



Testimony to the New York City Council Economic Development Committee &  
Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and Intercultural Intergroup Relations

Monday, November 15, 2021

Good morning, Chairman Vallone, Chairman Van Bramer, and members of the Committees on Economic Development and Cultural Affairs, Libraries, & International Intergroup Relations. I am Dr. Donna Keren, EVP of Research & Insights, and I am joined today by Nancy Mammana, Chief Marketing Officer, at NYC & Company, testifying on behalf of our CEO, Fred Dixon. We thank you for this opportunity to share the current status of the City's tourism and hospitality industry and NYC & Company's efforts, along with our government and private sector partners, to resuscitate the industry as we work towards economic recovery.

I would like to provide a quick background on who we are and what we do as an organization. NYC & Company is the official destination marketing and tourism organization as well as the convention and visitors bureau for the five boroughs of New York City. Our mission is to maximize inbound travel and tourism opportunities throughout the City, build economic prosperity, and spread the dynamic image of the five boroughs around the world.

We are a 501(c) 6, private, not-for-profit, member organization and represent the interests of nearly 2,000 member businesses and organizations from across the five boroughs. We are governed by an 85-member board of directors, which represents a diverse range of businesses from across the City. Our members range from hotels, cultural organizations, restaurants and attractions to BIDs and Chambers of Commerce. Together they fund about half of our operations. We also hold a procurement contract with the Department of Small Business Services to provide the City of New York with certain tourism marketing services.

Travel and tourism has long been a driver of economic prosperity for New York City with direct and indirect impacts in all five boroughs. 2019 marked the tenth consecutive year of growth of the number of visitors and, importantly, in visitor spending, business revenues, job creation, new investments and city tax revenues. However, the pandemic crippled the tourism and hospitality industry once normal operations came to a halt. Our global community fractured as borders were closed and convenings of any size became impossible.

Let me give you a snapshot of the economic costs and losses the City endured through the first year of the pandemic. Combined domestic and international visitation dropped by 65 percent and visitor spending decreased by 66 percent. This translated to a greater than 50 percent loss in jobs and a \$2 billion decrease in local tax revenues from all sources. Tourism-supported hotel room demand, always a leading indicator for economic impact, fell by 69 percent in CY 2020, with hotel taxes (HROT at 5.875 percent and \$2 fee) down by at least \$500 million to the general fund. These enormous losses were aggravated by the closing of the US borders as international markets account for 50 percent of room nights sold and almost half of all visitor spending across the city.

Given this reduction in visitation and spending since March 2020, especially by over-night travel and international visitors, the city's Leisure & Hospitality sector has lost more jobs than the Finance, Information, Real Estate and Professional & Business Services sectors combined. Leisure & Hospitality jobs were down by 50 percent, which represents over 230,000 jobs lost last year. As you may know, a significant proportion of the tourism workforce also lives in neighborhoods throughout the City. Many of them work in small businesses that provide key inputs to the visitor experience – from wholesalers to event specialists to local tour guides and start-ups. The tourism ecosystem spreads benefits at every level.

Restaurants and bars, which rely on visitors for about one-third of their revenues, have been the most affected in terms of actual number of jobs (a loss of 105,000 jobs as of September 2021, still down by more than one-third from 2019 peaks). It was good news when seated dining became available, and then indoor dining returned. The industry has been adding jobs but remains at risk as the winter weather returns.

On the other hand, though smaller in numbers, the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation sector has been harder hit. Given the attraction of the city's cultural community to visitors, six in ten jobs in the sector are supported by visitor spending. As a result, in September, even as Broadway, live events and museums are open across the boroughs, jobs in this sector remain at historic lows — 25,000 below 2019 levels, 28 percent below benchmark. This sector remains critical to the City's image and recovery.

Active hotel inventory remains down compared to pre-pandemic levels, even as new hotels have opened and properties across the five boroughs have reopened to visitors. The employment situation in this sector remains 32 percent below 2019 levels, hitting just 219,000 jobs in September this year, still 105,000 jobs below earlier levels. The return of domestic visitors has driven the occupancy rates to an annual average of just 55 percent. The sector remains at risk as the recovery of business and international travel will take several years to regain peak levels.

Throughout these uncertain times, NYC & Company remains pivotal to the City and the industry by connecting, convening, and supporting critical sectors of the economy from the earliest days of the pandemic. In June 2020, we brought together key stakeholders from across sectors and the boroughs including public health partners to establish *The Coalition for NYC Hospitality and Tourism Recovery*. The first objective of the Coalition was to create a tourism recovery plan and in July of 2020, we released “All In NYC: The Roadmap for Tourism’s Reimagining and Recovery.” Utilizing our strength as the city’s destination marketing organization, major components of this plan included our continuing local and resident revitalization campaign, *All In NYC*; our health initiative, the *Stay Well NYC* Pledge; tactics for our renewed commitment to diversity and inclusivity, especially in lifting up NYC’s BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities. We put hyperlocal exploration and experiences, along with staycation messaging, at the forefront of our initiatives until domestic, business, and ultimately, international travel could resume.

