be overlooked.

We strongly support calls for increased funding to Cultural Institutions to support funding pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce. The Public Theater also supports the overall baseline increase in funding for the arts in New York City. It has never been more important to the long-term health of our field to invest in a new generation of talent, and to develop a workforce that is as diverse and dynamic as the city we live in. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Kate Madigan, Government Affairs Coordinator, at kmadigan@publictheater.org with any questions or further information about our programs and work. Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.



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PRESIDENT

Francine Garber-Cohen

EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT/ SECRETARY

Linda Cantoni

TREASURER

Joseph Delfausse

TESTMONY FOR MONDAY JANUARY 27 2025 HEARING AT 10AM

Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, International Intergroup
Relations

RE: Pathways to Employment for Professional Artists:

Dear Members of the NYC Council,

For education in music, dance, and theater arts, New York City students attend Juilliard, Manhattan School of Music, Mannes College of Music and the various CUNY colleges. Between these and other colleges and universities, where students learn their craft, and New York City's professional theaters and opera houses, there are numerous pipelines. These necessary pathways are where students gain the experience they need to prepare them for professional careers in the performing arts, which are a huge draw for tourism and an important source of entertainment and recreation for New Yorkers.

Today I would like to stress the importance of training in music, which Regina Opera, located in underserved Sunset Park, provides for its musical artists, singers and instrumentalists, to assist them to prepare for future employment in the music industry.

The following was sent to Regina Opera by a debut artist, soprano Yeawon Jun, who is a doctoral student at a university in the NYC Metro area, in which she expresses her gratitude for the training:

“Participating as Nedda in Regina Opera Company’s production of *I Pagliacci* represents an extraordinary opportunity to challenge myself as a vocalist and performer. My goals for this include mastering the intricate musical and emotional nuances of Nedda’s character, refining my ability to convey authentic emotion through my voice and movement, and enhancing my overall stage presence. I also aim to deepen my understanding of dramatic interpretation and character development, ensuring that every aspect of my performance is both vocally and theatrically compelling.

This professional experience differs greatly from my prior performances as a student. While student performances are educational and often supported by a forgiving environment, this role requires me to deliver a polished, professional-level interpretation in collaboration with experienced artists and for an audience with high expectations.

Additionally, this experience provides a rare opportunity to work in the competitive New York City opera scene, which will undoubtedly push me to grow and excel.

I aim to balance the technical aspects of my singing with the expressive demands of the role, maintaining a standard of excellence that aligns with professional expectations.”

Ms. Jun expresses her gratitude for the experiences offered to her and all other singers and instrumentalists by Regina Opera. I’m sure that other musical ensembles are similarly grateful for the experiences provided by other groups in New York City.

Respectfully submitted.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francine Garber-Cohen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Francine Garber-Cohen, President, The Regina Opera Company, Inc.

MISSION

“Developing the community in the area of arts and social services with the focus on educating the community on Caribbean culture”

TAGLINE

“Using Culture as a Tool for Social Transformation”

PROGRAMS

After School Programs

Artist Resource Center

Authors Connecting

Award of Excellence

Body of Vibration Dance & Theater

Choral Singing

Concert Series

Musicians Mentoring Musicians

Spirit of the Arts Award

Stilt Walkers /Moko Jumbies

The Art of Masquerade

The Art of PhotographyVideography

SLOGAN

Official Home for Caribbean Culture

Serving all New Yorkers with programming & events in:

Serving the community with programming throughout Brooklyn, parts of Queens, Bronx and Manhattan and expanding.

Testimony for the New York City Council

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

From: Tropicalfete, Inc.

Date: Tuesday January 21, 2025

Subject: Oversight: Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers

Dear Chairperson and distinguished members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations,

My name is Alton Aimable, and I am the President and Founder of Tropicalfete, Inc., a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to preserving and promoting Caribbean culture through arts, education, and community engagement. It is an honor to testify today in support of this critical oversight hearing on "Pathways into the Arts and Cultural Workforce for New Yorkers."

About Tropicalfete, Inc.

Since its inception, Tropicalfete has been committed to nurturing artistic talent, fostering cultural exchange, and empowering underrepresented communities. Our programs integrate the arts with education to inspire personal and professional growth while preserving the rich heritage of Caribbean traditions. Each year, we host flagship events such as the Carnival Festival, Pop-Up in Times Square, and our Grand Finale, which bring together diverse audiences and serve as vital platforms for artists and cultural practitioners.

