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CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS,  
LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL  
INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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Start: 10:00 a.m.  
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Joseph C. Borelli  
Laurie A. Cumbo  
Karen Koslowitz  
Francisco P. Moya

## A P P E A R A N C E S

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Commissioner of the New York City Department of  
Cultural Affairs

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Malian Cultural Center

Annette Brockett  
Tropical Fete

Tanya Turgeon  
Marquis Studios

Elizabeth Mitchell  
PS67

Laura Mercer  
Dancewave

Keith Kaminski  
BRIC

Anna Melo  
Eldridge Street in the Lower East Side

Rachel Serkin  
Eldridge Street in the Lower East Side

Priscilla Jimenez  
Student at the Mott Hall School

Alice Stevenson  
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David Nussenbaum  
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Patrick Rowe

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Jean Lee  
Asian American Writers' Workshop

Lucy Sexton  
New Yorkers for Culture and Arts

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [Gavel] Good morning everyone. Welcome to City Hall for those who are here for the first time and welcome to this very important hearing of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations. My name is Jimmy Van Bramer and I am very proud to be the Chair of this Committee. And today, we're having a hearing on one of the most successful cultural Council initiatives ever in the history of the City of New York and I don't think I am exaggerating by saying that CASA or the Cultural After School Adventure program has been transformational.

Everyone knows how important it is to have the arts as a part of the education of every young person in the City of New York and I believe, as I believe many people here believe that access to the arts is a fundamental human right that isn't acknowledged generally speaking when we talk about the rights of every individual to self-fulfillment. And I'm particularly proud of this program for lots of different reasons but one of which is that when I became the Chair of this Committee nine and a half

years ago, the budget was \$5 million. And today, it is over \$15 million.

So, we have more than tripled the funding for the Cultural Afterschool Adventure Program since I have been the Chair of this Committee.

The City Council believes in this program. City Council Members love this program and we are absolutely thrilled that it is in over 700 public schools throughout the five boroughs. There are 51 Council Members, each now has the opportunity to allocate 15 separate CASA grants in their districts.

And I love the program for so many reasons, but one of which is we get to partner great cultural organizations with of course our public schools, and I'll share one particular story. When I first got elected in 2009, one of the first things I did in early 2010, is I went to PS111 which is a school in my district that serves primarily the children who live in the Queens Bridge houses with some also in the Ravenswood Houses.

And I walked through with the principal and she brought me to a beautiful dance studio, which a private foundation had built in the school, State of the Art Dance Studio. And I said, this is an amazing

space. It is so beautiful, and she said, it is but the problem is that we don't have funding for any programming, so it goes unused. And I said, how could that be? How could we ever allow that to happen in the City of New York?

So, I allocated a \$20,000 CASA grant to Alvin Ailey, School of American Dance and ever since that time, Alvin Ailey has been using that dance studio to work with young people at PS111. And like many of you, there is always an end of year performance at PS111 where Alvin Ailey dancers and the young people from PS111 dance.

And a few years ago, I went to the performance to see the children perform their end of year performance and after doing a number of terrific dances that they had been taught, they had a freestyle section of the program and all the children were invited to just dance. And a lot of the kids got a little shy because they hadn't learned this particular dance, but one young woman went to the front of the stage and just danced with abandon and was so incredibly impressive.

And after the event, I went up to the stage to take pictures of all the kids, and I said to this

1 young woman, I said, you were just amazing. You are  
2 so brave; you are so great. You are such a great  
3 dancer. And the principal pulled me aside and she  
4 said, the young woman that you just spoke to, at the  
5 beginning of this year was non-communicative.  
6

7 She was going through a very difficult period in  
8 her life at home and this program, this dance  
9 program, this CASA program, changed her life and  
10 allowed her to be able to dance for you today on  
11 stage, being brave in front of all of those people.

12 So, I tell that story all the time since it  
13 happened several years ago, because it speaks to the  
14 power of art, of dance, and education and how  
15 children in particular but all of us, but children in  
16 particular, being able to express themselves is so  
17 incredibly important, so foundational.

18 So, it's one of the reasons why we fight so hard  
19 to increase this program every year. So, that we now  
20 have over \$15 million into the program and of course,  
21 we've done other things to make sure that the arts  
22 and education programs are enhanced. So, we love the  
23 program. We love that there are so many young people  
24 here today who are going to perform for us. So, I  
25 guarantee you that this is going to be the most



adorable City Council hearing ever in the history of City Council hearings.

So, we're going to hear some important words from our Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl and then I think we're going to have some performances and we're going to intersperse that with some testimony from some of the folks who help run the programs and lead the programs. Because we have another hearing in this room at one o'clock, we're going to try and keep the testimony to about two minutes, so we can allow the performances and the children to go on as long as we're all having fun with it.

So, that's the ground rules, that's why we're here today. We want to hear the success stories. We know it's working well and we as a Council are absolutely thrilled that so many of you are here to talk about the importance of the Cultural Afterschool Adventure Program.

And with that, I will first also recognize that there is another hearing going on across the hall. There is a very important budget negotiating team meeting going on simultaneously, so members will be in and out, but we want to respect the time and we

know that we have so many young people here today who want to perform, so we're going to get going.

So, with that, we will hear from the Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl, who I believe has to be sworn in before he testifies.

COUNCIL CLERK: If you can please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony and the Council Member questions before this Committee today?

TOM FINKELPEARL: Yes, I do.

COUNCIL CLERK: Thank you.

TOM FINKELPEARL: Okay, I am very excited and I'm going to stick around and definitely watch some of these performances. Which by the way, to you performers, usually the Commissioner testifies, answers some questions and leaves, but I want to stick around and see, because you guys are so, I can just tell, amazing.

Okay, good morning Chair Van Bramer and Members of the Committee. I am Tom Finkelpearl, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. I am here today to testify in regards to the Cultural Afterschool Adventure Initiative or CASA, as it is

commonly known. I am joined today by a number of my colleagues from the agency.

Since it was established by the City Council more than a decade ago, CASA has become a critical source of cultural programming for public school students across the city. In its current fiscal year, \$15.3 million in CASA funding from the Council is supporting 765 programs, 15 in each council district. This is more than triple the program's initial funding amount. The breadth and diversity of these programs reflects our remarkable cultural community. A few highlights include, the Bushwick Starr. I did not plant these people, people showed up who happen to be in my testimony, several of them are here.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And also excited to be sitting right next to you though. Was that also unplanned Commissioner?

TOM FINKELPEARL: Coincidence, complete coincidence. The Bushwick Starr received four CASA designations in FY 2019 to work in after school programs in Brooklyn. Through their Big Green Theater program, students conceive and create new original plays centered on environmental concerns. The plays are based on knowledge gained from

1 scientists and other ecology experts. Student plays  
2 are performed during the Big Green Theater Festival;  
3 professional performers bring the work to life, and  
4 students take field trips to see the work being done  
5 at other schools as they explore the intersection  
6 between art and the environment.  
7

8 The Coronal Youth Music Project received a  
9 designation to work in PS110 Queens, providing  
10 orchestra focused music education to 15 first graders  
11 based on the El Sistema model. Another 25 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>  
12 grade students who participated in the CASA program  
13 in 2017 and 2018 will move on to join the group's No  
14 Frontiers Children's Orchestra in Corona. Students  
15 participating in these programs do small scale  
16 performances for family and friends.

17 Hook Arts Media is receiving a CASA to partner  
18 with PS15K in Brooklyn where it has worked for over  
19 seven years. The school requested instruction in  
20 African dance and drumming and Salsa dancing. The  
21 students, many of whom live in nearby NYCHA housing,  
22 meet a few days a week. Along with the guest  
23 performers, students present a culminating  
24 performance in the Spring.  
25

Sundog Theater on Staten Island has multiple CASA designations supporting activities in dance, theater, choral music, the visual arts, mural making, and puppetry for children in K through 5<sup>th</sup> grades at various schools. Programs begin in January and run through June, engaging students in a variety of genres and building their confidence as young art makers.

The Museum of Moving Image received a CASA designation to conduct an after-school animation course for students from PS150 in Queens. Student participants learned out to create their own animated movies. In the process they develop their critical, analytical, and creative skills. At the end of the program, MOMI hosts a screening and reception of the students work.

Multicultural Music Group, who is sitting over here, with three designations in FY 2019, is providing group instrumental music classes to beginner students in brass, woodwinds, percussion and strings in the Bronx and in Staten Island. The students will also take part in performances at evening assemblies and take field trips to Lincoln Center, to experimental and folkloric music

performances at area colleges and universities, and to performances by the Multicultural Music Group Orchestra.

To reiterate something, I said in testimony earlier this year, when I was working at cultural institutions, I saw firsthand the impact that CASA can have on both students and organizations. It's an opportunity to provide in-depth afterschool programming for kids in public schools. And it also forges connections between cultural organizations and schools, as well as talented teaching artists.

Overall, the City has made major strides in bringing arts programming to our students, both during and after school. Arts education has been a top priority for Mayor de Blasio since day one. In 2014, Chair Van Bramer and I stood alongside the Mayor at the Bronx Museum as he announced \$23 million increase in arts education funding. The results have been transformative. The number of certified arts teachers in NYCDOE schools has increased by 444 over the last 15 years an 18.5 percent increase over the 2013-2014 school year. Also, especially relevant as we discuss programming focused on partnering cultural groups with public schools; in the most recent Arts

in Schools report, all responding schools 100 percent, reported partnering with at least one cultural organization over the course of 2017-2018. That's up from 84 percent five years ago.

With such a champion of arts education in Chancellor Carranza, we have seen this commitment to our students grow. Last year saw a record \$433 million citywide investment in arts education, up from \$336 million at the start of the Administration. That's a \$97 million increase in annual citywide arts education spending over five years.

In the extensive public engagement, we conducted for CreateNYC cultural plan, we heard over and over again that arts education was top priority for New Yorkers from all background across the city. CASA, which taps into the unparalleled assets represented our city's cultural organizations, is an incredibly effective way to connect youth and culture as a public servant and government administrator, I am always looking for ways to improve programming and services. For CASA in particular, we would like to work with you to make designations earlier and streamline bureaucratic hurdles, all of which would make this great program even better. Now is the time

to meet and discuss ways of achieving this for FY 2020. So, let's get a meeting on the books.

I'm incredibly optimistic that the message many of us in this room have been delivering for years has sunk in. Arts education and cultural experiences are not extras. They are critical components of a young person's education and provide a tremendous return on investment in terms of creative, emotional, and intellectual benefits for students. We are lucky to have such dedicated partners on the City Council who understand the tremendous value of cultural engagement for students.

Since CASA was established in 2005, nearly an entire generation of students has cycled through. A second grader in 2005, might well be graduating from college this spring. It remains a particularly impressive and inspiring collaboration, and a major investment in cultural programming that exceeds many U.S. cities' entire cultural budget. We look forward to sustaining it and making it even better for future generations of NYC students.

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight this extraordinary partnership. I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.



CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you Commissioner Finkelpearl for that testimony and those are some pretty important things that you just said. So, the budget for the Cultural Afterschool Adventure Program from the New York City Council is larger than the budget for Culture in entire cities in this country. Which speaks to the City Council's commitment to this program and speaking of the City Council's commitment to this program, I believe I see Council Member Joe Borelli from Staten Island who has joined us. You are in for a very big treat Council Member as some of the children are about to perform for us.

So, we are going to keep Commissioner Finkelpearl's Q&A short, because we want to hear all these wonderful children sing and dance and perform for us. But also, I had not thought about it this way because I worked for an institution in 2005 that young people entering the program than are in college, which is quite impressive that the City Council's Cultural Initiatives have actually helped raise up a generation of young people.

So, Tom, obviously I know that you care about the arts. I know that you care about young people and I know you believe in programs like this, but you know,

there is funding, there is money and then there is the power in people's lives that in some ways gets lost in a discussion of dollars and cents. While very important because it allows us to pay for some of these things but talk to me about what you see as being the most important reasons for supporting arts and education and programs like CASA.