As the US opens our borders to international markets, New York City is regaining its rightful place as the top international destination bringing global visitors who stay longer and do more dining, shopping, visiting museums and historic sites, and attending live performances or sporting events in the city. Through strategic government investment in our work, we have been able to maintain our presence and messaging in key global markets ready to pivot to welcoming domestic & international visitors once again. This much needed government funding has expanded our marketing reach and research capabilities. Therefore we are grateful to Senate Majority Leader Schumer for ensuring New York City received significant funds from the American Rescue Plan. We would like to thank the Mayor for making an historic investment in our work and to Chairman Vallone for speaking at the Mayor’s presser announcing the City’s first investment in tourism recovery.

Now Nancy will share our 2021 marketing campaigns and vibrancy programs that continue to revitalize the travel and hospitality industry.

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to share our work.

On June 24, we launched our global [It’s Time for New York City](#) campaign, which is the largest multi-phased global tourism marketing and advertising campaign ever created for New York City. **It’s Time for New York City** was rolled out as restrictions began to lift, more people were getting vaccinated, and travel resumed in the United States and beyond. The campaign reminds visitors of the City’s unrivaled energy, excitement, and the abundance of endless experiences and resiliency that make NYC the most iconic destination in the world. Designed to create urgency and FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), **It’s Time for New York City** campaign has three phases and includes television, digital, outdoor media and partnerships. To date, three commercials have launched asking “Where Were You in the Summer of ’21?” and “Lights Up,” celebrating the Fall return of Broadway,

performing arts and culture, and our third highlighting the holiday season, which just launched the first week of November. The Mayor continues to show his support by including us in his pressers to showcase our commercials and celebrate the return of tourism and vitality to the City.

In addition to our media, we have joined forces with important travel partners to drive actionable results. We began in June with a partnership with AAA targeting the Northeast drive market, followed by American Airlines in July, targeting the longer haul US domestic market, and Amtrak targeting the Acela corridor from October through Q1 2022.

We also followed up our 2020 “NYC Misses You Too” out-of-home campaign with “New York City is Ready for You” creative in the UK, Mexico, Japan and Sweden, in part to help fulfill our contractual requirement with the City to utilize our JCDcaux media allocation, but also to help keep New York City top of mind as travelers began considering their next travel destination.

When the Federal government announced the November 8 reopening to vaccinated travelers, we immediately began expanding our efforts by developing international media campaigns and partnerships with airlines and tour operators in key markets. Those partnerships include British Airways, which launched in London on November 8, and then Porter Airlines in Canada, Aeromexico in Mexico, CVC in Brazil and six other partnerships that will be live by Q4 2021. Other markets will follow in Q1 2022.

Throughout the pandemic, we have continued our engagement with locals and tri-state visitors and commuters through our annual “Vibrancy” campaigns, designed to help promote the energy and attractiveness of our local tourism and hospitality businesses during need periods. Since its inception in Summer 1992, [NYC Restaurant Week](#), held in both January/February and July/August, has been a celebration of dining, bringing people together for a shared experience of food, drink and camaraderie. Taking into consideration the vulnerability of the restaurant industry, we made it economically feasible for any restaurant to participate, receiving the largest number of five-borough participants ever. On the heels of Restaurant Week’s continued success, NYC & Company has relaunched seasonal vibrancy programs including the twice-annual [NYC Broadway Week](#) and [NYC Off-Broadway Week](#), with 2-for-1 tickets to some of Broadway’s hottest shows as well as shows featured at smaller theaters across the boroughs; and [NYC Must See Week](#), offering 2-for-1 tickets to nearly 70 attractions, museums, tours and performing arts. These programs have attracted visitors from the tri-state region and beyond, and are economic drivers during what are typically slower travel seasons. In October 2021, we also added a new “It’s Time for Culture” campaign supporting our performing arts and cultural organizations in every borough, plus a special push around local holiday shopping and retail this November & December.

In January 2022, NYC & Company will bring back **NYC Winter Outing**, a combination of NYC Restaurant Week, NYC Broadway Week, NYC Must-See Week, and the newly added NYC Hotel Week. By combining all programs on a broader platform and under one messaging umbrella, we expand the reach of the message to daytrips and valuable overnight visitors and drive traffic to businesses and organizations across the city.

As we rejoice with the successful return of Broadway, performing arts, nightlife, music and sports venues, the industry is still challenged as not all international borders have reopened, business meetings and conferences have not fully returned, and the coronavirus variants remain a threat to our “new normal.” NYC & Company will continue to support our industry by stimulating demand from hyperlocal, regional, national, and international visitors. For example, we have not stopped booking future meetings and conventions to foster the return of business travel as much as possible. We will continue to share in real-time public health guidelines with all of our audiences. We knew this would be a marathon not a sprint and are steeled for the long road ahead to a full economic recovery. However without a stable, long-term funding strategy, we will fall behind our competitors affecting our mission to build economic prosperity and share all that each borough has to offer around the world through sound communication and community and member engagement.

Thank you for allowing us this time to testify. As always, we appreciate the Council’s support of the industry and being partners with us in this work. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.



**Oversight Hearing – NYC’s Tourism Industry and the COVID-19 Crisis  
Committee on Economic Development & Committee on Cultural Affairs  
November 15, 2021**

My name is Sanne Wright and I am the External Affairs Manager at the Times Square Alliance. Thank you Chair Vallone, Chair van Bramer, and the members of the Committees for their efforts to help New York City recover. We are very grateful for your continued work to support the tourism industry over the past several years.

