



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

Oversight Hearing: Fiscal Year 2021 DCLA Preliminary Budget, Capital Commitments, and Mayor's Management Report

March 4, 2020, 11:30AM – Council Chambers

Testimony Presented by New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) Acting Commissioner Kathleen Hughes

Good afternoon, Chair Van Bramer and members of the committee. I am here today to testify in regards to the Mayor's proposed preliminary budget for Fiscal Year 2021. I am joined by a number of my colleagues from the agency....

Let me start with a review of the figures from the preliminary budget. The FY21 DCLA Preliminary Budget is \$147.6 million, which includes:

- \$105.7 million for the Cultural Institutions Group
- \$28.6 million for the Cultural Development Fund
- \$5 million baseline funding increase that will go to supporting cultural organizations as part of CreateNYC and other agency priorities
- \$1.25 million for energy at groups on DCLA property
- \$7.1 million for agency operations and other expenses

As you know, at this point in the budget process, these figures do not include any one-time additions that are typically added at budget adoption, such as City Council initiatives and member items, as well as Mayoral increases. It's also comparable to the preliminary budget proposed for the agency over the last several years.

For Fiscal Year 2020, our budget is currently \$212.2 million, a slight increase from the budget at adoption due to technical adjustments. This is the largest City allocation in DCLA's history, an achievement we owe to our close partnership with the City Council.

Work on distributing FY21 funds is already underway. The deadline to make an FY21 capital funding request from the borough presidents was last Friday; applications for Council and Mayoral capital funding are due on March 24. To date, we have received 113 requests from over 90 organizations totaling more than \$500 million in capital funding applications. And we anticipate this number will grow as we approach the March 24 deadline. Our capital team is already hard at work reviewing these applications.

Currently, DCLA's five year capital plan allocates \$962 million to ongoing projects at more than 200 cultural groups. These critical investments go to everything from theater seating, to purchasing pianos, to construction of whole new facilities. The agency also routinely provides capital funds for decidedly un-glamorous projects that are essential to running a cultural facility,

like boiler replacements and HVAC upgrades. Recent and upcoming highlights from our capital portfolio include:

- At **MoMA PS1** in Queens, City capital funds are supporting a boiler replacement project, an upgrade that will ensure a safe, comfortable and stable environment for visitors and artwork. The project is fully designed and construction should begin later this year. To my point about “un-glamorous” projects, no private donors were rushing in to put their names on PS1’s boiler, so we’re glad to be able to invest City funds in this important project.
- The **Bronx Council on the Arts’** building renovation project was City funded in full with \$8.6 million. The project included the gut renovation of a building previously used as a bank branch, redesign of the entrance for better street presence, creation of a small reception area, administrative space for up to 25 staff, large flexible multipurpose event space on street level, and more. The project was substantially complete last February, and this new home for the Bronx council has elevated the group’s presence in their community.
- At **Louis Armstrong House Museum**, also in Queens, we’re providing funds for a new 14,000 square foot education center, which will include state of the art exhibition gallery space and a 68-seat jazz club. The organization’s research collections, which are currently housed at Queens College, will be moved to a new archival center on the second floor of the facility. This project has secured LEED gold certification. Supporting environmentally sustainable capital projects has long been a priority for DCLA, and even more so following the CreateNYC cultural plan’s commitment to increase such investments.
- In Brooklyn, we were thrilled to help break ground on the much-anticipated **L10 Cultural Center** last year. Adjacent to Mark Morris, the Center for Fiction, BAM, and others, this new facility will house 50,000 square feet of cultural space. That’s more than an acre! Where once there was an empty parking lot, in the not-too-distant future you’ll be able to attend exhibitions and performances at MoCADA’s new home, see a movie on one of BAM’s three new cinema screens, take in a performance at 651 ARTS, and visit a new branch of the Brooklyn Public Library.
- In Manhattan, major City capital investments will transform two institutions: at the **American Museum of Natural History**, the new **Gilder Center**, designed by Jeanne Gang, will be a major new hub for education programming and much needed space for the museum. And at the **Studio Museum in Harlem**, a whole new facility designed by David Adjaye will give this remarkable organization a platform for connecting artists and audiences for generations to come.

These are just a couple examples of projects in all shapes and sizes that are helping to ensure that New Yorkers have access to the most remarkable cultural facilities, no matter where they live.

Now, let’s turn to some updates on agency programs and initiatives.