TOM FINKELPEARL: I mean, I think, first of all, there have been studies that show the educational value that having kids engaged in arts and culture gets them engaged in school. It helps with attendance rates, but I also feel like you know, having been, when I was up in Massachusetts, I was in my little marching band. I got a trumpet, you know, which I rented to buy. I think it was \$15 rental to buy a \$65-dollar trumpet. Being involved in that group activity, connected me with the other students. It connected me in different ways with different students I didn't know, and I'll just bet you that's the fact for all the young people we see sitting here today.

It's a way to make a community stronger. It brings parents together. Whenever we had a concert,

I remember all the parents proudly, no matter how we played, were proudly there watching us.

So, it's community building. It is engagement, it is creativity. We are looking at a situation now where these young people, when they graduate from college are going to be in a very different kind of job environment than what I was in you know, 40 years ago when I graduated. And creativity is at the top of the list of what employers are going to be looking for in the future.

So, I think its good for communities, it's good for individuals and I think it's good for their long-term prospects in the kind of economy we're going to have in the future.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, since we're revealing our early educational artistic experiences, I will share that at PS70 in Astoria Queens where I went to elementary school, we had an amazing music teacher named Mrs. Miller who I still remember every word to the school fight song, as our elementary school had a school fight song.

And I still remember every word to this day and when I go back to graduations, I have three nephews who just went through that school. All the teachers

there are amazed that I still know every word to the song. But we had music festivals all the time and I loved performing in them and then I too joined our local churches fife and drum and bugle corps, The Saint Joes in Astoria and I played the drums along with my older sister and then in junior high school took up the trombone, although, very unsuccessfully.

But it was a lot of fun and very, very important that young people do these things and I think confidence and the ability to speak. The ability to communicate, the ability to stand up in front of other colleagues, co-workers, friends. Some of the most important lessons that anyone can learn. Obviously, we in public service do a lot of public speaking for a living but when I was in school, I was incredibly shy. Partly because I'd have to come out, but I was very shy and really just tried to blend into the woodwork and not stand out in any way or show who I was in any way.

So, maybe talk a little bit about how these experiences, participation and these kinds of Cultural Afterschool Adventure Programs also encourage young people to be who they are. Celebrate and develop that confidence to improve their ability

1  
2 to stand up literally. But there is power in sort of  
3 literally standing up and then also being able to  
4 than take that into the future and be who you are and  
5 lead, and whether or not you become a star Broadway  
6 performer is one thing, but you take those lessons  
7 whether or not you don't wind up leading a show on  
8 Broadway, with you for the rest of your life.

9 TOM FINKELPEARL: Yeah, well, I mean, I think the  
10 example you gave earlier about the young woman who  
11 was transformed. So, I did principal for the day a  
12 couple of times and I was in Queens and I was in  
13 Maspeth at a school one time which, they told me not  
14 a school that was doing well academically. But they  
15 brought me to the music room, and they said, this is  
16 a place where our young students, who might be  
17 English language learners at that time, can excel.

18 They had a chorus that was really impressive and  
19 again, you know, there are different ways to be  
20 talented. And I keep looking over at the students.  
21 You could be or could not be a good student. You  
22 might not be very confident in speaking in public,  
23 you're in a math class let's say, but you might just  
24 be really good at the drums or at the trumpet. And  
25 so, I saw that happen in my own life when I was a

1 young kid and I saw that with my colleagues, but I  
2 also saw it in schools in Queens. Corona Youth  
3 Orchestra as an example, that's one of the CASA's  
4 that I mentioned which brings kids by using EL  
5 Sistema into a relationship with a musical instrument  
6 that than becomes a way to perform. I think you've  
7 been at some of those performances, Chair Van Bramer  
8 at the Queens Museum, where there are hundreds and  
9 hundreds of people there and the kids are up on stage  
10 and they are just - you know, there is that pride in  
11 the performance and I do think at public speaking  
12 again, we're doing it right now. You guys are going  
13 to be doing this in the future. It is a very  
14 important part of being a successful professional.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: This is not a budget  
17 hearing per say, but would you agree that generally  
18 speaking, the world would be a better place if we  
19 increased funding for programs like CASA?

20 [CROWD APPLAUDS]

21 TOM FINKELPEARL: I think I would say yes to  
22 that.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I would feel very sorry  
24 for you if you said no to that question after that  
25 reaction to the question and I know you believe in

the program, so there is no point in belaboring it.

So, my final question is do you believe that you and

I should go on talking for a lot longer or do you

believe that we should hear and see some of the young

people who are here to perform?

TOM FINKELPEARL: Yes, I would say yes to the  
later and no to the former.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alright, so with that I  
want to thank the Commissioner for being here and I  
think we're going to move into the unchartered  
adorableness factor of this hearing. And I believe  
and I'm going to call some names of the organizations  
and then the adults who are leading those  
organizations will work us out in terms of who's  
performing and who's speaking, and we'll do it that  
way. And if I call more than one, obviously and if  
there are other schools or programs performing, we  
will stagger that as well.

So, the first, and I hope I am saying this right,  
there is Assetou Sy. So, if you all would come up.  
Are you testifying and performing. Yes, okay, so,  
whoever is testifying from Assetou Sy will go over to  
that witness table. And then we also have PS125, USA  
Moley Foundation, also together performing. Same

group, got it, okay. Tropical Fete, yes, are you testifying? Do you want to join the testifying table, whoever is going to testify from Tropical Fete and is Tonya Turgeon here from PS32K. Do we have young people from PS32K as well? And they will perform at some point as well? Okay, great. So, why don't you also head up to the testimony table. And I'm told that we have young people coming with Sunny Willis, a choir, right? Are they hear yet? They are on their way. Okay, so you'll let me know when they arrive, and we can call them.

And I assume those stilt walkers in the back are part of the program? Okay, great, that's good know. Very comforting that they are in fact part of the situation here. And hold on one second.

Alright, there is a lot of moving parts here, so I think we're going to start with this panel, and we'll start from left to right, my left, your right. And the three of you will testify and then, you will queue up the young people who are performing if you have young people performing and I am so excited. I am very much looking forward to all of this.

So, with that, let's begin with Assetou Sy. You have to press the red button right in front of you.



Yes. We're going to go to a two-minute clock on the speaking portion. So, we can go as long as we need to with the performances and not limit the performances.

ASSETOU SY: Good evening ladies and gentleman. Funding for Culture in New York City makes good sense of good business.

I thank you for this invitation to address you and the need for robust funding for cultural programming in New York City. My name is Assetou Sy, president and co-founder along with my husband Mr. Mamadou Sy, of the US Mali Charitable Association of New York and the Malian Cultural Center.

Since 2007, a mission of UMACA has been to bring diversity of after school cultural programming to primary school students of New York City during evenings and Saturdays. Our African dance and drumming classes have been widely received and successful. Earlier this year forty of our participating students performed at the United Nations before an audience of approximately four hundred people which include a diverse audience of United Nations staff; personnel of NGOs operating at

the United Nation; personnel and diplomats of permanent missions to the United Nation.

New York City is the cultural capital of the world. Our classes and performances are how we contribute to this legacy of our City.

It is well known that Malian music consistently dominates at the top of the World Music scene. Scholars recently have gone so far as to suggest that Malian music is the root of the American Blues, the forerunner of the Jazz Age. What would the Broadway stage be without the latter?

I would like to share with you something that is not so well known. The first Lion King was Sundiata Keita, a Mali emperor or Mansa. The current Broadway musical is loosely based upon the life story of this monarch who founded the Mali Empire which dates from 1235 until 1400.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Excuse me, can I ask you to skip that next paragraph, because no one is a bigger fan of the Lion King than me. But if you would wrap up with the last paragraph, which I think is very important than we will be able to move on.

ASSETOU SY: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

ASSETOU SY: There is no secret that the investment in cultural programs in our City enhances the quality of life of all New Yorkers and creates a talent pool for jobs and commerce. The mission of UMACAA is to create the next generation of such talent for our entertainment sector, the Broadway stage and beyond. To achieve these goals, it is an absolute imperative that robust funding and support for the City's cultural assets be properly allocated and managed. The return on investment should be quite obvious. I am proud to play a role in this noble effort. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much.

So, first I want to recognize that Majority Leader Laurie Cumbo from Brooklyn has joined us. Always well timed, because, I think we're allowing clapping here Laurie, we are just going for it.

And are the young people ready to perform?

ASSETOU SY: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I think we're going to have our first performance. Yeah, we're doing performances now Laurie Cumbo. So, why don't you tee that up and then we will hear from the next panelist.

Right, we will intersperse performances and testimony as best we can here.

[PERFORMANCE BEGINS]

[INTERPRETER]: Alright, so for those of you who did not understand. These children all introduced themselves. They said their first name, they said where they were born, where they live and what they would like to do in the future, which might change, and they did it all perfectly in French.

And now there will be African dancing.

[APPLAUDING]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you so much. Another round of applause for these amazing young people.

[APPLAUDING]

Now, I see the steel drums, yes, steel drums in the City Council Chambers for a hearing are teed up. Who are the steel drums associated with? Yes, so why don't we hear from Tropical Fete and then you will tee up the performers. Great, let's do it.

ANNETTE BROCKETT: Thank you. Good morning. My name is Annette Brockett and I am one of the board members of Tropical Fete, and we thank you this morning for inviting us here to tell you a little bit

more about the success that CASA has brought in our program. Thank you for having us.

A special thank you to Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations. Chairman James G. Van Bramer, Council Members Joseph C. Borelli, Laurie A. Cumbo, Karen Koslowitz and Francisco P. Moya for having this hearing today on the CASA program.

We would like to acknowledge Council Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel, Brad Lander and Majority Leader Laurie A. Cumbo for supporting our programs. Thank you.

Tropical Fete has been a part of the Cultural Afterschool Adventure Program since FY 2017. We brought cultural programming such as steel pan music, stilts dancing, arts and craft, masquerade and computer music production into IS392 and PS135. This has been a rewarding experience engaging students with meaningful activities that connect them to cultural diversity and cultural history. We can become a stronger community by learning about each other's cultures and participating in different cultural expressions. Tropical Fete proudly declares

that we have achieved these goals through the CASA program and our cultural programs.

Communication with the schools is vital to execute a successful program. We asked for the principal's recommendation to hire a teacher that is already part of the school program and to liaison with the program to communicate with parents, enroll students and set up room for programming. This allows Tropical Fete to focus on programming. A special thank you to Ms. Maryann Gaston who is the rep for IS392. Ms. Gaston sits over there and to Ms. Jean Leon who is our rep at PS135. They have served us exceedingly well in these capacities.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: unfortunately, I have to interrupt you there. I want to let you know that I read the last paragraph and we very much are all working to make sure that things are as efficient as they possibly can for all of you to do these programs as well as you possibly can. But we are on a two-minute clock and it looks like Tropical Fete is ready to Fete us with a dramatic performance.

So, can we go right to it?

ANNETTE BROCKETT: Of course.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

[INSTRUCTOR]: First unit we have is from PS145. I am going to have them say their names. It is going to run quickly for the scale followed by Genene that we will doing on Phillis and then we're going to party with the stilts at the end.

And like the Commissioner said, speaking up is a big part of developing yourself and getting ready to achieve stuff in life. So, we always want them to speak up before they play.

So, that was a C-Major scale and that's the first step that we teach the kids how to play pan. Most people don't think it's an instrument, but it is an instrument similar to the piano that's in the back.

[APPLAUDING]

GENENE: Hello, I am Genene. [PERFORMING].

[APPLAUDING]

[INSTRUCTOR]: Danita is one of the teaching artists in the program. She will be performing while the NGA plays I in love and the stilts people are going to come out dancing. So, I just want to make sure the floor is clear, and everything is in place. You need to be in your seat.

[LAUGHTER]

[PERFORMANCE BEGINS]

[APPLAUDING]

[INSTRUCTOR]: I just wanted to thank the City Council for having us and anytime there is stage for us to perform we are there. So, just call us if you need us. The trick that Zoey did today, she learned it just last week. She was always able to hold her leg like this and now she is able to turn around. Now she is learning how to stoop and where each of us are going to train all summer where we all hop on one leg and we try different tricks. So, if you're nervous about it, it's as safe as walking. You see, there is all normalness, so thanks again, and thanks Ms. Cumbo.