It is no secret that Times Square is the center of the City’s tourism industry. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, it was home to 16% of the City’s total hotel rooms, driving \$2.5 billion in annual revenue. Times Square’s theatre district, heavily patronized by visitors from across the globe, brought in \$12.6 billion in total annual economic impact. Similarly, the district’s 668 storefront businesses generated \$168 million in annual sales tax revenue. Today, these numbers look different.

Since the pandemic hit, there has been an 89% decline in hotel occupancy, totaling a loss of \$417 million in occupancy tax revenue as well as 89,000 jobs in the tourism sector. In Times Square alone, 70 storefronts have closed. At the height of the pandemic, pedestrian counts fell by 91% to 33,000. We have made strides towards recovery but over 10 Broadway theatres remain closed and pedestrian traffic, commercial leasing, and consumer spending all remain down by 32%, 40%, and 60% respectively.



If we want over 60 million tourists to return to New York, and Times Square, annually, we must ensure that the City is at its most safe and welcoming. Since before the pandemic, our streets, sidewalks, and plazas have been inundated with people in need, including individuals engaging in open drug use, experiencing mental health crises, and sometimes engaging in criminal, violent, or otherwise disruptive behavior. The current policy of allowing anti-social and illegal activity to occur without intervention is failing. Instead, the City must commit to enforcing against illegal activity and sufficiently fund humane, effective policies to help troubled people find their way off of the streets and into treatment and/or transitional housing.

BIDs and other community-based organizations across the City have the potential to be some of the strongest partners in making our public spaces clean, vibrant, and welcoming to visitors. Currently, the Alliance partners with the Center for Court Innovation, Breaking Ground, and Fountain House on Community First, a program that uses peer Community Navigators to provide consistent outreach to persons in need on our streets, building trust by offering essentials like food and blankets and then connecting people to mental health care, transitional housing, benefits, and employment. After a six-month pilot period, Community First received funding from the Department of Social Services to continue its work for the next year.

Since mid-July, navigators have engaged with 120 individuals on the street. Through sustained interactions and trust building, 20 of them have accepted longer term support, like housing and drug treatment. Programs like Community First require supportive housing and other social services to be readily available and well-functioning, but the City has yet to invest sufficiently in both. If we wish to fully recover, this must be a priority.

## ADVANCE | MORE OPERA

The Association for the Development of Vocal Artistry and Neighborhood Cultural Enrichment  
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Testimony to the New York City Council  
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations  
Oversight - NYC's Tourism Industry and the COVID-19 Crisis – Update  
T2021-8114

Submitted by

Cheryl Warfield

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

Monday, November 15, 2021

Greetings. Thank you, Chair Vallone, Chair Van Bramer, Majority Leader Cumbo and Members of City Council for reading my testimony. I am writing to present my perspective as an artist and cultural administrator on the importance of the arts and culture ecosystem to NYC's tourism industry and to urge the development of stronger, more inclusive marketing partnerships in tourism for not-for-profits.

Please allow me to introduce myself. I am Cheryl Warfield, an African American opera singer, teaching artist, and a long-standing member of SAG-AFTRA, Actor's Equity and my parent union, the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA). In New York City, I have performed at the Metropolitan Opera and on Broadway. I am also an independent artist, the founder of ADVANCE, a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization and the artistic director of MORE Opera.

Years ago, I founded ADVANCE (The Association for the Development of Vocal Artistry and Neighborhood Cultural Enrichment) in Columbus Ohio when I only dared to dream of becoming a working singer in NYC. The goal at that time was to provide performing opportunities for talented classically trained singers, particularly artists of color to assist them in preparation for viable performing careers in NYC.

Like so many performing artists, I would visit NYC annually to train, audition, and attend performances while in pursuit of "the dream." Other than Europe, NYC was my only choice to pursue my artistic dreams because New York City is the cultural mecca of the world, especially for classical music and opera. NYC is the ultimate dreamland for artists and culture-lovers alike, and there is no question that arts and culture drive tourism and bring significant dollars to the economy. Smaller not-for-profit cultural organizations play a key role in NYC's cultural ecosystem, but too often are overshadowed by the attention that Broadway and the larger cultural institutions receive with their effective marketing strategies. The not-for-profit community needs greater inclusion in NYC's overall marketing plan for tourism.

I was surprised and impressed by the state of Florida - Division of Arts and Culture's webpage on cultural tourism at <https://dos.myflorida.com/cultural/info-and-opportunities/resources-by-topic/cultural-tourism-toolkit/what-is-cultural-tourism-basic-information/>, where the importance of cultural tourism is not only defined, but all organizations are encouraged to create a plan to attract tourism. The webpage also provides a toolkit, cultural tourism funding resources, a directory of Florida direct marketing organizations (DMOs), Arts and Culture event and calendar websites, and other useful links. Perhaps New York State has a comparable website, but it did not appear in my Google search. It would be beneficial to small organizations like mine and to

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independent artists for NYC to provide a cooperative marketing plan for tourism that includes cultural organizations of all types and sizes.

Culture generates \$110B in economic activity for the city and employs about 400,000 people. Arts and culture are essential to New York City's economic recovery and for tourism. I believe the economic impact on tourism will be significantly greater if a concerted marketing effort is made to include diverse not-for-profit cultural organizations in future marketing plans. The city must continue to be forward thinking and innovative, partnering and sharing its marketing efforts throughout the boroughs to rebuild and restore arts and culture and promote tourism, thus retaining its place as the leader and cultural mecca of the world.