Additionally, our organization recently expanded our community space in Brooklyn. This 13,000 sq. ft. accessible facility will serve as a cultural tourism landmark and a hub for arts programming and workforce development.

The Need for Equitable Pathways in the Arts

The arts are not just a reflection of culture, they are also an economic engine. However, many talented New Yorkers, especially from underserved and immigrant communities, face significant barriers to entering and sustaining careers in the arts.

The challenges include:

- Lack of affordable arts education: Many aspiring artists cannot access formal training due to high costs.
- Limited funding for cultural organizations: Small organizations like ours struggle to secure resources to expand workforce initiatives.
- Barriers for immigrant and BIPOC artists: Systemic inequities limit opportunities for many artists and cultural workers.

Tropicalfete’s Contributions to Workforce Development

At Tropicalfete, we address these challenges by providing accessible pathways into the arts and cultural workforce through:

1. Educational Workshops: Our programs such as music, dance, and theater and so on provide free or low-cost training for young people and adults.
2. Internship Opportunities: We partner with local schools and colleges to offer internships in event management, marketing, and production, preparing participants for careers in the creative sector.
3. Mentorship Programs: Established artists within our network mentor emerging talent, fostering skill development and industry connections.
4. Space Rentals and Incubator Programs: With our new community space, we aim to host events, workshops, and residencies that empower artists and entrepreneurs.

MISSION

“Developing the community in the area of arts and social services with the focus on educating the community on Caribbean culture”

TAGLINE

“Using Culture as a Tool for Social Transformation”

PROGRAMS

After School Programs

Artist Resource Center

Authors Connecting

Award of Excellence

Body of Vibration Dance & Theater

Choral Singing

Concert Series

Musicians Mentoring Musicians

Spirit of the Arts Award

Stilt Walkers /Moko Jumbies

The Art of Masquerade

The Art of PhotographyVideography

SLOGAN

Official Home for Caribbean Culture

Serving all New Yorkers with programming & events in:

Serving the community with programming throughout Brooklyn, parts of Queens, Bronx and Manhattan and expanding.

Recommendations to the Council

We commend the Council’s focus on pathways into the arts and cultural workforce and recommend the following actions to further strengthen these efforts:

1. Increase Funding for Community-Based Arts Organizations: Provide grants in greater funding amounts to grassroots organizations that are already building capacity for underserved communities.
2. Expand Workforce Training Programs: Create citywide initiatives that focus on skills development, including technical roles like sound engineering, stage design, and digital marketing.
3. Support Cultural Tourism Initiatives: Invest in spaces like ours that double as cultural and economic hubs.
4. Streamline Support for Immigrant Artists: Simplify visa processes and provide legal aid for immigrant artists contributing to New York’s cultural landscape.
5. Formalize Arts Pathways in Education: Ensure arts education and career development are integrated into school curriculums across all boroughs.

Closing Remarks

New York City thrives because of its diversity, creativity, and cultural vibrancy. By creating accessible pathways into the arts and cultural workforce, we can ensure that every New Yorker has the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from this vital sector. Tropicalfete is eager to collaborate with the City Council, cultural organizations, and community leaders to achieve this shared vision.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to continuing this important conversation.

Respectfully submitted,

Alton Aimable
President and Founder



**Testimony to the Committee on
Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations
Erin Prada, Assistant Director, Youth Development
Wildlife Conservation Society
January 27, 2025**

Thank you, Chairwoman Rivera and members of the Committee. My name is Erin Prada, and I serve as the Assistant Director of Youth Development at the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). WCS manages the Bronx Zoo, New York Aquarium, Central Park Zoo, Prospect Park Zoo, and Queens Zoo. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee today.

Founded in 1895 and headquartered in New York City, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) is committed to safeguarding wildlife and natural habitats through scientific research, conservation efforts, educational initiatives, and fostering public appreciation for nature. Our five parks not only rank among the city's most popular tourist destinations and family attractions but also function as vital educational resources and employment hubs within their boroughs. Partially funded by the City of New York, these parks contribute to preserving endangered species while offering environmental education to thousands of educators and children. Additionally, they enable us to deliver diverse programming and interactive educational experiences.

In New York City alone, WCS employs over 2,000 individuals, making us a significant contributor to local employment. Notably, WCS is one of the city's largest employers of youth, providing over 1,900 young people aged 14-24 with opportunities for personal growth and community impact.