- Applications for the FY21 **Cultural Development Fund** were due February 18. We received over 800 applications for funding. This was thanks, in part, to the workshops my staff hosted across the city, which over 300 people attended, along with our first-ever application webinar for anyone who couldn’t attend a workshop in person or who wanted, after a seminar, to brush up on some aspect of the application. The annual peer panel review process will begin March 26 and will continue over the next four months. As always, we appreciate and rely on the City Council’s collaboration in this effort. Your panel representatives bring important community perspectives to the application reviews and to

each of the many panels we convene annually. Agency staff will be in touch in the coming weeks to secure Council participation on these panels.

- We received over 120 applications for the fourth round of the **CreateNYC Leadership Accelerator**. This professional development program trains diverse, mid-career cultural workers to advocate for themselves, establish supportive peer networks, and ultimately move into leadership positions within the cultural sector. One past participant recently took to Twitter to share their enthusiasm for the program, writing: "If you're in middle management for your 9-5 and there is an opportunity to do leadership/development training please take it...the programs I've done with @NYCCulture [and others] have drastically impacted how I communicate, problem solve, and influence those I work with." This has been a common refrain from past participants, now 75 strong. In the weeks ahead, we'll convene all past program participants in response to their interest in and our goal of creating space for this diverse peer network to grow and support one another as they become future cultural leaders.
- We recently announced an open call for the City's next **Public Artists in Residence**. This pioneering program places artists within New York City municipal agencies, giving us a way to tap into this city's remarkable artistic talent to help re-think our approach to public service. We encourage artists and artist collectives to apply to work with one of four agencies participating in the 2020 PAIR program: the NYC Civic Engagement Commission, the NYC Department of Sanitation, the NYC Commission on Human Rights, and the NYC Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. Applications are due March 29, 2020, and selections will be announced later this spring. The current group of PAIRs are deep into implementing their projects, and we will share updates and public programming connected to these in the months ahead.
- On January 23, a massive fire destroyed a City-owned building at **70 Mulberry Street** in the heart of Manhattan's Chinatown. No one was seriously injured, but a number of local organizations utilized space in this community hub, including HT Chen & Dancers and the Museum of Chinese in America, which housed its archives in the building. Thanks to heroic and unflagging efforts, initially of first responders and then of workers from the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services, Department of Records and Information Services, Department of Buildings, and others, we are optimistic that we will be able to save much of what was initially feared lost, and the Mayor is committed to rebuilding this important community space.
- My agency, and more specifically the **Percent for Art** team, has been moving the city's efforts to build **public monuments** that are more reflective of our city's diverse residents and history. We attended a community board meeting on Staten Island last month to present on the planned Katherine Walker monument. And just last night, we presented to Manhattan Community Board 2 regarding the planned Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera monument. We're also working closely with the artists selected to design the Shirley Chisholm monument in Brooklyn, and the replacement for the J. Marion Sims statue in East Harlem. We'll continue to post dates of upcoming public meetings on nyc.gov/percent for the remaining She Built NYC projects in the months ahead.

Beyond their work on monuments, the Percent team has continued to commission permanent artwork for public spaces citywide. In recent months, we've installed *Unity* by

Hank Willis Thomas in Downtown Brooklyn, as well as works by Jim Drain at PS 46 in the Bronx, John Elliot at PS 398 in Queens, Jiyoun Lee-Lodge at PS 144 in Queens and Peter Gerakaris at PPS 101 in Brooklyn. We've also recently commissioned local artists for 11 artworks in public libraries citywide.

- Working alongside our cultural partners, the agency has continued to keep **diversity, equity, and inclusion in the cultural sector** on the front burner. Last year, we released results of a pilot study from SMU Data Arts examining the demographics of the cultural workforce. Similar to the report we released in 2016, this workforce demographics study indicated that our cultural workforce does not reflect the diverse residents of our city. What we were able to capture this time around - as a result of a survey that relies on self-reported data rather than HR files - was information on disability status and sexual orientation. The pilot study included 65 DCLA constituent groups, and we plan to roll it out to ALL of our grantees in the next fiscal year, providing a wealth of new data that we can use to better understand and address the barriers we face, and help any organizations in their efforts to employ a diverse workforce.

But we're not just studying these issues. We're investing millions of dollars in programs specifically intended to create more opportunities for underrepresented groups. These include the CUNY Cultural Corps which, since 2016, has placed over 400 CUNY students in paid positions at cultural organizations. And the Leadership Accelerator program I mentioned earlier in my testimony. These programs have been created alongside new, dedicated grant programs like the CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund and Language Access Fund. And all 33 current members of the Cultural Institutions Group have created and formally adopted plans – and are acting on them – to foster more diverse, equitable, and inclusive work environments and hiring strategies. From the elimination of unpaid internship programs, to hiring new senior level staff focused on diversity, these plans are already paying dividends. There is a genuine enthusiasm and willingness to do the real, difficult work needed to correct these generations-in-the-making problems. We won't fix them overnight, but we're proud of the work we've done alongside our cultural partners so far. This is still just the beginning.