Thank you for all your efforts towards a greater, more equitable and just New York that is inclusive of arts and culture and thank you reading my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

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Good morning. I am Thomas Ferrugia, Director of Governmental Affairs at The Broadway League. The League was founded in 1930 and serves as the principal trade association for the national commercial theatre industry. Today, we represent over 600 theatre owners, operators, producers, presenters, general managers and suppliers of theatrical goods and services across North America and around the world.

We thank Chairmen Van Bramer and Vallone, as well as the other distinguished members of the Committees on Cultural Affairs and on Economic Development for allowing us to participate in this hearing on NYC Tourism and the COVID-19 Crisis. I would also like to recognize Speaker Johnson and Councilmember Powers for their unwavering support for the live entertainment industry.

Broadway is a massive economic and tourism driver that, prior to the pandemic, drove an average of 40,500 theatregoers to Midtown Manhattan each day, with over 80,000 patrons attending theatre on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Based on our most recent full theatre season, 2018-2019, Broadway grossed \$1.829 billion on 14.8 million tickets, averaging grosses of \$35 million on 284,000 weekly admissions over a one-year period

In 2019, we hosted millions of travelers from around the globe who spent billions of dollars in our city. 46% of admissions were tourists who live outside New York City and its surrounding suburbs, while 19% percent were visitors from abroad. Broadway drew this healthy, pre-pandemic foreign audience from the United Kingdom, Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, South America, comprising the highest number of foreign visitors in all Broadway history. Approximately 60% of foreign tourists who attended a show in 2019 stated that Broadway was one of their most important reasons for visiting NYC. The average foreign Broadway tourist saw 2.3 shows and stayed in the city for 6.7 days. Broadway-motivated foreign spending on ancillary activities, excluding the cost for these visitors' theatre tickets, exceeded \$2.9 billion. While we anticipate losing a large population of domestic tourists this coming year, we believe foreign visitors represent our most at-risk theatregoer as the likelihood of this population returning to NYC in significant numbers throughout 2022 remains low.

We would like to highlight several policies for the Council to consider that will encourage visitors to return to Broadway, as well as help sustain its economic growth. First, safety is of paramount importance. However, we have seen a proliferation of anonymous vendors who aggressively solicit trusting families, take unfair advantage of their familiarity with the characters the solicitors portray and often attempt to embarrass or harass visitors into paying for photographs. We therefore thank Councilman Powers, the Council and Mayor de Blasio for enacting 1811 which remedied many of these concerns by enhancing existing law governing activity zones and pedestrian flow areas. However, as always, active police enforcement and diligent oversight by this body will be critical to ensuring the new law achieves its goals.



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We also believe that access to the midtown core remains vital to Broadway's economic viability and the seemingly unending addition of sidewalks and bicycle lanes in Times Square, clogging the streets and making vehicular access to theatre district needlessly complicated, is a short-sighted approach to addressing a larger problem. Our patrons should be welcomed, regardless of their means of transport, not exasperated by a lack of pick up and drop off access.

For example, in addition to the many restrictions already in place to accommodate bicyclists, a plan is currently in motion to completely shut down Broadway from 50<sup>th</sup> to 47<sup>th</sup> to create another large pedestrian plaza area. In addition, the City recently installed another bike lane along the east-side curb on 7<sup>th</sup> avenue midtown and relocated street parking into what was formerly a car lane, thus fully eliminating two vehicle lanes. When vehicles frequently double park, traffic is then forced into a single lane. This traffic then clogs even further as these vehicles must all turn off 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Cars and bicyclists must share the streets, however intentionally frustrating motorists to accommodate bike lanes has made it almost impossible to navigate Times Square. We acknowledge the need for bicycle lanes, but recommend that businesses in the community have an opportunity to meaningfully participate in decisions that so directly impact our customers. Now we have near gridlock, non-stop honking of horns and inconvenience over 15% of theatregoers who come to Broadway weekly by car.

Finally, we ask the Council to revisit Councilman Powers' proposals to reform the commercial rent tax. As the Council knows, this tax was introduced in 1964 and applied to the largest spaces in Manhattan from Battery Park to 125<sup>th</sup> street. Today, it is assessed only on businesses – big and small – in Midtown and Lower Manhattan. Further, this tax is now assessed on rents paid on outdoor signs and therefore includes unoccupied spaces where no business is conducted. It is a regressive tax that creates a disincentive to operating businesses in the City and an unfair double assessment on these establishments that are already paying local property taxes. Intro 1371 would not eliminate the tax, but instead provide a graded measure of relief to taxpayers with incomes of less than \$10 million or who pay less than \$800,000 per year in rent. Intro 1372 would end the tax only on billboard advertisements within the Theater Subdistrict. As the economy recovers and we struggle to rebuild our audience base, we feel the City must focus on removing undue financial obstacles, encouraging spending and supporting financial growth.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify at today's hearing. As always, we look forward to continued collaboration with the Council and to working together to ensure New York City remains the cultural and financial capital of the world.



## **The Importance of the Arts and Culture to Tourism in NYC from the Dance Parade & Dance Rising Perspective:**

Every year in May since 2007, Dance Parade conjures what we believe represents the largest single day event in the world devoted to the diversity and universality of dance as a healthy and joyful cultural expression. The 1.5 mile Parade leaping off from Broadway and 21<sup>st</sup> St in Manhattan and the 4 hour free 5 stage festival with which it culminates called DanceFest that takes over most of Tompkins Square Park would not be possible without the thousands of dancers, up to 10,000 in a given Parade, and their communities who work in studios and lately in parks, plazas, piers and Open Culture streets year round in every Borough and almost every neighborhood in the city.