[APPLAUDING]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you to Tropical Fete. I think this officially became the coolest City Council hearing ever just now and I'm so grateful that that move worked. I got a little nervous when leg kick happened, I got a little nervous. I want to recognize we've been joined by another member of the Committee, Council Member Francisco Moya from Queens. So, we are absolutely thrilled with all of the young people who are performing.



Another big round of applause for all the young people from Tropical Fete.

[APPLAUSE]

And now we have Tanya Turgeon from PS32K. Right, and I believe that our choir has arrived. Is that true? Nope, yes. The conductor says yes, but we're going to hear from Tanya first and then if and when Sonny Willis and the choir are ready to go, then we will tee that up as well. But first, we are going to hear from Tonya and PS32K.

TANYA TURGEON: Good morning, my name is Tanya Turgeon and I am a teaching artist at Marquis Studios. Thank you to the members of the City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations for holding today's oversight hearing on the Cultural Afterschool Adventures Initiative. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of Marquis Studios.

Marquis Studios is a non-profit arts in education organization founded in 1977 that directly serves 40,000 children each year. 80 percent of students served live below the poverty line and over half of our grant funded programming serves students with disabilities. We employ 90 fully trained teaching

artists, who annually provide a spectrum of multi-cultural residencies to a diverse student population through an average of 580 residencies in 170 schools spanning all five boroughs of New York City.

In 2016, Marquis Studios accepted an offer from my previous employer, Big Apple Circus, to become the administrators of our Circus Afterschool Program. Marquis Studios' 40 years of experience allowed for a seamless transition so we could provide the same team of teaching artists, curriculum model, and standards we had developed over the years. Through Marquis studios' evaluation and assessment practices, we can continue to ensure quality and sustainability for this program that has been my dream job since 2008.

Thank to funding through the CASA Initiative from Council Member Diana Ayala and Council Member Brad Lander, we have been able to continue the Circus Arts program at PS43X and expand it, providing 24-weeks of hands on instruction to the students at PS32K, some of whom you will see perform today.

Marquis Studios' mission is to inspire a passion for learning through programs integrating arts activities with academic core subjects and life skills.

Circus Arts, for example, utilizes clowning, tumbling, aerial skills, tightwire, stilt walking and juggling to promote creativity, physical education, gross motor skills, improved hand/eye coordination and responsible risk taking. Through juggling along students can learn the importance of math, counting, science, gravity, and the invaluable life skills of self-discipline and teamwork. Circus offers something for everyone leading participants to gain confidence and become more engaged with their peers and communities.

I can stop there.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much and you have a performance as well?

TANYA TURGEON: We do, yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great, let's do it.

I think there is more folks there, so if the Council Members want to fully see the performance we will turn around. Yeah, thank you.

[PERFORMANCE BEGINS]

Thank you. So, much fun. We have never had this many projectiles flying through the air in a City Council hearing. Thank you so much. You know, we're having a lot of fun here. I know Commissioner

Finkelpearl, you probably haven't had a better day since you've been the Commissioner. It's a lot of fun but it's also important to remember that all of this is happening because of CASA. And these are all CASA programs and young people are learning all these incredible skills and doing incredible things because of CASA. Because CASA exists in these schools and these programs are receiving funding as well.

So, is the choir ready? The choir is ready. Is someone going to speak before the choir, great. So, one of the members of the choir come up front and speaking on behalf of the organization.

I am here on behalf of my principal because she could not be here. Okay, do you want me to start?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, please.

ELIZABETH MITCHELL: My name is Elizabeth Mitchell and I am the principal at PS67, the Joseph P. Addabbo School. We are a school with approximately 550 students serving the neighborhood of Ozone Park Queens.

PS64 is a diverse school where many students are non-native English speakers. I cannot over emphasize how valuable having the young people's chorus after

school program at our school has been to us over the years.

The program has improved the language proficiency and abilities of our students and has brought students of various background together. After every performance our students themselves reveal the tremendous impact that YPC has had on their academic social and emotional growth. YPC's presence has been so meaningful to our participating children in the 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade who eagerly look forward to their YPC music instruction every week.

Our phenomenal YPC conductor Mr. Sonny Willis brings years of experience, thoughtfulness, sensitivity and warmth and has become a welcome and integrated presence at PS64. We have been so lucky to have had access to YPC which has added a new dimension to our arts education.

Over the years through your partnership we've been able to enhance our curriculum to better educate our students. Parents and teachers who have attended YPC concerts have consistently remarked on quality of the performances and how clearly the students took part in themselves and their peers.

Performing at the Apollo Theater for the past two years was a particular highlight for our students who perhaps for the first time saw themselves as true performers and artists. Your funding of Young People's Chorus After School program has opened the doors to opportunities for so many of our students. As a result of this funding, our students were featured on the front page of the Queens Courier and some students continue to perform on world famous stages beyond their career at PS67.

A few months ago, our school community celebrated when one of our graduates performed at Lincoln Center with a New York Philharmonic. We sincerely hope that you will continue to fund these after school programs so that the children at our school and others can experience the transformative power of music in their lives. We extend special thanks to our Councilman Eric Ulrich for providing this amazing opportunity for our students.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much. I have never had to stand before to be seen speaking but it's so great to see so many young people and this group is from Queens. I'm from Queens. We love

Queens, right? Does everybody in the audience love Queens too?

[APPLAUDING]

Right Laurie, it's not all about Brooklyn. Every once and awhile. So, I am so thrilled. So, thank you the Young People's Chorus of New York City and we are so excited to have all of these beautiful young people from Queens New York. They are going to sing for us now, so thank you and with that I'll hand it over to the conductor.

[PERFORMANCE BEGINS]

[APPLAUSE]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: This is like the coolest hearing ever. I told Laurie, I was already tearing up a little bit and then when they held hands, I was like stop it, stop it, stop it. I am going to just start bawling. You guys were amazing, and we all think your amazing. But I will take just a slight hinge of pride being a Queens boy, but these kids are from Queens. So, thank you so much for doing that for us and we're going to get a picture with everybody, okay.

Alright, so normally you wait at a hearing like this and you're like oh, please let them finally call

me, right? But who wants to follow that? Like, please don't call me on this panel make it be the next panel.

So, speaking of which, and I'm not sure folks are performing or if we're moving towards more of a testimony focused hearing but that okay. There are a few people here I think have clips which are just as good as performances. But I see, Laura Mercer from Dancewave. Is Laura Mercer here from Dancewave. Yeah, head over to the panel. BRIC Arts Media, who is here from BRIC Arts? You guys have one person testifying? Okay, who ever is testifying from BRICs, is that Alanna? Whoever it is, just come up and then you can introduce yourself. Oh, is there drums too. Oh, that's amazing. Oh, there is music coming. Okay, great. Oh, Keith you're the one, that's Keith right, is that the deal? Okay, great.

Is Rockaway Waterfront Alliance here? Julie, yeah, we got to have Queens in each panel, at least one panel. Who are these young people? PS1, are you signed up? Okay, great. Yes, we will look for you guys. Oh, there you are, you are here. Is that Rachel? Okay, so why don't we have Rachel from PS1



come up because anyone who shows up with adorable little kids, goes right to the front of the line.

So, Rachel, you will testify and then the young people will – wonderful they have artwork to present which is terrific. So, we have four panelists and when we work out the audio visual than we will get going, right? And then those of you who did not bring adorable little kids, I care about you just as much and we will get to you as well. We are going to go to two minutes once again or thereabouts on the testimony just so we keep a check on the time. And we have a bunch of folks to testify.

Are we ready? So, is Dancewave going to go first because you have a presentation. Great, yeah, go ahead.

LAURA MERCER: Thank you Chairman and Council members of the Committee for Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations. We sincerely appreciate your consideration in inviting us to speak today. I am Laura Mercer, Director of Outreach and Community Engagement at Dancewave, here today with School and Community Programs Coordinator Maleni Cruz to celebrate our significant impact, thanks to the support of many

Council Members, on New York City schools and communities through the CASA Initiative.

Dancewave is the dance education non-profit providing access to a community dance experience that encourages individuality and whole person development through NYC and beyond. Dancewave's unique culture model creates an inclusive environment for all ages, abilities, sexual orientations, racial and social economic backgrounds. Through innovative programming, we use dance as an expressive vehicle for transformation.

What makes Dancewave unique is that we use the Dancewave culture model. This not only focuses on teaching a dance technique or choreography to a high-level through the CASA Initiative, but youth development practices are emphasized through regroups and restorative practices. This means that all dancers in the room whether they are aged 4 through 18, are seen, heard, and respected as individuals. Their voices are heard and valued and are celebrated creating a unique respectful and collaborative dance experience between teaching artists and students.

We thank you so much for your support through the CASA Initiative. The CASA Initiative allows

Dancewave to provide a rich cultural experience to K-12 students through New York City public schools by teaching a diverse range of dance styles. This includes West African, Afro-Haitian, Chinese Dance, Hip Hop and Latin Dance Styles such as Salsa, Merengue and Bachata. Through the CASA program, the students cultural experience is further embedded by the opportunity to make costumes, learn African drumming, receive presentations about the history of the dance style and have a large culminating event celebrating their final performance with the whole community.

We thank all of the six Council Members who supported us this year; Rafael Espinal, Mathieu Eugene, Jumaane Williams, Stephen Levin, Mark Levine, and Keith Powers. And we now have a video to show you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, I'll just say the lesson learned there is that if you funded CASA, you get elected public advocate, right. You get promoted Laurie. So, with that we are going to see a short video.

LAURA MERCER: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great, thank you.

[PLAYING VIDEO]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alright, thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

So, it is great to see all of that happening in school buildings and as someone who just finished his first half marathon and really believes in fitness, I was struck of course by all the exercise that the kids are getting.

[UNIDENTIFIED]: You ran a marathon?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I did. I ran the Queens half marathon three weeks ago. Yeah, I'm not bragging or anything like that but I'm just announcing that publicly at a City Council hearing.

It was on Instagram, so I already -- but yeah, half marathon.

[UNIDENTIFIED]: I'm impressed.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, I'm not sure if we're going to go for a full marathon but that's a lot of information at a hearing. So, who's next? Keith, you have a video as well. Okay,

KEITH KAMINSKI: Thank you to the New York City Council and Department of Cultural Affairs for our commitment to BRIC through the CASA program, which

has made a special year of after school programming possible.

This year, BRIC has had the privilege of partnering with eight public schools and six New York City Council Members through CASA to engage nearly 300 students in after school arts and culture programming.

In addition to providing crucial arts education in public schools, CASA funds allow BRIC to bring much needed resources to schools and families including free, safe, and productive space for children to spend time after school. These opportunities would not exist without CASA.

I'm pleased to share some of the student work that was produced last semester as part of BRIC's CASA program at PS 284 in Brownsville. Forty third grade students from 284 participated over the course of 60 after school hours. This is one of their stop motion animation projects about NASA scientist Katherine Johnson as part of their exploration of Black History Month and learning about women in STEM.

[VIDEO BEGINS]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: No worries, technical difficulties occur. So, you may have heard I ran a

Queens half marathon a few week ago, in case you missed it.

I'm just filling time. Just filling time.

UNIDENTIFIED: What was your time?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You know, first of all, we ask the questions here. People ask me all the time about the time, and I say, just trying to survive that's all. I finished, I did, I really finished.

Okay, so we don't have the video then we'll skip it and we're just going to take for granted that it's really important. It's really cute and really special but if there is anything else, you'd like to say about it.

KEITH KAMINSKI: No, just what you are missing is it tells a life story of Katherine Johnson and she was featured in the movie Hidden Figures, so students were really learning about her in her life.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wonderful, thank you for being here.

[APPLAUSE]

Next.

JULI SCHROEGER: Good morning Chairman, Members of the Committee and guests and special thanks to

Councilman Donovan Richards and the Department of Cultural Affairs. My name is Juli Schroeger and I am the Program Coordinator at the Rockaway Waterfront Alliance. I am joined today by my colleague Ana Fisyak, Director of Planning and Development and we appreciate the opportunity to testify about our programs that have been supported through the CASA Initiative.