- Finally, I'd like to take the opportunity to highlight some of the amazing cultural programs happening this month for **Women's History Month** and the centennial of women's suffrage. First, I applaud the City Council for partnering with the New-York Historical Society on the latest portraits added to the "Women's Voices" exhibition right here in this building. I'm especially pleased to see that a number of women from the world of arts and culture are being honored, including Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Austen.

The Women's Suffrage NYC Centennial Consortium is chaired by the head of the Staten Island Museum and the Director of the Center for Women's History at the New-York Historical Society. The consortium members will be putting on performances, exhibitions, and more this month and throughout the year. You can visit womenssuffragenyc.org for details on programming. We are working with our colleagues at the Department of Records and Information Services to continue recognizing the 100th anniversary of women achieving the right to vote. In this election year, that could not hold more meaning.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
FISCAL YEAR 2021 PRELIMINARY BUDGET OVERSIGHT HEARING
CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES & INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS
COMMITTEE**

March 4, 2020

Good morning. My name is Tony Marx and I am the President of The New York Public Library (NYPL). I would like to thank Speaker Corey Johnson, Committee Chair Jimmy Van Bramer, and the entire City Council for holding this hearing. On behalf of our millions of patrons and dedicated staff, I appreciate the opportunity to testify on the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) Preliminary Budget.

Libraries are on the front lines of tackling inequality in our city and country. From helping to bridge the digital divide to offering new immigrants a chance to learn English, libraries offer free essential services for all New Yorkers and are welcoming civic spaces for high-need communities, at all stages of life. No institution is more visited, or trusted, across the city.

In recent years, the New York City Council and the Mayor have demonstrated that they recognize the unique and irreplaceable role that our libraries play as trusted partners in all neighborhoods of our city. Thanks to your leadership, the years of budget cuts to libraries are

behind us, allowing us to maintain universal 6-day service throughout the city and expand our vital services and resources. However, we must continue this investment in libraries to best serve NYC's most vulnerable populations.

In particular, to support New York's vibrant immigrant communities, NYPL provides services such as language instruction and programming to help immigrants improve their language skills, to advance their careers, to connect with their communities and to help the next generation succeed. Since 2012, NYPL's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and English for Work classes have significantly expanded. NYPL teaches ESOL classes in 39 locations in the Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island, and filled approximately 15,000 seats last fiscal year, a 7-fold increase since 2012. Building on our robust selection of language services, we offer drop-in English Conversation Classes for ESOL learners in twenty two sites across our network. We also provide ESOL classes at two correctional facilities on Rikers Island. From non-native speakers to the intermediate and advanced speakers, early education to formalized adult language instruction, NYPL fills critical gaps in immigration language services for New Yorkers across the City.

Perhaps, there is no better example of how libraries strengthen communities than our early literacy offerings. By equipping our children with the fundamental skills and knowledge they need to be successful and productive members of our community, libraries are an investment in our future. This past year, early literacy programs including, storytime, family literacy workshops and Pre-K for all partnerships reached over 722,000 attendees. In addition, through the City Council funded City's First Readers program, we have delivered over 130,000 early literacy kits

to parents over the last 5 years and provided valuable professional development training for children's staff.

In our effort to get more people reading more, we continue to find innovative ways to eliminate barriers to the library and information access. Through a systemwide campaign focused on increasing the number of library cardholders we were able to increase the number of new people signing-up for an NYPL library card by nearly 30%. For some New Yorkers who are currently unable or afraid to apply for a library card due to lack of documentation or concerns about sharing personal information, we created the Limited Checkout Card for Adults. The pilot of this new type of card was very successful - both drawing in new patrons and improving the library's relationship with patrons who already frequent the library, but couldn't have a permanent library card before we offered this option. Overall, we saw 250 limited Checkout cards created over 3 months at the two pilot locations - Parkchester in the Bronx and 125th Street in Manhattan.