At the heart of WCS's mission is the communication of scientific knowledge and conservation principles—skills essential for STEM professionals. Unfortunately, traditional education often overlooks science communication and public engagement, especially for diverse audiences. Our commitment to cultivating the next generation of science communicators is reflected in our workforce development programs, where youth engage visitors across our parks while earning a wage. These programs equip participants with essential 21st-century job skills and help them build meaningful connections within their communities.

For decades, WCS has been a leader in STEM workforce development in New York City, with a growing impact over the past seven years. **The SCI Network NYC** program, which WCS created based on the success of our STEM Career Lattice Program, is an integrated career pathway initiative that ensures that youth from historically under-resourced communities gain expanded access to opportunities at our institutions, along with professional services and support systems.

In 2024, we hosted nearly 1,100 interns who gained hands-on experience in fields such as animal care, horticulture, science communication, teaching, and administration. Collectively, these youth earned more than \$2.4 million in stipends and wages. Additionally, 84% of our



interns identify as people of color, compared to 69% of NYC residents. Historically, internships have been accessible primarily to those with financial resources and social capital. Through SCI Network NYC, we strive to ensure that youth from all backgrounds can participate in science internships and benefit from these transformative opportunities.

Our program combines professional development workshops, STEM education, and peer networking to equip youth at institutions like the New York Aquarium and Bronx Zoo with the tools they need to excel. These experiences empower participants to transform their first jobs into long-term career opportunities. By integrating youth development across departments, we provide participants with the knowledge, skills, and support to pursue careers in STEM. This engagement model allows youth to take on increasing responsibilities and receive progressive compensation, addressing the economic realities they face and positioning them to qualify for employment within our institutions and beyond.

The program's impact is evident: 77% of participants reported that their internship helped them identify an interest in working or interning at cultural institutions in the future. For many, these experiences have provided new perspectives on science, inspiring transformative career aspirations.

The SCI Network NYC program is the first of its kind in New York City, offering paid internships with wraparound services to over a thousand youth annually. We look forward to continued partnership and support from the Council. With your continued support of \$2m in the FY26 Budget, cultural institutions like WCS can continue empowering a diverse cohort of young New Yorkers with the skills and experiences needed to build meaningful, lifelong careers in STEM.

New York Theatre Workshop's 2050 Administrative Fellowship changed my life. It allowed me to switch careers and pursue my passion for theater. Not only was the Fellowship an incredible opportunity for me to gain the skills and knowledge I needed to succeed, but it was also a wonderful community of people that continues to support me in my career. And because of the Fellowship, I was able to land the job of Development Coordinator at The Drama League, where I have been ever since.

Best,
Bernadette Norman
She/her/hers

I was a production management fellow for the first cohort in 2017. The fellowship launched my career in the arts. After completing the fellowship, I was hired full time at NYTW as the Assistant Production Manager. Within a few years, I was running my own production department as the Production Manager at Soho Rep. I've switched careers since then and am now a Software Engineer but the skills I learned as a PM fellow serve me in this career path as well.

Warmly,
Brandi Ude

The 2050 Admin Fellowship connected me to a beautiful cohort of smart, driven, savvy theatermakers and professionals, many of whom remain close friends of mine to this day. I feel so lucky to have been and continue to be part of the NYTW community. I now work full time as a theater producer and owe so much of my network and toolkit to my time at NYTW.

Hope this works!

Best,
Declan

The 2050 Administrative Fellowship at New York Theatre Workshop is the most pivotal experience in my career. I can look back and point to the experiences and lessons I learned in my fellowship as the foundation for who I am today as an artistic leader. I had just completed another administrative fellowship at a smaller off-broadway theater, but the 2050 fellowship elevated my sense of responsibility, self and confidence in the field of arts administration.

It's a program that so deeply integrates people at the onset of their careers into a thriving, bustling, respected and community oriented theatre organization. The ability to be at New York Theatre Workshop for an entire year, thanks to the fellowship, was invaluable in the journey of learning to be a better administrator and having the courage and confidence to take on more responsibility.

It's the combination of an educational framing for the fellowship along with this integration to the staff and team that I think makes the fellowship the most successful. I wasn't just made to do intern level grunt. But rather, I was invited to the table, and participated in artistic meetings alongside giants of the American Theatre Landscape such as Jim Nicola and Linda Chapman who at that point had been running the theatre for 38 and 23 years respectively.