CASA has been a vital support for our living classroom program which merges art and science to engage local youth and hands on learning about their environment. With CASA funding allocated by Councilman Richards since FY 2017, we have collaborated with three schools in our area, PS183, 105 and 197Q. Each school has high needs and test scores which unfortunately are well below the New York City average. These schools serve mostly students of color from low income households and have many students with special needs.

Consistent CASA funding has allowed us to partner with each school for multiple years to build strong partnerships with teachers and give students opportunities for experiential learning. An opportunity that is deeply needed, yet rare in our

community. Since 2017, we have served 531 unique or over 2000 repeat students spanning kindergarten through fifth grade through a series of hands on workshops about their environment.

As a coordinator, teacher, and observer of this program for the past four years, I have seen firsthand the transformation that occurs when youth actively engage with their environment. Whether it's exploring fish, sand from Jamaica Bay, or creating bird masks to learn about local wildlife, I believe that this type of experiential learning is vital in the development of mindful and happy children. Most especially for those growing up in a highly urbanized and underserved area.

We thank the Council for their continued support of CASA and by extension the living classroom program and the students of PS183, 105 and 197Q.

We look forward to continuing our work under this initiative in the future and we've provided a few photos for your enjoyment attached to this testimony.

Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]



The photos are adorable, and the school is very important. Am I led to believe that the video is now working? Okay. So, the kids from PS1 will have a few more minutes to think about it.

[VIDEO PLAYING]

[APPLAUSE]

How old are the kids who did that?

KEITH KAMINSKI: Third grade.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Third graders, wow, that's amazing. Alright, the Museum at Eldridge Street and P.S. 1? And we have young people who are going to display art.

RACHEL SERKIN: Yes, they brought their art with them. I am going to let them introduce themselves and thank you so much to the Council for having us here today and a special thank you to Council Member Margaret Chin for supporting this program for the past three years.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Awesome, should the young people be with you up there. Yeah, lets do that.

RACHEL SERKIN: Okay, great, wonderful.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: This way they are also on TV, because this is going to be played on channel 74 in Queens. I don't know what it is in other.

RACHEL SERKIN: So, good morning Council Members and guests. My name is Rachel Serkin and I am the Manager of School Programs at the Museum at Eldridge Street in the Lower East Side. I am joined today by CASA Educator Anna Melo, P.S. 1 teacher Donna Yung, and five of our CASA students in this year's program.

For over 100 years, P.S. 1 and the Museum at Eldridge Street have been fixtures in our Lower East Side community. Built in 1887 as the first great house of worship for Eastern European Jews in the United States, the Museum at Eldridge Street tells the story of how our landmarked synagogue served as a spiritual and communal fixture for its immigrant congregation. P.S. 1 has been educating generations of children for over a century. Since its beginning over a century ago, P.S. 1 has welcomed children and students from all over the world. Today, many of the children who attend the school are immigrants and the children of immigrants. They are the living embodiment of what makes our community a gateway to America.

Our Community possesses many clues about New York's City's past and through our after-school program History Mystery, Puzzling Places, Perplexing Spaces, we show our youngest community members that history can be found on the facades of their buildings and the streets they walk on every day. By creatively documenting their observations through photography, printmaking and other art projects our young sleuths investigate how their community has changed over time.

For the past three years, the second-grade students at P.S. 1 have participated in neighborhood walking tours, visits to the Museum at Eldridge Street, print making workshops and interactions with community elders.

Today, I have brought several examples of artwork that our five students in attendance have created over the course of these past six weeks. In two more weeks, their culminating project will be a Parent Night art show celebrating the projects they have worked on.

As our detectives explore their neighborhood's puzzling places and perplexing spaces, they discover

the mystery and history and the clues in their own backyard.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and now we are going to learn a little bit about the artwork itself and the young people are going to talk, so we're going to come around and look at what you are going to present, right.

RACHEL SERKIN: Sure, come on over here. So, first I am going to have these guys introduce themselves.

MAVIS: My name is Mavis.

ALENA: Hi, my name is Alena.

LAURA: Laura.

BRANDON: Brandon.

LUCAS: Lucas.

RACHEL SERKIN: So, most of these are photos from our visit to the Museum at Eldridge Street and one from the walking tour. This is a print over here. So, I'm going to pass the mic around and I want everybody to tell me what your favorite project was.

MAVIS: My favorite project was the print making.

ALENA: My favorite project was the print making.

BRANDON: Making the photos.

LAURA: I was taking pictures.

LUCAS: Stain glass.

RACHEL SERKIN: So, we've done a lot of different projects with these kids and we're going to put together a final gallery show at the end. So, they're going to have the opportunity to curate their own exhibit right there on wall text, decide where everything goes. It's going to be fantastic.

ANNA MELO: I should also add that Parent Night is happening on May 15<sup>th</sup> at P.S. 1 and you are all invited.

RACHEL SERKIN: Oh, yeah, come on out.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Did the young people take any of those photos?

RACHEL SERKIN: The young people took all of these photos.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wow.

RACHEL SERKIN: Come on up, have a look.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Those are great photos.

RACHEL SERKIN: I know, they have a great eye don't they.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And they printed them as well?

RACHEL SERKIN: We printed them. Listen, I can barely work the printer. I wouldn't make eight-year old's do it.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, Lucas took that photo. Who is Lucas? That is great, is that black and white.

LUCAS: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wow, that's a beautiful black and white photo.

RACHEL SERKIN: There was a toner problem, so we got creative.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: It looks like a great black and white photo Lucas. I think it's amazing.

RACHEL SERKIN: That's a print. So, we did roadblock style prints, but using Styrofoam because they are eight and they carved the image onto the block and then it's just regular print making.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's great.

RACHEL SERKIN: Thank you for having us.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you guys.

LAURIE CUMBO: Thank you, you all did a wonderful job. Oh, we get a photo with you to. I want to be in this photo, because when they become famous, I want them to pull this photo out.

Thank you, thank you all.

[APPLAUSE]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you guys. The Multicultural Music Group and Priscilla Jimenez who is a student right. Testifying herself, that's great. And then we will call up some others as well.

Alice Stevenson from New York Historical Society, is Alice still here? Great. Is the Wildlife Conservation Society still here, Tom representing WCS Eileen Doyle from the Young Audiences of New York. Alright, that will be that panel and then we have a few more to go.

Alright we have Eileen joining us, great. And Priscilla because you are the first student actually testifying, you are obviously going to get to go first. So, whenever you are ready.

PRISCILLA JIMENEZ: Good morning.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good morning.

PRISCILLA JIMENEZ: My name is Priscilla Jimenez and I am a student at the Mott Hall School. On a sunny afternoon at the Mott Hall School, sixth grade me stepped into the band room for the very first time. Clad in a school skirt, multicolored headband and with no confidence in my musical ability I

hesitantly took a seat, instantly regretting my decision to come. Sixth grade me had no idea how to read notes on a sheet or tell whether a note was sharp or flat. I also had no idea that music would later become both a liberation and a gift, as school, high school admissions, and life seemed to suddenly become more real, and as my mom would assure me, more adult like.

As the oblivious 11-year-old that I was at the beginning of my journey with the Multicultural Music Group, I was not particular well informed on the imperfections of our world. I knew that Christopher Columbus, "discovered" America on October 12, 1492, and that the mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell, but what the public-school system failed to teach me was that there is history, culture, pain, and stories of innovation and success beyond the borders of our country. To deny this factor would be naive and disrespectful on our part as a global society.

Even when we are told that walls and unconstitutional policies conceal all that away. Even the successful passing of these laws would confirm that people will always find a way to



connect. Music was what allowed me to connect with my roots, my own taste, my story and the stories that others have to tell.

The Multicultural Music group was established in 1996 to grant opportunities to under privileged students in New York City through music instruction and informative trips beyond the classroom.

In addition, themed performances addressing political, economic, and social issues are done multiple times annually to shine a light on the conflicts occurring globally.

The Multicultural Music Encounters series has tackled countless topics in my time with the group and even more in its 22 years in schools. While these come plentifully, they are often overlooked as they are, unfortunately, deemed irrelevant to our society because we do not experience the effects of these injustices and genocide affecting under-developed countries.

Being a part of this organization, both as a violin student and a proud immigrant from the Dominican Republic has helped me to find myself and my identity in a world where we are drilled from a young age to follow the general crowd. Through the

majestic performances of the Encounters series, I was able to feel represented and comfortable in my own skin after years having crammed solely American history and culture into my life. Furthermore, the music we played encouraged me to resonate, understand, and sympathize with the struggles of others. The things I learned opened my eyes to worlds I had never been exposed to before and even sparked my interest in politics and current social issues.

I have so much to be thankful for after having been part of this program for only three, but rather eventful, years. I have met wise and talented people that I was able to learn alongside. I could share my passions for music and understand the hardships we naturally fail to honor and remember. Every student should get to have such an experience. On behalf of the Multicultural Music Group and hundreds of children who receive music instruction each year, I will like to express our gratitude to the following Council Members: Mark Levine for supporting the program at the Mott Hall School; Joe Borrelli for supporting the program at Elias Bernstein I.S. 7 and Rafael

Salamanca for supporting the program at South Bronx Academy I.S. 296.

We will like to encourage Council Members: Corey Johnson to support Manhattan Bridges High School; Bill Perkins to support Mott Hall High School and Mark Gjonaj to support Pelham Preparatory Academy at the Columbus Campus Schools. Those schools are eagerly waiting to start the program but the need to support.

Thank you for listening.

[APPLAUSE]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That was great, and mom is watching in the audience. Wow, you must be very proud of her. Yes, of course.

MOM: Can I say something?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, of course.

[MOM IS SPEAKING BUT NOT INTO THE MIC]

[APPLAUSE]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That is so sweet. It was very powerful, that's why I asked them to turn the clock off. So, we could hear all of what you had to say. I was also thrilled. There is a line in there where you said your interest has been sparked

in politics. Would you like to run for office maybe one day?

PRISCILLA JIMENEZ: Perhaps.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wouldn't that be exciting Laurie Cumbo?

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I mean I'm just -

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, I think we want more and more young women to run for office and get involved in politics and what you had to say was very powerful in so many ways.

PRISCILLA JIMENEZ: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Chair Van Bramer can I just put in a plug for 21 and 21?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Of course.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Right. So, in the City Council we have 51 members but only 11 women. So, we are certainly looking for more women to run for office and just as you were speaking I was getting those goose bumps, those chills when you are speaking because you have such a powerful voice and it took me a long time as a Council Member to get the courage and the confidence to speak as you have done here today.

So, you are like light years ahead of so many. I didn't come to City Hall until I was in my 30's. So, you've really got a jumpstart on this particular process, so we hope to see and most importantly hear more from you. Thank you so much.

PRISCILLA JIMENEZ: Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I feel like we're on one of those shows and Jalo and he is Ivan.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I love it. Mom probably wants you to go to college before you run for City Council though. Right 2021 is probably a college year for Priscilla, but even still, you can run for office. You can do anything based on what we just heard.

So, thank you Priscilla and I think we will go to your left. New York Historical Society. Feel free to sit and stay Priscilla for the testimony.

ALICE STEVENSON: Thank you so much. My name is Alice Stevenson, I am the Director of the Childrens Museum at the New York Historical Society.

I would like to thank Chair Van Bramer and the members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and Intergroup Relations for your time this

morning and we're so honored to be included in the people who are invited this morning. It was such a terrific morning to see.

I am here to report on our work this past year and continuing with support of the CASA grants. This is our ninth year that we are doing this work and we are very grateful for your generous support of our efforts to provide this truly unique educational opportunity for students and families at partner schools in New York City.

New York Historical is the oldest Museum in the City. We have a renown research library, as I mentioned, Childrens Museum and a really rich display of educational programs for the public schools in New York City to take advantage of.

New York Historical reaches over 200,000 young people every year and 75 percent of our students live at or below the poverty line and we serve them both in their schools and at the museum and in their communities and the CASA grant helps us do this obviously through the after-school programming.