A key initiative that we believe will remove a barrier to entry for families is the elimination of late fines for children and teens. Nineteen of the top 25 cities in the United States have eliminated these fines; New York City is not one of these cities. We all know that library late fines disproportionately impact lower-income New Yorkers. Parents and children are often fearful that a library card may mean yet another bill they cannot pay. They are a hindrance to the mission of public libraries to offer all people equitable access to knowledge, information and opportunity. We know, from our own initiatives to waive fines that predictions about lost materials have not come to pass. MyLibraryNYC participants check out 30% more items than their counterparts not in the program, but only have a marginally higher loss rate.

Even more so, one year after a 2017 amnesty, there was a substantial increase (+60%) in the percentage of children and teens who were previously blocked and then checked out materials from their public libraries; this effect was most pronounced in the lowest income neighborhoods. Many other large cities that have eliminated fines have found the same: many patrons who had been blocked from using the library or were fearful of doing so, have returned in droves. By eliminating late fines, we are opening the door for lapsed and new cardholders to reconnect with public libraries and take advantage of their services and materials. For New York City to truly be the “fairest big city in America” we must eliminate the late fines that prevent the most vulnerable New Yorkers from accessing the services they need.

As trusted community partners, NYC’s libraries are key stakeholders in the 2020 Census efforts. The Library Plan for the census is comprehensive with the primary goals of connecting with the city’s most hard-to-count residents, providing technical resources and helping to answer questions. We are equipping each branch with dedicated census technology and all staff will be trained and provided the tools to help facilitate a complete count. Every NYPL branch and research library will have a dedicated census kiosk and branches in neighborhoods at risk of being undercounted will receive additional technology, staff training and staff support. We are establishing partnerships with local community-based organizations and other stakeholders to ensure communities across New York City know libraries are open and welcome them to complete their Census. NYC libraries are acutely aware of what’s at stake in the 2020 census. Ten years ago, the city’s response rate was less than 62 percent, compared to the national average of 76 percent. Another undercount in 2020 would have devastating consequences. Potential losses in political representation and billions in funding for public education, housing and health services, Medicaid, senior centers, libraries, and other critical infrastructure would be

keenly felt by every New Yorker, particularly in communities that have historically been underrepresented.

The operating expense funding we have received over the last few years has allowed libraries to not only provide books, information and space for millions of New Yorkers, but it has also allowed us to provide free classes and resources for new immigrants, educational programs and support for low income working families, an access point for the millions in the digital dark, and key partnerships with the City on initiatives such as IDNYC and Census 2020. Libraries are an essential part of the City's human and physical infrastructure. It is why we are asking you to restore the \$14 million in funding you added for libraries in FY20 and support our request for \$10 million in additional funding, to maintain the current levels of library service and enhance access and programming for children and teens.

In addition to ensuring that we can remove any barriers to access and continue to provide the vital library services that New Yorker's deserve, we must continue to invest in the physical infrastructure of our branches. Time and time again, we have seen the return of your investment in our branches' circulation, program attendance and visits, and for that we thank you. Following our Stapleton, Washington Heights, Van Cortlandt and Macomb's Bridge renovations we saw a significant increase in usage at those locations. Having witnessed the impact of newly renovated, welcoming spaces, we aspire to provide this for all communities we serve. With your partnership, we are expanding our physical footprint, but this growth and our rapidly aging buildings have ever-increasing costs, and we need your help to keep up. This can only be achieved with continuous funding provided by sustained inclusion in the 10-year capital plan and an improved city capital process.

As a step towards sustainable funding, the \$300 million capital ask in FY21 for our three library systems would allow NYPL to fully fund current DDC managed projects that have shortfalls, improve our technology infrastructure, address critical maintenance needs and initiate a number of major projects, including a complete renovation of our aging Hudson Park Library.

This year is the NYPL's 125th anniversary - a moment to appreciate, celebrate and reaffirm the Library values of trust, inclusion, respect, and free and open access to information, knowledge and opportunity. These values have supported and strengthened New Yorkers, our democratic foundation, and our world for over a century, and are arguable more important today than ever before. With your help, we can continue to serve as a trusted partner to the City in providing essential library services and upholding the common values that define who we are as New Yorkers.

Thank you again for all your support and for this opportunity to testify. We remain available to answer any questions you may have.

BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING

**Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup
Relations**

March 4, 2020

Thank you, Speaker Johnson, Majority Leader Cumbo, Chair Van Bramer and Chair Dromm, committee members, our Brooklyn delegation, and the entire City Council for supporting New York City's libraries.

We appreciate your efforts to ensure our libraries remain safe, welcoming spaces for all, a mandate that has never been more important. I echo my colleagues request for the city's continued support, so we can serve the public at the level they have come to expect and deserve.