I was also given the space to really take ownership of a weekly new play reading series, where I was responsible for the coordination of logistics and payment for all artists involved. Through that responsibility, alone, I was able to meet and collaborate with over 200 artists. Many of whom, veterans of the theatre industry with Tony Awards. And many of whom, were also at the onset of their artistic journeys with a new play. To be able to support artists at all levels of their careers was extremely rewarding.

And to have a cohort of 10 other admin fellows was such an instrumental part to my learning and my integration into the organization. I still call some people from my cohort my closest friends and collaborators to this day.

If you need further proof that this 2050 Administrative Fellowship cultivates the skillsets and the confidence in young theatre administrators, I can point to the several full time staff members at NYTW that are alums of the fellowship program, myself included. It's a program that benefits the theatre greatly, it benefits young leaders greatly and it benefits the larger American theatre landscape tremendously.

The only way to ensure that we have a future generation of artistic leaders to steer the ships at the hundreds and hundreds of artistic organizations around the country, is to have programs like the 2050 Fellowship to cultivate those leaders and fan the flames of the future of the field.

I would not be half the producer, curator, administrator and leader I am today, were it not for the 2050 Administrative Fellowship.

Leo Angulo | Artistic Programs Manager | **New York Theatre Workshop** |

The 2050 Administrative Fellowship opened the doors for me to pursue a paid career in the arts. By connecting me with like-minded peers in the form of a fellowship cohort, I was given a support system and a pathway to living and working in New York City. For me, this professional educational program was an invaluable experience as an out-of-state recent graduate with no prior connections to the theatrical sphere in NYC.

Best,
Sammy Womack

My time as an artistic admin fellow for New York Theatre Workshop gave me a lot of the skills that I use now as a freelance producer. My time during the fellowship showed me all of the logistical skills it requires to curate a room and provide space for new works to take their precious next steps. I've been able to create budgets for independent readings and small productions, provide new writers with realistic timeline for workshops that prioritize their artistic vision, I've gone on to adjudicate EST's Youngblood fellowship application and now become a co-facilitator for New George's Jam. My time at New York Theatre Workshop gave me the confidence to start and finish many different projects. Because of my particular fellowship track I got to see many different artist through early stages of their projects, line produce readings and workshops and read and evaluate new scripts. Those responsibilities helped me think about my process as a writer in a whole different way. I had an unwavering appreciation for artistic admin and the lengths they go through to hold me and my work as a writer. These skills that I gained and the people I have met through this fellowship have shaped my artistic journey in a way that is truly invaluable.

Thalia Sablon

The 2050 Administrative Fellowship at New York Theatre Workshop launched my career as an early-career professional trying to forge a path into the arts and entertainment industry. Through the fellowship, I spent a full year as a Marketing Fellow, which afforded me the incredible opportunity to experience and learn from a department that I had never considered I wanted to work in full-time.

The program took a chance on me, someone with zero prior marketing experience but an intermediate knowledge of graphic design and a passion for the arts, and it paid off immensely. Five years later since my fellowship, I'm still a part of the marketing team at New York Theatre Workshop in a manager-level position. I wouldn't be where I am in my career without a workforce development program like the one at New York Theatre Workshop.

Best,
Uno

Uno Servida | Media, Memberships & Communications Manager | He/Him

Yuli Testimonial for NYTW 2050 Admin Fellowship

The 2050 Administrative Fellowship has been a transformative experience that reshaped my understanding of arts administration. This program opened countless doors, connecting me with producers and directors and embedding me in the heart of storytelling. It taught me the fundamental skills of budgeting, production, and community building, while instilling a mission-driven, purpose-driven approach to professional growth.

Thanks to this fellowship, I've advanced to the Theater Producer of Color program and secured a Marketing Coordinator role with John Gore Organization. The program gave me the confidence to build lifelong relationships, connect with artists I once thought were out of reach, and develop a professional identity rooted in creativity and purpose. New York Theatre Workshop didn't just offer a job—they provided a pathway to meaningful change and a new generation of hope in the arts.

New York Theatre Workshop's 2050 Fellowship was instrumental to my career in arts administration. It was like getting to enroll in off-Broadway grad school -- rigorous, fast-paced, thrilling, and informative. I've worked at a multitude of off-Broadway institutions, and the Workshop is the first place where I felt like my work was valued. The Workshop's deep care for artists is what sets them apart, and I was so fortunate to learn about producing and theater management at the off-Broadway level from the kindest and hardest working people in the industry. I am a different person now than I was before my fellowship -- I am more confident and more capable in my work, more clear-eyed about my long-term career goals, and more ready to be making new work in New York than I ever could have been before.