Dance Parade and its younger sister initiative Dance Rising stand as emblematic of the diversity, energy, inclusion, generosity and inventiveness that makes our city a beacon of creativity, hope and love worldwide and draws tourists from across the globe like moths to a warming flame. Where else would they be as likely to encounter dancers dancing on any random walk across town? The over 100 styles and genres represented every year in the Parade and DanceFest and since October, 2020, Dance Rising still do not encompass the entirety of what makes the city special.

Even the pandemic has not been able to stop us: With the Executive Production assistance of former DP Grand Marshal Mickela Mallozzi, famous worldwide as the 4 time Emmy award winning host of *Travel Bare Feet*, Dance Parade presented its 2021 edition as both a streaming and televised event on WNYE even while Mickela prepared her second 13 week season of her ongoing series devoted exclusively to the diversity of dance and music to be found in our metropolis. If that won't draw tourists to our beacon, then they must be being detained.

As a licensed NYC tour guide, I can attest to the wonder and amazement of tourists I've encountered from every corner of the globe at the cultural bounty that brings them here. As a citizen and a creative producer, I find it impossible to estimate the economic and social impact that the arts and culture contribute to the economic and cultural vitality that tourism brings to our city. Arts and culture workers remain essential workers and I urge our leaders to help us create a more coordinated synergy and economic support model to capitalize on this connection.

Thank you.



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

*Submitted to City Council Committee on Economic Development and the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations on November 15, 2021*

*Prepared by Dance/NYC*

*Presented by: Sarah Cecilia Bukowski, Research & Advocacy Assistant*

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**On behalf of Dance/NYC ([www.dance.nyc](http://www.dance.nyc)), a service organization that serves over 5,000 individual dance artists, 1,200 dance-making entities, and 500 non-profit dance companies and the many for profit dance businesses based in the metropolitan New York City area, including BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Color) dance workers, immigrants, and disabled dance workers. Dance/NYC embeds the values of justice, equity, and inclusion into all aspects of its operations and frames the following requests through the lens of those values. Dance/NYC joins colleague advocates working across creative disciplines in thanking you for your leadership and requesting:**

- 1. The inclusion of arts and cultural businesses in recovery funding for the tourism industry, specifically to comply with public health mandates;**
- 2. The prioritization of additional funding allocations to organizations experiencing the highest levels of impact from the pandemic; and**
- 3. The continued expansion of City-funded media campaigns to support the nonprofit arts and culture sector in addition to Broadway and for-profit entertainment.**

Dance/NYC expresses gratitude to the City Councilmembers, City Officials, Mayor's Office and other dedicated workers who have contributed to the recovery of the City's arts and culture sector. With gratitude, it believes that there are comprehensive improvements and investments to be made in order for arts and culture to continue as a primary engine for tourism.

New York City is a global tourist destination for arts and cultural innovation and legacy, and with the reopening of international travel, the City's tourism industry will boost recovery and



economic activity across industries. The arts and culture sector is the number one driver of tourism to the state, generating **\$110 billion in economic activity** according to the *Comptroller's Report on the Creative Economy* (<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-creative-economy/>). Of that economic activity, dance plays a key role, with the nonprofit dance sector contributing approximately **\$300 million annually**. This figure is largely understated, as it only includes organizations with 501(c)(3) status. The actual contribution is likely much larger with the inclusion of fiscally sponsored organizations, for profit dance studios and independent arts workers. The arts and culture sector serves as a foundation for the City's tourism industry that cannot operate sustainably without targeted recovery funding and dedicated financial support from the City.

A healthy arts ecology is interconnected with many other industries, and event-related spending by arts audiences generates valuable revenue in tourism sectors. According to the Americans for the Arts *Arts & Economic Prosperity* report (<https://bit.ly/AFTAartsandeconomicprosperity5>), the average arts attendee spends approximately \$31.47 per person per event beyond the cost of admission on expenses like meals, retail, parking, lodging, local transportation, childcare, and souvenirs. These dollars provide vital income to local merchants, energize the arts districts, foster a healthy residential real estate market, and pay salaries and wages in non-arts sectors. Additionally, nonlocal audience spending is significantly higher (\$47.57) than local audience spending (\$23.44), evidence that a community harnesses measurable economic rewards by attracting nonlocal arts attendees and cultural tourists. Investing in arts and culture supports jobs, generates government revenue, and bolsters the cornerstone of tourism.

Dance/NYC conducted the *Coronavirus Dance Impact Study* (<http://bit.ly/DNYCImpactSurvey>), a comprehensive research study on the impact of COVID-19 on the dance sector. Dance organization, group, and project budgets shrunk by nearly one-third (31% on average) due to earned and contributed revenue losses. These budget shrinkages are directly due to reductions in programming for local patrons and cultural tourists. As a result, 18% of dance organizations, groups, and projects believe that permanent closure is likely or extremely likely; 84% of those



facing permanent closure have budgets under \$100K. Separately, Dance/NYC has been tracking organizational closures and is aware of at least 26 organizations and facilities that have permanently closed their doors due to the pandemic; the majority of which includes studio facilities which are primarily small businesses and beacons in their communities. In Dance/NYC's *Defining "Small-Budget" Dance Makers in a Changing Dance Ecology* ([www.dance.nyc/sbdmdata2020](http://www.dance.nyc/sbdmdata2020)), we found that 83% of these organizations have existed in NYC for over a decade and 43% have existed for more than 20 years as drivers of tourism in their communities. Small budget arts and cultural organizations are feeling the most acute impact of the pandemic and should be prioritized for additional relief and recovery funding for tourism-related industries. These challenges to organizational stability put the arts and culture as a whole at risk of losing capacity to contribute to the tourism economy.