This year we partnered with PS 84 in District 6, our district in west prep in District 7. The CASA program that we are doing builds on our curriculums

1 that are available through as I said, museum visit,  
2 teacher/professional development on line free  
3 curriculums that dig into New York City's history,  
4 revolutionary war era history, the Lenni-Lenape, and  
5 so through this CASA grant that passed here, the  
6 middle school students at West Prep studied  
7 specifically Revolutionary War era broadsides and did  
8 print making projects as well and we always ask  
9 students to think about American history through the  
10 lens of today of their communities of what they are  
11 interested in. So, in addition to learning about  
12 Revolutionary War air broadsides, they then created  
13 broadsides that spoke to them and spoke to issues  
14 that they wanted to address in their community.

16 We then worked with 25 elementary school students  
17 at P.S. 84 and they were studying Lenni-Lenape. And  
18 many of the photos on the second sheet show this  
19 work. This is looking specifically at the kind of  
20 technical innovations that the Lenni-Lenape hand,  
21 both in their communities and in their economic  
22 structure and Lenni-Lenape obviously are the people  
23 living in Manhattan area when the Dutch came.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

25 [APPLAUSE]

1                   TOM HURTUBISE: Good morning, Chairman Van Bramer  
2                   and Members of the Committee. Thank you for letting  
3                   us present here today. My name is Tom Hurtubise, I  
4                   am the Curator of Education at the Queens Zoo and the  
5                   Wildlife Conservation Society. I am here today to  
6                   provide testimony on behalf of WCS and the Queens  
7                   Zoo. WCS is a member of the Cultural Institutions  
8                   Group, CIG, a coalition of 33 cultural institutions  
9                   who share public-private partnership with the City of  
10                  New York and are located in all five boroughs. We  
11                  are a proud recipient of CASA funding, but it is  
12                  worth noting that not all CIG's are currently  
13                  receiving funding to do this work.

15                Let be begin by saying how grateful we are for  
16                the Council's vital support of culture and the arts  
17                in New York City. The Queens Zoo delivers CASA  
18                programming to three schools. PS 171, PS 186, and  
19                PS79 for a total of about 140 students. We provide  
20                hands-on science-based, afterschool enrichment and we  
21                are grateful to the Council Members Constantanides,  
22                Barry Grodenchik and Paul Vallone for their support  
23                of their support of the important programs that we  
24                serve their schools.



Queens Zoo CASA Program, Wild About Our Community, challenges students to become conservation scientists in their own neighborhoods. Students from grade 2-5 combine science, art, games, and written reflection to explore fundamental science concepts. They apply what they've learned to investigate their own local parks and school yards.

Through this program, students don't just reinforce science concepts from the classroom, but they understand science in a whole new way as something that can be observed, felt and discovered all around us. I will make one quote from a teacher who notes that an ENL teacher approached her and came to them and said, how blown away she was at the wealth of knowledge a student had of the rainforest because of the CASA program. The student knew layers of the rainforest, many of the animals that lived in the forest. Was able to understand and discuss the role of the sun, food chains and it should be kept in mind, that the ENL English as a new language student retained all of that and science concept.

One more comment, they do share their work with their families, and we provide family Science Days at

the Zoo for all of the CASA programming that come to us that we work with.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great, thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

EILEEN DOYLE: Good morning. I am Eileen Doyle, the Executive Director of Young Audiences New York.

We have proudly participated in Cultural After School Adventures Program since its inception. Young people in our CASA programs develop their artistic skills alongside professional New York City Artists and they gain life skills they take with them as they grow as well, as we've seen here all morning. Which is why it is so exciting for us to run our CASA programs.

Participation in the arts is proven to educate the whole child, leading to improved academic achievement and development of key social and emotional skills, that put individuals on the paths to success in work and life. Opportunity gaps persist for New York City children. CASA helps us close those gaps together.

The important life lessons of perseverance and collaboration are so clearly present when you watch young people learning to master a dance routine or learning to build percussion skills collaboratively

1 together. So too is the emerging confidence of  
2 English Language learners proudly performing for  
3 their families in their own neighborhoods. CASA is a  
4 critical program for leveling the playing field for  
5 all of our New York City children. Together we are  
6 arming them for success in school, work, and life.

7  
8 Special thanks to Council Members Ayala, who  
9 helps us at Central Park East with our Theater Improv  
10 program, Lankman[SP?] who helps us with digital media  
11 and percussion at PS 182Q in Queens and also in  
12 Queens, Council Member Adams for our work with — we  
13 think of it as our May and June Grand Finale of the  
14 school year. They like to do their arts residency  
15 programs then and it ends in a big neighborhood  
16 celebration. So, special thanks for help and support  
17 in their work in those neighborhoods and thank you  
18 and congratulations to everyone for CASA work.

19 I have a few photos.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure, flip through the  
21 photos really quick. That's a great photo.

22 EILEEN DOYLE: Some how it's harder when people  
23 are watching you hit the buttons. So, here is dance  
24 and Chinese dance, theater improv. Here is musical  
25 theater, Juliet and Romeo like never seen before

because we invented a scene, the kids invented a scene. More African dance with our young ones. Some digital media photo has been very popular.

These are students in our link Digital Media Program being mentored by mentors from NBC Universal and cartoon work, all kinds of visual arts. The End.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wow.

EILEEN DOYLE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. Thank you very much to this panel. We are going to go to the next panel. Is Piruz Partow, sometimes reading the handwriting is not as easy as you would like, so I apologize if I have said anyone's name incorrectly. Juan Carlos Salinas from the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning. Juan Carlos is still here, great. Shamilia McBean, did I get that right? Shamilia McBean from the CUNY Creative Arts Team and Sidney "Dr. Dance" Grant from Ballroom Basix.

I love that you put Dr. Dance in parenthesis on your sheet. So, these four will go. Thank you and just because they were helping out several times with the audio/visual, I want to take this opportunity to highlight our Policy Analyst Cristy Dwyer and my Committee Counsel Brenda McKinney who are both to my

right, who are in addition to being incredibly competent at the work that they do at the City Council, apparently experts at audio/visual and power point and slide presentations. So, thank you both for that and I also want to thank Jack Bernadovitz[SP?] from my office who is here taking so many photos and videos that you have to follow my Instagram feed because I haven't looked at it but I'm sure it's like just - it's trending now. It's probably trending it's so important and Matt Wallis and Jimmy Ray is to my left also on our team.

So, with that, why don't we start with Brooklyn.

PIRUZ PARTOW: Wonderful Chairman Van Bramer, Majority Leader Cumbo. Thank you for this opportunity to address the Council about the Cultural After School Adventures Initiative. We would like to thank Commissioner Finkelpearl and the staff of the Department of Cultural Affairs for the tremendous work they do in supporting the administration of the CASA program.

I am Piruz Partow the Executive Director of the Brooklyn Music School. For those of you that don't know BMS, we were founded 110 years ago with the

mission of bringing the joy of music and performing arts to all residents of NYC.

We are very honored to have the opportunity to participate in the CASA program in recent years. As most of the people in this room already know, participation in regular, high-quality arts education can have a positive impact on the life of every child, but those benefits are particularly dramatic for at-risk youth.

Longitudinal studies compiled by the NEH show that the disadvantaged youth who have high levels of engagement with the arts are 4 times less likely to drop out of high school. 2.4 times more likely to go on to earn bachelor's degrees and 50 percent more likely to vote, as compared to their peers who have little or no arts education.

As many of you also know, the overwhelming focus on core academic skills and test results combined with the restructuring and resizing of many of our city's public schools, has led to shrinking of music, dance, and dramatic arts as part of the curricula at many of the schools.

We support the Council's initiative to begin to address this situation through the CASA program and

encourage you to continue to support vital arts enrichment for our children.

BMS received our first CASA grant in 2014 at PS 20, thanks to Majority Leader Combo's support. This year we will provide after school music and dance programming to nearly 500 K-5 students, including a school band, a strings ensemble, urban movement, early music, and buckets and beats style drumming. 78 percent of the students at this school identify as minority, 63 percent from families below the poverty line. Both teachers and parents at PS 20 have commented on how the programs are well loved by the students and contribute to a high level of focus, collaboration and self-esteem.

We have a second CASA grant at PS 245 which is a Title 1 school that has no daytime music programming at all. With the support of Council Member Eugene, we are able to offer classes including music fundamentals, violin, urban dance, Borough Beats performance series to 300 students there this school year. 98 percent of the students at PS 245 come from families living in poverty and 96 percent are minority, exactly the type of young people we know

receive the greatest positive benefits from frequent, high quality arts instruction.

I know that's my time, but I just want to say that BMS believes the important of taking music and performing arts directly to those schools where the need is greatest. Over the past five years, we have grown the student population served by our BMS Outreach program from 100 nearly to 6,500.

In addition, another 4,600 members of the community indirectly participate by attending concerts and school events.

I'm sorry we didn't have a performance today for you all, but thanks to the Majority Leader our students have had the honor of playing within these chambers and that upright is very familiar to our students as well.

So, thank you all very much for the support.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wonderful, thank you so much. I have heard so many great statistics about the power of the arts and what it means but I haven't heard the voting figure that you just said, which is incredibly important in producing civically and actively engaged individuals. Obviously, we vote at incredibly low levels in this city and state and



country generally speaking and something we need to fix.

So, with that we'll head over to Juan Carlos.

JUAN CARLOS SALINAS: Thank you Council Members. My name is Juan Carlos Salinas and I am the Education Director at Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning.

It is often said that the arts have the power to change lives, you have heard that through several people here today. I am sure that the arts have impacted many of you in many different ways.

However, for many of us, the arts were the turning point in our lives, and I say this as someone who couldn't speak English but because of a theater teacher, I was able to get to Yale University. With that said, for many of these things, they begin with the CASA programs in after school.

As a CIG and the only multi-disciplinary arts center in Southeast Queens, JCAL serves as an arts oasis in a neighborhood of New York City where cultural opportunities are limited for one of its largest communities of color.

There are many education programs out there, but JCAL is unique. Our students grow with us. Elementary, Middle, High School, college, our adults,

our education programs cover the depth and breadth of a lifetime of an education in the arts.

Our CASA programs serve over 300 students directly and over 1000 students indirectly in South East Queens, often listed as arts poor districts. Over 98 percent of our participants are students of color and for most of our students we are the only arts education they receive. Through CASA we employ over 20 teaching artists and we provide them a living wage as artists.

As Ms. Christine Guzman parent coordinator at PS 160 says, "I don't know what we would do without JCAL. When our federal funding for the arts was cut, JCAL was there to fill the void. Whether it was dance, drama or visual arts, our students were able to explore the artistic talents under the tutelage of dynamic teaching artists. What makes JCAL such a great partner is that they not only bring the CASA programs to our school, but they welcome us into their facilities for endless opportunities for our students and their parents." Or to put it best in the words of one of our students, Santana Thompson. "I love JCAL because I get to create, without fear or judgement."

Everything we do is possible because of your financial support. So, I ask you today, please continue to help us create the turning point for our students. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, powerfully said. Shamilia?

SHAMILIA MCBEAN: Good afternoon.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good afternoon.

SHAMILIA MCBEAN: My name is Shamilia McBean, I am the Project Director for the CASA programming at CUNY Creative Arts Team and before I get started, I want to do a little experiment with everybody here.

So, if you could just take one hand and raise it up if it's available, make it available and see if you can make a plus sign with that hand. Got it, pretty simple, cool, alright you can retire that hand. Take your other hand and see if you can make a circle with the other hand, just make a circle with it. Oh, yeah pretty easy. Alright, now, can you make a plus sign and a circle at the same time? Try it. Oh, a little bit more tricky. Cool, sometimes I think that I have it.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You are going to tell us what all that means right?

SHAMILIA MCBEAN: What do the plus signs and the circles mean?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, or the ability to do them both at the same time.

SHAMILIA MCBEAN: I don't know what it means, it might mean you're operating with both sides of your brain or something but that is just one small way that we like to invite the young people that we work with into our creative processes. We start with play as a way to build community, to be in conversation with one another and then build upon that, so I wanted to invite you all into that as well. Thanks for trying it out with me.

IN the Creative Arts Team's CASA sessions, we build worlds with theatre but more importantly we use play and creativity to build connections and community among our participants.

I'd love for you think about what ideas might spring to mind when you hear the words "No Filter"? or when you think about words, Make Space Take Space? Are there any phrases, songs, images that arise when you consider Time Travel or your own relationships to the Past, Present and Future?