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 1/27/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kimberly Olson

Address: [REDACTED] LIC, NY 11109

I represent: NYC Arts in Education Roundtable

Address: 520 E 8th Ave NY, NY Suite 302 10018

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Name: Hannah D'Amico

Address: [REDACTED] Brooklyn NY 11215

I represent: IATSE

Address: 207 W. 25th St. 4th Floor, NY, NY 10001

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Name: Karen Tobacco

Address: [REDACTED] NYC 10034

I represent: Creative Art Works

Address: 100 W. 33rd St, #1026 NYC 10001

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Name: FRUN HARTNOMAS

Address: [REDACTED] 1105

I represent: Queens Botanical Garden

Address: 4350 Main Street, Flushing 11355

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Name: Albeliza Perez

Address: [REDACTED] Brooklyn NY

I represent: American Museum of Natural History

Address: 200 Central Park West NY, NY 10024

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Name: Erin Prada

Address: PO Box 687, Verplank NY 10596

I represent: Wildlife Conservation Society

Address: 2300 Southern Blvd, Bronx NY 10460

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Name: Yardel Ramirez

Address: _____ Brnx, NY

I represent: Wildlife Conservation Society 10462

Address: 2300 Southern Blvd, Brnx NY

10460

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Name: Kate Madigan

Address: _____

I represent: The Public

Address: _____

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Name: Lindsey Butler Malickel

Address: _____

I represent: New 42

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Name: Nicole Touzien

Address: 182 9th Ave, Brooklyn

I represent: Dancewave

Address: _____

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Date: 1/27/25

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Name: Stephanie Wantell

Address: [Redacted] Brooklyn, NY 11215

I represent: Education Through Music

Address: 122 E 42nd St Suite 2000, NY, NY

10108

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Name: Ayanna Cole

Address: 881 7th Ave NY, NY 10019

I represent: Carnegie Hall

Address: _____

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Date: 01/27/2025

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Name: LAURA MORGES-VEGAZQUEZ

Address: 47-01 111th Street, Corona NY

I represent: New York Hall of Science

Address: _____

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Name: Dimitri Jackson

Address: 1969 7th Ave

I represent: Carnegie Hall

Address: _____

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Name: DAVID FREUDENHAL

Address: _____

I represent: CARNEGIE HALL

Address: _____

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Name: MANUEL MARRASIN

Address: [redacted] Brooklyn NY,

I represent: Record about JUDGE COMPANY

Address: 4674 St

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Date: 1/27/2025

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Name: Ian Su

Address: [redacted] Woodside NY 11377

I represent: Innegie Hall

Address: _____

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Name: Larric Combs, Commissioner

Address: DCLA

I represent: _____

Address: _____



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Name: Samel Burgess

Address: _____

I represent: Carnegie Hall

Address: _____

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Name: Jacob Smith

Address: _____

I represent: Roundabout Theatre Company

Address: _____

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Name: JENNIFER D. BELLA

Address: _____ NEW YORK, NY

I represent: ROUNDABOUT THEATRE

Address: 111 W. 46th ST. NEW YORK, NY

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Name: Rachel Neches

Address: 80 8th Ave

I represent: Center for an Urban Future

Address: _____

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Name: Courtney FRENCH

Address: _____

I represent: Jamaica Arts Center

Address: 161-04 Jamaica Ave

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Name: Trevor New

Address: _____

I represent: American Composers Orchestra

Address: _____

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Name: Lyndsay Working - Vip

Address: _____

I represent: American Composers Orchestra

Address: _____

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Name: FRANKIE GARDNER

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Laurie Cumbo

Address: 31 Chambers St

I represent: NYC DCLA

Address: _____

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Name: Lance Polivy

Address: 31 Chambers St

I represent: NYC DC LA

Address: _____

Panel #2

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Name: La-Tia Morris

Address: _____ Middle Island 11753 NY

I represent: AMNH

Address: _____

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Name: LISA GOLD

Address: _____

I represent: ASIAN AMERICAN ARTS ALLIANCE

Address: _____

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Name: Ava Kinsey

Address: [REDACTED] BK 411217

I represent: Brooklyn Academy of Music

Address: _____

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Date: 1/22/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chrisopher Leon Johnson

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: SCP

Address: _____

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