Pandemic-related interruptions in programming, economic hardship resulting from City mandates without City infrastructural or economic support, and permanent closures in the arts and culture sector result in a direct impact to tourism and its related industries. The impact of these hardships goes far beyond the businesses themselves. For arts and cultural venues and institutions that provide services to independent arts workers, the repercussions of organizational interruptions, displacement, and closures are compounded; losing access to these spaces puts the working lives of arts workers and the art itself at risk. The effects of the pandemic and the ongoing affordability crisis is manifesting in a migration of arts workers from the City. According to the *Coronavirus Dance Impact Study*, as of late 2020, 5% of the dance workforce had relocated permanently and another 17% were considering permanent relocation, with 43% considering long-term career options outside of dance. These wide-ranging impacts are felt most acutely by arts workers and organizations led by and primarily serving BIPOC, immigrants, disabled people, and other communities with less access to capital reserves, which in turn stands to exacerbate historical inequities in the field. Fewer and less representative arts workers and arts organizations in the City directly results in losses to cultural diversity, tourism opportunities, and revenue generation across sectors.



Arts and cultural businesses were the first to shut down and are among the last to reopen, with performing arts organizations also being subject to ongoing restrictions through public health mandates. While the public health goals are laudable, their implementation stands to cause economic hardship to the City's still struggling arts and cultural field, particularly the hardest-hit small budget organizations. In addition to increased expenses related to public health mandate compliance, businesses are confronting an ongoing loss of revenue due to decreased attendance to programming, classes, and performances. City funding allocations to facilitate compliance with public health mandates is crucial to supporting organizational capacity to provide programming to patrons and tourists, as well as ensuring the long-term sustainability of the City's arts and cultural sector. It is crucial that affected businesses, particularly small budget arts and cultural organizations, have access to City funds to comply with City mandates. We ask that the City look to relief funds intended to support the recovery of the tourism industry to ensure that arts and cultural businesses survive the implementation of mandatory public health regulations.

Direct investment in arts and cultural businesses is crucial, in addition to supporting the intrinsic value and visibility of their programming. The recently announced multi-million dollar "Welcome Back to New York" marketing and communications campaign puts mainstream Broadway shows front and center as a primary attraction for tourists traveling to the City. While this campaign is commendable, the City must also recognize that the vibrancy and value of the arts and culture sector reaches far beyond Broadway. Expanding this media campaign to include nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and institutions throughout the five boroughs would not only support their programming, but also bring much-needed economic investment and tourist dollars to neighborhoods hit hardest by the pandemic. An equitable, sustainable City-wide recovery requires a City-wide investment in the people, organizations, and industries that drive economic activity and make every neighborhood in this great City unique and vibrant.

By directly supporting the economic viability and visibility of arts and cultural organizations, these measures provide much-needed relief during the pandemic and ensure the long-term



capacity of arts and cultural organizations to serve arts workers and their communities.

Dance/NYC joins the City's arts and culture sector in asking for the above measures to ensure the longevity of small businesses and arts and cultural organizations that have long been an essential part of the communities in our City. Arts and culture can lead the City's economic recovery, and these investments can help ensure their resilience, growth, and long-term survival.

**For Dance/NYC and its constituents, the most urgent priorities are:**

- 1. The inclusion of arts and cultural businesses in recovery funding for the tourism industry, specifically to comply with public health mandates;**
- 2. The prioritization of additional funding allocations to organizations experiencing the highest levels of impact from the pandemic; and**
- 3. The continued expansion of City-funded media campaigns to support the nonprofit arts and culture sector in addition to Broadway and for-profit entertainment.**

Taken together, these measures stand to support arts and culture as a key driver of the tourism economy in the City. Dance/NYC thanks you for your consideration and commends your leadership and ongoing efforts to support the recovery of the arts and culture sector as tourists return to the City. Dance/NYC looks forward to the opportunity to ensure that New York City remains a vibrant capital for arts and culture.

###



November 15<sup>th</sup> at 10am (REMOTE HEARING – Virtual room 1)

***Oversight – NYC’s Tourism Industry and the COVID-19 Crisis – Update***

Committee on Economic Development & Committee on Cultural Affairs (Jointly)

My name is Barbara Blair. I am the president of the Garment District Alliance. Thank you chair Vallone, Chair Van Bramer and members of the committee for your efforts to help New York City recover after a devastating 20 months. The Garment District is situated on Manhattans west side and links the 34<sup>th</sup> Street Penn Station area to Times Square. Because of this central business district location, we have some of the highest pedestrian counts in NYC. Additionally, the Garment District has over 50 hotels hosting 1.9 million visitors to the city a year and is the site of Penn Station with 600,000 users a day and Port Authority with an additional 300,000 users a day pre-pandemic.