I can imagine that any of those themes might conjure up an array of memories, sounds, words, bits of knowledge rooted in your experiences. Our CASA programs invite young people to use one of these three themes, at least this year as starting points to muse about the world around them and what they would like to say about that world through theatre. So, the young people we've worked with have created songs, community poems, soundscapes, masks, scripts, performances that speak to these themes and beyond. They created alternate realities, declare their origin stories, and use their platforms to exercise agency within the world we've already shaped. With each creation, the participants define and challenge how society looks now and build on it in ways that they imagine that it could exist.

And of course, I'm going to skip a head a bit, but I hope that you all take you all take some time to look at what's here. The Creative Arts Team, just to offer a bit more background, serves more than 19,000 New Yorkers at 180 schools. This year we are sharing 19 CASA programs, we are really excited to that and serve about 643 students within that time and process and the creations that they've made have

1 looked all kinds of ways. We've seen young people  
2 discussing what it means to create and define their  
3 own spaces. Exploring what full self-acceptance  
4 looks like and imagining how the world might be  
5 beyond this particular moment in time.  
6

7 So, we're grateful for the opportunity to create  
8 these spaces with the young people. Grateful that  
9 the things that they build come from their own ideas  
10 and we definitely love to center the participants  
11 ideas and what it is that they would like to see as  
12 we move forward.

13 I encourage you also to take some time looking at  
14 the photos at the back when you get the chance and  
15 some of the quotes from the young people. I  
16 particularly yule a little bit when I hear young  
17 people say, I wish we could sleep at school and do  
18 CASA every day.

19 Thank you all very much.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. So, you  
21 know, this is my tenth year as the Chair of this  
22 Committee and you know, my tenth year obviously being  
23 a Council Member and I love the work that we do and  
24 we do a lot of good things and we fund a lot of  
25 programs but you don't always get to see what you do.

Right, and so this hearing is amazing because even as I hear everyone citing all of my colleague who are allocating that particular CASA grant for that particular school, it is so good to hear it, to see it, to look at the testimony and the photos and the performance and the videos. Because it makes it real when we're out there fighting and when I am in budget negotiating team every year fighting for more CASA, and more CASA's and more CASA's which is how you go from \$5 million to \$15.3 million.

To hear all of you and share these stories is very affirming but also inspirational to sort of go out there and fight for even more money for more CASA's right. And to see what we can do, so it is really good and reassuring that it actually matters, and it works. Right, what we're doing is working, reaching all the lives.

So, with that Ballroom Basix.

SIDNEY GRANT: Good afternoon everybody. Good afternoon Chair Van Bramer and the CASA Initiative Committee Members. It is a sincere pleasure to be making an appearance at today's hearing as an arts organization that is a first time CASA recipient. We were formerly fiscally sponsored by NYFA, the New

York Foundation for the Arts, we were ineligible for CASA, but we are really excited that we were designated last year as a 501 C3. We received cultural immigrant initiative funding as well as two CASA grants from one of our long-time discretionary funders Council Member Donovan Richards and without further ado, I want to show you what the kids put together for his birthday a couple of weeks ago as a surprise. A surprise birthday of merengue for him and then we'll keep chatting a little bit about what Ballroom Basix does. Here we go.

[PERFORMANCE BEGINS]

They learned that one that day for the video. Happy Birthday Donovan Richards. Okay, so Ballroom Basix began in a single Harlem school in 2008 with just a few 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. We spent 2 years refining our non-competitive syllabus and methodology, which is actually based on a country western dance called the Barn Dance. And this dance naturally rotates from person to person. So, what we did is you could see from the video here is we crafted a transition step into every dance that we teach. That way no tow students are stuck together, and it ensure that every child regardless of ability,



popularity, ethnicity or identity gets a chance to interact respectfully and rotationally with each and every classmate. So, really quickly, and we don't dance to country western music, we are smart enough to use their music. So, take a quick look.

[PERFORMANCE BEGINS]

That's the DOE dance teacher there.

Okay, so you get a sense, thank you very much.

You get a sense of the diversity of the dancing and

in addition to the uniqueness of the Barn Dance,

Chairman Van Bramer and his colleague Mr. Wallis who

I was fortunate to meet with just last week and

Laurie Cumbo who I met off the elevator at 250

Broadway not long ago, will maybe find it a

particular interest how our program encourages gender

neutrality in the partner dancing roles, liberating

the dances from the confines of who leads and who

follows. We have lady leaders and fella followers in

all our classes, reminding students not only to

respect each classmate in whichever role they prefer

to dance, but also emphasizing that learning both

parts makes every student a more well-rounded dancer

in the same way that learning offense and defense

makes an athlete a more well-rounded athlete.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: As much as I enjoy your enthusiasm and the fact that you danced along to the videos, with the kids dancing, which was impossibly adorable and by the way, I don't even know what they are doing there, it just looks like a lot of fun. It just looked like they are hitting each other in a non-violent positive way but it was all very fun.

So, I don't think we can finish all the rest of the testimony out of respect for all the folks who have to follow you, but I have read it. Obviously, you know, we are fans of your program and love you're -- is that a new logo? The T-shirt that you're wearing and all that stuff.

SIDNEY GRANT: It is.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: It's pretty cool. So, with that, I just want to say thank you.

SIDNEY GRANT: Well, I want to say thank you to you to and off script, I just want to say in reference to your opening remarks about the student that experienced such a radical transformation, it is very rewarding in this work, seeing how reticent children, children who are shy, wouldn't otherwise perceive themselves as being able to dance, truly

come out of their shells and transform. So, thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, thank you to this panel. David Nussenbaum, from Bronx Art Ensemble, Karen Jolicoeur from Creative Art Works. Is Karen here? Yes. Camara Jackson? Is Camara Jackson still here? No, from Elite Learners Inc. Ashley Hodge, is Ashley Hodge here? Yeah, there is Ashley, great and is Elizabeth Costa from the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y here? There is Elizabeth Costa from the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y. I think that is four on this panel and then we have two other panels of four people.

I want to thank everyone for hanging in although I think probably, we would all acknowledge this has been more fun than most hearings and more inspiring than most City Council hearings.

DAVID NUSSENBAUM: I was about to say good morning, but I'll say good afternoon Chairman Van Bramer and members of the Committee if there are members of the Committee here. My name is David Nussenbaum and I am Executive Director of Bronx Arts Ensemble. First off let me thank the Committee and the entire City Council and DCLA for the generous CASA support they provide Bronx Arts Ensemble, and

our many peers across the city. These programs are vital to the development of public-school students aiding them in art making which builds self-esteem, expression, collaboration and innovation.

Through CASA we teach roughly 850 students a year and provide meaningful employment to 40 talented teaching artists. Both our student and artist populations are predominantly of color. We teach all four arts disciplines during school hours and in some of those schools, we are fortunate enough to receive CASA funding to teach after school. Some of our CASA students are lucky enough to study the arts with us both in school and after school; most get no access to arts other than their CASA programs. In this respect, CASA fills a major gap.

We thought it would be most impactful to have one of our teaching artists, Moses McCarter, talk about some of the students he has taught through Bronx Arts Ensemble CASA programs. Moses is a specialist in Brazilian Capoeira a cross between dance and martial arts.

So, Moses, take it away.

MOSES MCCARTER: Good afternoon.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good afternoon.

MOSES MCCARTER: Majority Leader Cumbo, who is not here anymore, Cultural Affairs Chairman Van Bramer, thank you for the time.

I have had the pleasure to be employed with the Bronx Arts Ensemble for the past 13 years, pretty much full time. I am born and bred in New York City; I am a Bronx kid. I grew up in Queens and spent some time in Rosedale as well. A New York City boy.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Why did you leave Queens than?

MOSES MCCARTER: You know, I wanted to bring that up. No, but I was born in the Bronx and I lived in Queens for some time and I returned, you know the prodigal son so to speak. I had a chance in my early 20's to travel the world. I fell in the love with the Brazilian Martial Art of Capoeira.

I studied it full time in Brazil and decided to come back to the Bronx. If you are not aware, the Bronx is always number 62 in the Health and Wellness and Deceased for New York State. We have the highest levels of asthma, diabetes. So, I felt that my responsibility as well as you know, my work in life to come back to the Bronx and spread a lifestyle of health and wellness through the art form of Capoeira

and I am a Yogi as well. I practice Yoga, I practice meditation.

Anyway, I'd like to share with you some stories of some of the students that I've had over these 13 years as an instructor in New York City public schools. I would like to bring to mind Amina, she was an immigrant from Togo. She found expression in dance, particularly because in her country, a woman or not, as encouraged and sometimes discouraged from engaging in certain types of movements, and forms of movement. She recently graduated from SUNY Purchase. Alright, she studied with me for three years at the International Community High School.

There is also Carlos, recently arrived from Mexico about six years ago, who is shy, an introvert. For all intent and purposes, he studied with me for four years full time, three times a week at the time. He is currently studying computer science at Government College.

There is also Grace, a very shy elementary school student with no background in movement of dance, now in her second year, studying Capoeira with me. She is you know, tall, self-conscious of her height but

through movement, she is discovering herself and expression using her body.

A very special story actually at the International Community High School, this happened about a decade ago, about the second or the third year of their existence as a school. I had students from three rival gangs at the time in the Bronx from the Bloods, the Crypts, and the Trinitarios, if you are not familiar. There was a serious fight during school hours which had to be broken up by faculty and security, myself included. Faculty and Bronx Arts Ensemble teaching artists planned the following semester to proactively address this conflict through martial arts program, building understanding and bonds between members of the three gangs.

I am proud to say that members of all three gangs happened to sign up for Capoeira class. During the course of the year, they collaborated with rival gang members. That June in a season-ending performance, we all presented with all gang members on stage for a moving performance at the end of the year performance where there was no conflict, no any of that negativity in my classroom and they actually

collaborated in a beautiful way in class for the end of that year.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's an amazing story.

MOSES MCCARTER: Yeah, I just wanted to share that with you, and I want the Committee and the Council to continue you know, funding these types of programs not only for New York City boys like myself who I actually participated in these programs myself in a different way, you know, way back when. I am a little older than I look, but you know just continue doing this because it provides scope for an affect on these children that we work with. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

Next.

ASHLEY HODGE: Good afternoon everyone. My name is Ashley Hodge. I am a product of the New York City public school system, a proud graduate of Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School for music and performing arts and I am currently an assistant principal at P94M. On behalf of principal Dr. Jane Bradley NP94M, I would like to thank the members of the City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations for providing P94M



with funding through the Cultural After School Adventures Initiative and I appreciate the opportunity to testify at today's oversight hearing.

P97M for those of you who do not know, provides an enriched and diverse learning environment for students as part of District 75, the citywide district for special education, P94M has eight school sites co-located in community schools. The schools programs are located in the following neighborhoods: Battery Park; Financial District; Chelsea; Lower East Side, Murray Hill; and Hell's Kitchen. We serve over 430 students and those 430 students are spread across those sites between the ages of 5 and 21.

P94M places high expectations on collaborative efforts to support students in achieving academic communication and social skills. To that end, it is always our goal to infuse arts into our common-core aligned curricula, as it provides additional entry points to support increased engagement, achievement, and self-confidence.

As a partnership school, P94M has a decades long relationship with Marquis Studios. Marquis Studios is committed to enriching the lives of students through its wide array of programs focused on

students with disabilities. The relationship P94M has with Marquis Studios, has provided our students with access to least restrictive environments by fostering collaboration through inclusive 10-week residencies with neuro-typical peers, increased communication and social skills. Through high-quality residencies such as Circus Arts, Visual Arts, and Percussion Music, our students have learned about other cultures, rhythm, and fashion design through teamwork and creativity. Research shows that children with disabilities improve their social skills and self esteem while also advancing fine and gross motor skills when participating in inclusive programming with children without disabilities.

CASA funding has helped teach students powerful lessons about diversity, communication, collaboration, and empathy. CASA funding has helped us build and maintain strong community ties with our co-located schools as we share art residencies and work together to help children creatively achieve learning goals.

Thanks to City Council Members' generosity, we were the recipient of three CASA grants for the 2018-2019 school year, Fiscal Year 2019. We hope that our

1  
2 school and other schools across New York City  
3 continue to receive funding through the CASA  
4 Initiative.

5 I thank you for your time.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

7 [APPLAUSE]

8 ELIZABETH COSTA: Hello, I am Elizabeth Costa  
9 from the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y. Thank you for this  
10 opportunity. We bring arts education to 74 New York  
11 City public schools citywide.

12 We are in every district represented by this  
13 Committee, eight schools total and on the handout  
14 that you have there, you will see the CASA programs  
15 in yellow and in orange on the schools list which  
16 begins on the reverse, the schools represented by the  
17 Committee.

18 We also have a two-year paid apprenticeship at  
19 the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y for ten high school teens that  
20 shows them what a career in an arts and culture  
21 organization is like. These teens called teen  
22 producers are helping us produce teen arts week next  
23 month and we are collaborating with 30 organizations  
24 citywide including for example the Museum of the  
25 Moving Image.

The CASA work that we do is critically important to the schools. So, whether it's a percussion club at Eleanor Roosevelt High School or a jazz improv course at TAPCO in the Bronx, these are crucial for the kids and just as one example, in PS23 in Brooklyn, Principal Natina[SP?] has said that they have a chronic absenteeism problem. About 48 percent of the kids have chronic absenteeism.

On the days where we have the arts education programs there, we have four programs including CASA, the attendance is the best ever during the year.

So, the CASA program was an animation program, you saw an example earlier today. The kids in the first part of the course get to create clay sculptures and they work together, they work independently on those sculptures and then the second part of the course, those sculptures come to life.

Additionally, if you've heard of the wonderful artist Chantel Martin, we invited the kids to come to an interactive line drawing session with Chantel Martin. Not only the kids in CASA but 100 students total from the school and then we livestreamed that program as well.

It is so clear how important CASA is. We urge you to continue your support of CASA and we thank you for the support that you've already given.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Do you have a power point?

KAREN JOLICOEUR: I do, and it will overlap.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: No worries. If you need assistance, you know where to call.

KAREN JOLICOEUR: Good morning. My name is Karen Jolicoeur and I am the Deputy Director at Creative Art Works. It is my pleasure to be here to talk to you about our CASA programming today.

Creative Art Works is a 33-year-old creative youth development organization working in the visual and multimedia arts. Our CASA programs are provided in direct alignment with our mission to equip New York City youth who would otherwise lack access with essential creative tools and skills, to connect them to their communities and academic life, and to inspire new possibilities for the future.

It is to the City's credit that this critical initiative has been not only sustained but has also grown in recent years. With our schools being

squeezed as they are for time, space, materials, personnel, the CASA Initiative provides vital resources, valuing our students holistically, and amplifying the artistic experience as central to a robust learning environment.

This is discerning as well as inspired. The Americans for the Arts 2017 Social Impact of the Arts report stats that after-school arts programs save cities money. For every \$1 spent on after-school programs, \$9 will be saved reducing other costs, improving academic performance and increasing kids' earning potential.

It further states that students who are excited by school, stay in school. Low-income students who participate in the arts, both in and after school have a drop out rate five times lower than that of their peers.

It's worth mentioning also that the CASA Initiative allows organizations such as ours to provide meaningful, sustaining work for some of New York City's fine teaching artists.

So, I will try to launch this and keep talking to economize on time.

This year alone, Creative Art Works is providing approximately 200 kids in grades 1-8, five schools in upper Manhattan in the Bronx with firsthand in-depth experiences in multiple media and curricula. These include cartooning and anatomy, Claymation - stop-motion animation, book arts, sculpture, set design, and a mixed media curriculum called Art Around the World. Students are exploring myriad materials, learning numerous techniques, and are being exposed to a variety of work and artists ranging from the self-portraits of Frida Khalo to the sculpture of Claes Oldenburg.

Along the way, through an iterative process, they try and try again, explore, ask questions, collaborate with their peers, and reflect on process, as much or more so than on product. They learn that you don't have to find something instantly easy to get better at it and find fulfillment in it. Their work is exhibited and celebrated at culminating events with family and friends, a real point of pride as well as an opportunity to practice some public speaking. They notice art in the world around them, and they learn that the arts can be for them.

In a recent assessment, a Creative Art Works student was asked, "What is the one thing you want us to know about our experience?" He responded by saying, "It was exciting, and I want everyone to experience this."

So, thank you all for championing these essential experiences for New York City youth so that more students can.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, that was amazing.

[APPLAUSE]

The tomato escape situation looked like a lot of fun.

Thank you all very much on this panel. Thank you, very much and next panel, if folks are still here, Patrick Rowe from — yeah, there is Patrick from the Bronx Museum of the Arts, Phillip Alexander from the Brooklyn Arts Council, is Phillip still here? Oh, there is Phillip. Venessa Felix from the Bushwick Starr, is Venessa — boy you have been waiting right, right there. You are so close to the Chair. David Chase from Ballet Hispanico. Great, and then we have one more panel and Lucy, I saw that you arrived, and you are going to wrap it all up for



us. I am going to have you close it out because we have been here for three hours and it has been amazing and very inspiring. And you missed all the kids, but trust me, it was great.

Why don't you start.

PATRICK ROWE: Great, thank you. Good afternoon Chairman Van Bramer and members of the Committee. My name is Patrick Rowe and I am Director of Education at the Bronx Museum of the Arts. I am here to provide testimony on the impact of the Bronx Museum's CASA program with 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at PS73, an elementary school located in the Highbridge neighborhood of the Bronx.

Our partnership with PS73 began in 2009 and after two years of in-school programming with 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> graders, we were fortunate to receive our first CASA grant which allowed us to work with 5<sup>th</sup> graders at the same school.

This CASA partnership has been running strong for 8 consecutive years, and we've had the opportunity to see alumni return as member of our Teen Council and as members of our intern group as college interns.

Each year approximately 30 fifth graders meet at the Museum for 28-2-hour sessions where they view

exhibitions featuring culturally diverse artists, engage in critical dialogue about exhibition themes and connect them to their own experiences through close looking and object interpretation. Through hands-on art making projects led by teaching artists accompanied by reading and writing exercises, students are exposed to key concepts in art, literature and history, and learn how to translate these ideas through diverse artistic media, such as drawing, painting, mixed media and sculpture.

In Recent years, we have reached capacity, and have done our best to welcome additional students, exceeding our capacity of 30 students. Next year, we hope to deepen this partnership by serving an additional group of fifth graders in response to program demand, growing our CASA art engagement from 30 to 60 annual students.

Through CASA and the critical support of the City, our fifth graders are developing a healthy and creative working environment where their creative choices and interests are nurtured, developed, and celebrated. Over the course of the program, our students become familiar with and invested in the arts and the Museum. As a result, and most

importantly, the Museum becomes a more equitable, fun, creative, and inclusive space.

We thank the City Council for championing this important and impactful program. On behalf of the Bronx Museum, thank you for hearing my testimony today.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. Next.

[APPLAUSE]

PHILLIP ALEXANDER: Good afternoon. My name is Phil Alexander. I am the Arts and Education Director for the Brooklyn Arts Council. I am very pleased and honored to be speaking here today.

As you may know, the Brooklyn Arts Council provides cultural services in all of the Council Districts within Brooklyn.

Since 2006, the Brooklyn Arts Council has provided a range of cultural activities through our CASA program, this includes arts residencies, assembly performances, and free tickets to professional performances.

We've worked with dozens of schools over the years and have an impact on thousands of students and family members and many of our partnered schools, we

are the only arts opportunities that is available to these students.

This year, BAC is partnering with 34 different sites and I can give you a very, very quick overview of some of those sites that we're working with. We have puppetry at PS24 in Sunset Park. We have theatre and social justice at Nelson Mandela High School in Bed-Stuy and mural making at IS96 in Bensonhurst.

We also, among our many different cultural performances this year include Daricar[SP?] Irish dance, Circulac[SP?] which is a hip-hop circus group and the Calpulli Mexican Dance Company.

As someone who interfaces with principals, teachers, teaching artists, parents and students, I get to hear what people think works and how things could change, and we also hear about how the program creates amazing essential learning in art skills as well as all those other special social/emotions skills we heard such as perseverance and collaboration.

I also get requests in terms of how we can change and expand the programming and so, given this opportunity, I have two suggestions that I

respectfully offer to the Council. The first is to streamline the Contracting Process as much as possible. Many of our schools would love to start in the fall but if we don't get our contract until December, we really can't begin programming until January.

Secondly, our expenses have increased year and year and year, but the individual award amount has remained stagnant for the past couple of years, so therefore, we respectfully request that the award amount be returned to \$25,000 per site, which is what the original award was when the program began.

I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of that and the opportunity to speak here today on this very vital and vibrant program. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

DAVID CHASE: Good afternoon. I am David Chase, Associate Director of Institutional Relations at Ballet Hispanico and thank you Chair Van Bramer and Members of the Committee for having us speak here today and for your support of the Cultural After School Adventure Program.

Ballet Hispanico was founded in 1970 by National Medal of Arts winner Tina Ramirez when she sought to give voice to the Hispanic experience and break through stereotypes. She identified a need to provide Latino children on the Upper West Side with a more meaningful direction, a more certain future, and she would do that by giving them a safe place to go after school and teaching them to dance.

Ballet Hispanico has been bringing arts education residencies to New York City Public Schools nearly since its founding. And the CASA program represents a continuation of our founder's legacy. Our residencies use dance, choreography and performance as the starting point, and integrate these art forms with the classroom curriculum and related subjects including creative writing, cultural studies, history and literature., thereby improving the students overall academic performance and success.

Ballet Hispanico re-entered the program in Fiscal 2018 and implemented CASA in 9 schools and grew this year to 12 schools. Our CASA programs provide a structured nurturing environment for students, some of whom are critically underserved and thus might not otherwise have the opportunity to engage in focused

cross-cultural dance activities. As one principal said, seeing the cross-cultural activity of having a Bangladesh or Arab speaking student dancing Flamenco along with a Latin-American or Caribbean student is in a word amazing.

As Ballet Hispanico approaches its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary next year, it is deeply gratifying for us to participate in CASA, an invaluable program that extends the organization's founding mission of service, engagement, education, and access to dance and arts experiences for New York City public school children. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and you nailed it at two minutes. First one in three hours to just nail it right down at the two-minute buzzer, thank you.

VENESSA FELIX: Well, I probably won't but good afternoon. I am Venessa Felix. I am a teaching artist and a youth and community programmer at the Bushwick Starr. You heard about us a little earlier. We are a non-profit theatre dedicated to new performance in Bushwick Brooklyn. The Bushwick Starr offers four free arts education and engagement

1 programs that will serve 120 people from the age of 9  
2 to 90 in our community this year, and I am so honored  
3 to have the opportunity to testify to the impact of  
4 CASA funding which has enabled us to increase the  
5 number of young people we serve in our local public  
6 schools and deepen our service by offering dynamic  
7 programs at each stage of their educational  
8 development.  
9

10 We are so grateful to the New York City Council,  
11 particularly Council Members Reynoso, Espinal and  
12 Levin who have designated support to our educational  
13 programs through this initiative this season. And we  
14 thank you Chair Van Bramer and the Members of the  
15 Committee and Cultural Affairs as well as the  
16 Department of Cultural Affairs and Commissioner Tom  
17 Finkelpearl for it's investment and the worthy work  
18 of CASA Initiative.

19 The Cornerstone of our CASA funded program is  
20 it's Big Green Theatre which just completed it's 9<sup>th</sup>  
21 annual festival, a student written work yesterday,  
22 literally yesterday afternoon. With superhero  
23 clubhouse, our partner theatre collective of artists,  
24 activists and scientists, we work with 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>  
25



grade students in our local elementary schools to learn about environmental science and play writing.

Scientists join the group to provide rigorous yet age appropriate context to issues like climate justice, environmental racism, and urban ecology than teaching artists work with our students to write their own original short plays crafting their imagination and exploration of how we can make the world a greener place.

The program complies of free performances of the students plays in an ecofriendly production by our adult actors at our theatre.