Over the last two years the district has been negatively impacted by crime. The west side of Manhattan has some of the highest rates of assaults, robbery, and other violent crime in the city. This is largely a result of individuals in dire need of help including individuals experiencing mental health challenges being present in the district, an unfortunate outcome of placing over 4300 individuals in hotels in one area of the city and thus creating a cluster of severely ill individuals. Drug dealing and use is in the open including openly injecting, needles strewn on our streets, individuals passed out on our sidewalks and in our plazas and the accompanying disorder. Ground floor retailers including restaurants are terrorized by often violent behaviors. Tenants that have returned to our office buildings have rejected conditions and opted to continue to work from home indefinitely and visitors in the hotels are appalled by what they are witnessing in our great city. For our part at the Garment District Alliance, 16 of our staff members have been assaulted over the last year.

If we want over 60 million tourists to return to New York, and Times Square, annually, we must ensure that the city is safe and welcoming. Since before the pandemic, our streets, sidewalks, and plazas have been inundated with people in need, including individuals engaging in open drug use, experiencing mental health crises, and sometimes engaging in criminal, violent, or otherwise disruptive behavior. The current policy of allowing anti-social and illegal activity to occur without intervention is failing. Instead, the City must commit to enforcing against illegal

activity and sufficiently fund humane, effective policies to help troubled people find their way off the streets and into treatment. The Garment District and indeed the entire west side of midtown Manhattan, home to our cherished theater industry, the Empire State Building and the 34<sup>th</sup> Street shopping corridor, Times Square are all under assault.

We implore the committee to put the safety of our streets, public order, and the assurance that recidivists and repeat offenders will be removed from the public realm and placed in an appropriate, safe setting wherein the support that they need is available.

The Garment District Alliance is supportive of an office of tourism recovery within the mayors office at city hall, however we urge you to put public safety at the top of the list of consideration and to include the NYPD in the participating agencies.



Testimony for the 11/15/21 Hearing of the

Committee on Economic Development Jointly with the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

from the Green-Wood Historic Fund,  
the 501c3 organization of Green-Wood Cemetery

Good morning Chair Van Bramer, Chair Vallone, Majority Leader Cumbo, and members of the committee and City Council. My name is Lisa Alpert. I'm the Vice President of Development and Programming at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn. And thank you everyone from NYC & Co. for this great conversation this morning. If anyone here is not yet familiar with Green-Wood as a cultural institution, I invite you most cordially to come to Brooklyn and see us. Green-Wood is the backdrop for concerts, art installations, walking tours, trolley tours, school programs, and environmental programs throughout the year. Typically about 250 programs every year. And these programs are outside – where attendees are safe and at ease.

I'd like to add to this dialogue – in a really passionate and urgent way to make the case that it's especially important that this committee look at the unexpected and unconventional – yet no less popular cultural spaces in New York City (like, for example Green-Wood Cemetery) and support them with city dollars to help them continue to accommodate and serve their audiences.

Two weeks ago when Brian Lehrer on WNYC asked callers to recommend where New Yorkers should be sure to visit here in the city – ostensibly before the European tourists returned. And a caller – whom we did NOT pay or threaten in any way – called to rave about Green-Wood as a Must See destination for visitors to New York. We agree.

Here's what's gonna really surprise you: Green-Wood sees a surprisingly high number of visitors annually. In 2019 Green-Wood had 300,000 visitors. In 2020, that number **doubled**, which means last year, we had 600,000 visitors. That's because we are open 7 days a week until 7 pm

daily at no cost to the public. With numbers like that, Green-Wood became one of **the most visited cultural spaces** in all of New York City, eclipsing most museums and botanic Gardens in any of the five boroughs. Naturally, post quarantine, numbers dipped a bit, but still we will close out 2021 with **400,000 visitors** to Green-Wood.

In turn, our local businesses, like Baked in Brooklyn, also enjoyed a substantial uptick in receipts at their registers from New Yorkers who were now exhausted from hiking the pathways and hills of Green-Wood Cemetery and in desperate need of some carbohydrates and hot coffee.

Currently, while we do receive some annual support from the Department of Cultural Affairs, we have not yet enjoyed the warm embrace – or really any embrace – from the city council. But we are huggers, and we would be most grateful for a real hug and a financial hug that will help us serve our growing audiences for our cultural programs, our environmental programs, and our biggest program of all, so to speak, the visitor services and orientation that serve our 400,000 annual visitors. By the way, our survey data show that our fellow New York City are our highest constituency of visitors. We love welcoming New Yorkers to Green-Wood and we hope we can partner with you to continue to support their visits, their adjacent economic activity, and the cultural adventure our visitors have when they visit this National Historic Landmark in Brooklyn, NY.

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## New York City Arts in Education Roundtable

*Written Testimony - Oversight: NYC's Tourism Industry and the COVID-19 Crisis*

Thank you Chair Vallone, Chair Van Bramer, the Committee on Economic Development, and the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relationships. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to arts, tourism, and the great city of New York. My name is Kimberly Olsen, and I write to you as the Executive Director of the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable.

The Roundtable is a service organization who builds its efforts around the values that arts are essential and that arts education is a right for all NYC students. We represent hundreds of organizations that have worked in long-standing partnership with the DOE to ensure that every child has access to quality arts experiences.