For most of our students, Big Green Theatre is their first introduction to theatre both as audience members and creators and when we first brought Big Green Theatre to PS75, they had no after school arts program at all. So, our ability to return to PS75 for the past five years has allowed us to fill a critical gap in cultural exposure for these students.

I'm going to the end and then I have a little video. Our CASA funded programming like Big Green Theatre allows us to build upon years of engagement to inspire lasting interest in the Arts for Bushwick youth and reinforce our deep investment and service

to our neighborhoods and institutions. We hope that the City Council and Department of Cultural Affairs will likewise commit to a continued investment in these programs that we can grow these relationships year after year. And this is a clip of some testimony from our students and their performances.

[PERFORMANCE BEGINS]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

That was great, we are pushing up against the next hearing. Council Member Cabrera from the Bronx is here, and we know he loves CASA to, but he also may be here for the next hearing.

So, with that, our last panel. Three hours of CASA wonder coming to a conclusion. If they are still hear, Ran Yan from the Lewis Latimer House. We love that in Queens, Suzanne Wilson for Midori and Friends, Polly Solomon from – is Polly Solomon here? There you are, wonderful, Mitch Mattson from Roundabout and Lucy Sexton, we are going to put a fifth seat up here at this point and end it with Lucy to round it out. This will be the last panel, we are going to try and keep it to two minutes just because

as you can see, the next hearing is mobilizing as we speak.

Why don't you start.

RAN YAN: Good morning Chair Van Bramer and the Member of the Council Committee on Cultural Affairs. Thank you for inviting me for my testimony today.

My name is Ran Yan, and I am the Executive Director of Lewis Latimer House Museum, the historic home of African American inventor Lewis Latimer.

The Museum was founded in 1989, when the historic home was saved and moved to the current site. It is owned by the Department of Parks and Recreation, operated by the Lewis Latimer Fund and it is a member of the Historic House Trust.

Over the past few years, our programs have grown exponentially. Inspired by Latimer's skills across multiple disciplines, which started as a Tinker Lab which is the Museum's key program focusing on pre-K - 12 S.T.E.A.M. education to reach underprivileged children and families in Queens and in New York City. Thanks to New York City Council's generous CASA designations in 2018 and 2019 from Council Member Peter Koo, we were able to bring high quality Tinker

Lab projects to local public schools such as PS242 and PS24.

During the period of 18-20 weeks, a class of 5<sup>th</sup> graders immerse themselves in designing and building electronic instruments, robotics, in addition to learning about African American inventor who was instrumental in the development of telephone and light bulb. These projects are long-term, in-depth and fun because they combine arts and technology in seamless fashions, by incorporating arts and craft, design thinking, coding, and hands-on building.

The program serves a majority of Asian students, as well as Latin American students. Most of their parents have limited English language skills as well as many of the students.

Latimer House and it's partner schools actively collaborate to produce trilingual materials to communicate with family members of the participants. Our favorite experience was to see students proudly showcase their projects during the culminating event, and the surprise and smiles on their parents' faces.

Thank you for your time and supporting the cultural activities.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

SUZANNE WILSON: Good afternoon Chair, thank you for having us here. My name is Suzanne Wilson, I am the Executive Director of Midori and Friends.

First and foremost, on behalf of our entire community, particularly the students and schools that we serve, Midori and Friends thanks you and extends our appreciation to the Council for its vision, leadership and commitment to promote equal access to the riches of a cultural education for all New York City students. Together, because of you and the CASA Initiative, Midori and Friends delivers customized musical experiences that celebrate the students' and the school's cultures engender school pride and strengthens the community.

I am proud to be here today to testify about the transformative and critical role that the CASA plays to enhance our students' education and enrich their lives, as well to ensure the sustainability and success of small non-profits like Midori and Friends.

World renowned violinist Midori founded Midori and Friends with a goal to spark students creativity and cultivate them into lifelong music lovers.

Today, we annually serve 17,000 students and partner with 81 public schools.

Focusing on children with little or no access to the arts, our comprehensive music programs are available to all children regardless of skill ability or background.

The CASA Initiative empowers Midori and Friends to connect more students to high quality music education, cultivate longstanding collaborations with our public schools, engage parents in their child's education and deepen our relationships in the New York City communities.

The CASA initiative has also afforded Midori and Friends the invaluable opportunity to launch our strategic vision, Music INC. Music in Neighborhood Collaboration is designed to ensure and offer long-term musical learning for students in elementary as they transfer to their secondary school.

Now, through dedicated sequential CASA funding it connects schools to each other within their district. City Council Members can create a pathway for their students to pursue their musical education from elementary through high school.

CASA funding represents so much more than just teaching students music, dance and theater. CASAs are an investment into New York City students and their future and sends a message that the New York City Council seeks innovative and smart ideas and collaborations to set our young people up for success.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

MITCH MATTSON: Honored Committee Members, my name is Mitch Mattson, Director of Career training from Roundabout Theatre Company.

On behalf of our leadership, staff, and the theatre communities we serve, it is an honor to address you today. This year, Education at Roundabout is investing \$4.1 million in public school arts and career training services in New York City. Over 85 percent of the that funding comes from the private sector. In partnership with the DOE our initiatives serve over 10,000 students and educators across all five boroughs each year and we are proud to be making such a bold investment in our City.

We participated in CASA since its inception. The program has encouraged over 2,500 students to take

ownership of their own learning and has given them pathways for success in their early careers. With a CASA grant, schools receive individualized hands on support from Roundabout teaching artists. All students attend Roundabout productions and each program culminate with a performance or event. On average, a Roundabout CASA program cost over \$30,000 per school, and we cover that 1/3. CASA is also an opportunity for students to engage with other transformative Roundabout programs. Roundabout Youth Ensemble is our after-school student led theater Company and 100 percent of participating students graduated from high school. Recognizing that there are barriers to accessing the theater district, Roundabout believes CASA could be instrumental in our plans to scale the Manhattan based program into the outer boroughs.

If a school in your district is interested in hosting RYE, please let us know.

In closing, thank you to the City Council for generously funding CASA each year. We ask that the Council continues to offer this invaluable program which provides much needed access to arts education.



In fact, there are just over 200 certified theater teachers in the district in the 1,800 schools.

We also recommend that the Council increase the dollar amount of grants offered to 25 or even \$30,000 in order to cover the growing expenses necessary to operate such successful programs.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

POLLY SOLOMON: I am going to multitask and play you some photos and videos from our programming while I talk. Our program just wrapped up right before spring break, so our students are already moving on to their next adventure. I am going to turn the volume down, so I can talk over it.

Good afternoon. My name is Polly Solomon, Circus Arts Instructor from Bindlestiff Family Circus, representing Bindlestiff Circus After School Programming at Children's Workshop School I the East Village.

Our after-school programming brings a wide range of skills to its students. At Children's Workshop we teach juggling, spinning plates and carpets, balancing feathers, stilt walking, diablo, flower

sticks, lasso, hula hoops, tumbling, and human pyramids. There are some obvious physical benefits to having a child participate in circus arts; they will build strength, coordination, flexibility, balance, and stamina through their practice. These, however, are not the primary goal of our time with our students. Bindlestiff's Circus After School is modeled on social circus theory and follows best practice developed by academics and circus educators in alignment with social emotional learning and physical literacy theory. Through the circus arts our students learn how to show respect to each other and themselves, how to communicate with one another and the value of collaboration. They learn to trust their peers and earn that trust in return.

As student build toward their final performance, they experience the importance of practice, commitment both to the study of their art and just showing up and being present for each other as member of a troop and build skills to aid in lifelong learning.

When it is time to take the stage, each student will have experienced creative expression and in supporting each other compassion. We do all of this

1 through value-based learning in out of school time  
2 while engaging in a healthy, noncompetitive physical  
3 activity.  
4

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. That was  
6 perfectly timed and also a great presentation. We  
7 are going to hear from Jean Lee, who has been waiting  
8 for a very long time and then Lucy, you are going to  
9 round out over three hours of CASA love that we've  
10 been experiencing here today. Jean.

11 JEAN LEE: Hello, my name is Jean Lee and I am  
12 the Development Coordinator at the Asian American  
13 Writers' Workshop. Thank you so much for the  
14 opportunity to speak today. It is an honor to be  
15 here.

16 The Asian American Writers' Workshop is a  
17 national non-profit dedicated to the belief that  
18 Asian American stories deserve to be told. We have  
19 held events with prominent Asian American Writers'  
20 like Maxine Hong Kingston and other writers of color  
21 like Zadie Smith and Claudia Rincon. Poet and  
22 novelist Ocean Vuong once said, "the Asian American  
23 writers workshop was such a foundation for me as a  
24 young writer. For the first time, I shared space  
25 with people who both looked like me as well as

understood, recognized, and validated my stories and experiences."

We wanted to bring this to other students in New York City high schools and we currently have CASA designations that fund our Create Now Youth program which brings established writers to lead after school creative workshops at New York City high schools. Our Create Now program would not be possible without these CASA and CII designations, we also have senior center programs and we would like to thank Speaker Cory Johnson and Council Members Margaret Chin, Chaim Deutsch, Keith Powers, Carlos Menchaca and Steven Levin. We currently have after school creative writing programs at Hunter College High School, Richard R. Green School of Teaching, Lower East Side Preparatory School and Boerum Hill School for international studies.

Our Create Now Youth program brings teaching artists to lead writing workshops with local students at their high school, as well as guest visits by accomplished authors.

I am going to slow down. Many of the students who participate in our program enjoy writing, not just as an academic pursuit, but also as an

intellectual and creative avenue. Our students usually have a heavy academic workload but Create Now gives them time to flex their creative muscles. 100 college high school student named Scott told us it was such a nice change of pace to just have an outlet to write every Thursday, especially because high school is very busy. The workshops also show Asian American students that there are professional writers and artists in their communities who share their experiences. Comic artist and teaching artist Wendy Xu was open about her coming of age as an Asian American writer and her perspective inspired students to express themselves creatively.

Last year, a student named Isabella told us as a student, having a teacher who relates more to us really inspired us.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Jean, I'm going to ask you to wrap up there. Just because we have another hearing that's about ready to happen right after this one, but I want to thank you very much for coming and being here today. So, Lucy, we have had over 3 hours of performances and testimonies. You missed a 50-person youth choir, stilt walkers, steel drums and dancers and singers, young people and I know there

are finance staff here. We love CASA, CASA is like the greatest thing ever and you're going to close out this hearing before we go to the rowdy Finance and Transportation Committee hearing following us. But it's been amazing to hear all the success stories CASA all over the city, hundreds of people here today. So, bring it home, wrap it up, so we can start Finance and Transportation as well.

LUCY SEXTON: Thanks, so much Councilman Van Bramer and all the City Council Members for allowing me to speak. My name is Lucy Sexton. I am Executive Director of New Yorkers for Culture and Arts. I am working for a city which every citizen in every neighborhood can engage with the life enhancing, community strengthening power of culture.

I am hear really to reference yet another article citing yet another study proving the positive impact of arts and culture classes on students. It was a New York Times piece in early March.

We already know that the arts build resilience and determination in children. They hep them to master complex skills. We have known this for many decades, yet we still face a system that cuts the arts first.

A remarkable new series of studies was done by Mariale Hardiman at Johns Hopkin's neuro-education initiative. It addressed how children do and don't retain what they learn in school and it showed that children who had learned the material and the curriculum that made use of the arts remembered more, and the effect was largest among the children who are less strong academically, the "lower performers."

The researchers saw an effect on the students with more limited reading skills; they remembered more science if they had learned with the integrated arts methods. Dr. Hardiman said, "Could this be at least one lever for closing an achievement gap?"

When the city is struggling to find ways to improve failing schools, why are we not investing more in making arts available to those schools? It's not just the right thing to do, it's proven to be one of the most effective things to do.

CASA is one way of getting arts to underserved schools, which really need those classes during the school day. So, I encourage the City Council and I support you in your fight for increasing funding to CASA, to expand the schools it reaches and to consider more ways of giving every child in New York

City access to the culture and arts programs that have been proven to help them in all of their learning. We need to give every kid the chance to succeed, and the arts are critical to that goal. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much Lucy and with your powerful affirmation about the importance of CASA, this hearing is adjourned.

[GAVEL]



C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date April 1, 2018