We recognize a huge component of local tourism happens at the school-level via field trips. According to the most recent [NYC Department of Education's Arts in Schools Report](#) (p. 54), 32% of schools reported bringing their students on Arts-Related Field Trips in the 2019-2020 school year — nearly 400 schools across all five boroughs. For many students, a field trip may be their first experience outside of their neighborhood or borough. Research shows that students who participate in a field trip to a cultural organization show increased empathy, tolerance, critical thinking skills, and positive attitudes towards learning.

Student academic and social-emotional benefits aside, field trips also make up an essential part of the cultural economy. However, prolonged delays and lack of clarity about field trip guidance are leaving many organizations in crisis. These organizations, already struggling from the financial impact of the past 18 months, are being forced to cancel these opportunities without clear guidance about hosting school-age audiences.


We're grateful for the support of the Manhattan Borough President's Office and City Council District 26 staff in helping the Roundtable learn of recent guidance updates, yet the NYC DOE has been reluctant to share information directly with the arts organizations and arts vendors who host these school audiences. We know guidelines exist related to field trips, yet this information is only listed within InfoHub — a password-protected online portal for NYC DOE staff and administrators. Arts organizations providing these critical experiential learning opportunities are ultimately left in the dark. As guidance continues to change due to Executive Order 250 and organization's ability to enforce vaccination requirements, organizations are making decisions with huge financial implications based on second-hand information from school teachers or administrators.

**As our city works to rebuild tourism and visitor spending, we seek your support to call on the NYC DOE to share field trip guidance publicly and directly with arts vendors.** We hope these guidelines will also share information on *how* organizations requiring proof of vaccination can work with schools to gather this information, ensuring a safe arts experience for all. We appreciate your assistance and support to ensure that arts organizations are able to continue providing local tourism opportunities for NYC's young people.

For reference, I have included below the most recent “field trip guidance screenshot” I have received from a school partner. It’s my understanding that the guidance has since been updated as of November 5th. Thank you for your consideration!

## Field Trips

*This page was last updated on October 25, 2021 at 4:58 PM.*

Schools should follow the rules and procedures outlined in [Chancellor’s Regulation A-670](#)  in conjunction with the guidance below.

For the 2021-22 school year, schools may take field trips across New York City and tristate area settings under the conditions that:



- Students and staff remain in stable groups;
- Wear face coverings for the duration of the trip (even when outdoors);
- Maintain physical distancing when possible; and,
- Make every effort to keep students from interacting with the general public at trip sites.

Examples of permitted trips include:

- Walks around the neighborhood;
- Visits to parks, zoos, botanic gardens; and,
- Visits to cultural institutions (e.g. theaters, concert halls, dance centers, and museums).

At this time, out-of-tristate area school trips and all overnight trips (local/domestic/international) are not permitted. Future trip guidance is subject to COVID-19 positivity rates, variants, and continued CDC guidelines.

### **Trips to Indoor Locations Subject to Vaccination Mandates**

- When arranging field trips for students who are of vaccine-eligible age, schools should be aware that, as per [Emergency Executive Order 250](#) , NYCDOE students on a field trip are exempt from vaccination requirements when attending a trip to an indoor premise, such as a museum or Broadway theater, in New York City.
- Schools should check with these indoor premises when booking field trips to ensure that they are in compliance with [Executive Order 250](#)  and will not require vaccine proof for students. Schools should consult with Senior Field Counsel with questions.

### **Transportation**

- Schools may use charter coach buses for travel as yellow busing for school field trips is not currently available.
- If charter coach buses are not feasible, schools may use public transportation.
- Schools must ensure that students remain masked at all times while in transit.

## My business threatened by the EDC at Essex Market

My name is Taylor Erkinen, I am listening in on the EDC committee meeting right now, as it uniquely pertains to my current situation.

The Brooklyn Kitchen is a recreational cooking school, and since 2006 has evolved as kitchenware retail, specialty grocer and butcher shop, and have taught thousands of folks how to be more confident in the kitchen. My business is franchising, and I am working to grow more independent franchises, creating a pathway for entrepreneurship for women. We are a fun, profitable care-based business.

We had been experiencing significant growth before being shut down for the pandemic. We reopened in the Essex Market demo kitchen in October, and immediately began reporting unsafe and unsanitary conditions to Essex Market Management. We have mice climbing walls, a lack of necessary sanitation chemicals, and a toxic and rude 'operations' team that does not know where to find a mop.

The Essex Market Management Team is a coalition of employees of the EDC Asset Management, and the Lower East Side Partnership, under contract with the EDC. Once individual is the liaison to the vendor's association. I'd like to better understand the conditions of these contracts and positions, the training wheels should probably come off and let the market run itself.

I have been told that I need to leave by December 1, 2 months into the planned 10 month residency. My initial investments include hiring and training 6 part-time employees, purchasing equipment and furniture, and time spent organizing and cleaning the shared space. I will be unable to recoup my investments.

The EDC's management has been consistently toxic and aggressive. Essex Market should be a functional example of how the city can partner with private investment, to create a public space for private enterprise. The EDC needs to provide better foundational support for small independent businesses rather courting Amazon, and certainly shouldn't be putting anyone out of business.

Thank you for your time

Taylor Erkinen

646-456-6009

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E-R-double K-I-N-E-N spells Erkinen

Don't let the perfcet get in the way of the good

V.I.F. = Verify in Field

[Call me!](#)

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