Today we submit our FY21 Tri-Library budget request: \$10 million in new operating funds and \$14 million in restorations that were not carried through in the preliminary budget, along with a capital increase of \$300 million - \$100 million for each system.

From leaky roofs and crumbling facades to defunct heating and cooling systems, our capital needs loom large. Unfortunately, last year our proposals were not included in the ten-year plan, denying the long-term funding necessary to maintain and improve the city-owned facilities our patrons rely on. Furthermore, our current capital needs requests were not reflected in the January plan. Each of our systems is facing enormous shortfalls on existing projects while we attempt to advance priority renovation projects and meet our system's technology needs. We have significant capital needs this year and have not been given the funds necessary to meet our plan.

With the city's help over the last few years, we have begun to move in the right direction, but our three library systems still shoulder a billion dollars in deferred maintenance. Inadequate capital funding means we can attend to only to the most serious projects and leave countless critical infrastructure needs and preventative work unaddressed. This yearly dance to determine which projects advance and which stall is costly, irresponsible, and unfair to our communities.

Given that we were not included in the ten-year plan, we need \$300 million in this year's budget to address enormous shortfalls on existing projects, advance priority infrastructure projects slated for the current year and revitalize our technology.

Shortfalls

Brooklyn Public Library is facing a shortfall of nearly \$52 million across 10 projects. This includes new construction management (CM) fees recently instituted by the City's Department of Design and Construction (DDC). We are not the only system carrying this burden. The New York Public Library has over \$51 million and Queens Public Library is carrying \$100 million in shortfalls and CM fees.

Year after year we struggle to push projects across the finish line. Carroll Gardens Library is a recent example. Seven years ago, we initiated a project to replace the HVAC system that was delayed by a shortfall. In 2016, the community approved a participatory budget project for a new teen space on the mezzanine, and DDC sensibly suggested that we combine the two projects. Working with the Councilman we made up the shortfall enabling both projects to merge and move forward. Not surprisingly, the cost of addressing structural issues on the mezzanine has grown. Now the project faces a new \$1.2 million shortfall though construction is slated for next year.

There are dozens of examples like this in every library system. You know the stories all too well, because we rely on your help to keep projects like these afloat in your districts. Without an adequate level of funding this year we will not get out from under our shortfalls and make the projects in your districts a reality.

Emergency needs

Providing a welcoming, inspiring, environment to our patrons is a top priority, yet so many of our libraries are plagued by maintenance issues, equipment failures, and drab, interiors. Last year Brooklyn Public Library spent \$500,000 of precious expense funding maintaining old equipment, replacing dilapidated furniture, and funding temporary heating and cooling solutions. Presently, we have close to \$4 million in emergency needs or fixes that are not capitally eligible, including costs for new elevator code compliance, repairs to emergency fire panels, and branch maintenance.

Last fiscal year, we lost an astonishing one thousand seventy-five hours of public service to unplanned closures, with disruptions at 33 of our 59 branches. Since January, Coney Island, Central Library's Tech Lab, Washington Irving, Paerdegat and Sunset Park Libraries had unexpected short closures because there was insufficient heat in the building. Because so many of our capital projects take too long to complete or new emergencies arise that can't wait for a new capital project, we must address them with operating funds. This underscores the importance of our \$10 million expense ask, which must go hand in hand with our request for capital funding.

Priority Projects

The capital picture isn't entirely bleak, there is some good news. For the few projects where we have funding to approach buildings comprehensively, there is progress.

For example, five extensive branch overhauls are underway at Eastern Parkway, New Lots, Canarsie, Brownsville and New Utrecht Libraries. Full scale renovations like these are only possible because of a one-time inclusion of funds in the city's ten-year capital plan, provided five years ago. We are proud to be including interactive public sessions and design charrettes for these projects, a first with our DDC sponsored projects.

For the first time in more than 50 years, we are adding new and improved libraries to our portfolio – modern and inspirational facilities able to support the countless ways people use libraries today. But these projects are too few. Our forecast for FY21 includes \$35 million in priority infrastructure projects and a branch overhaul. Without the funding to meet these needs, we risk backsliding on all our progress.

We know what needs to be done to maintain our physical plant. For example, we are transforming a languishing infrastructure upgrade at Walt Whitman Library into a much-needed full building renovation. Initially scoped to replace the HVAC, address fire safety, and accessibility, the project now includes a new garden space, exterior restoration and interior upgrades. With proceeds from our Brooklyn Heights Library redevelopment, and additional funds from the state's Downtown Revitalization Initiative, we will renovate and reconfigure the main floor and meeting room to maximize space for our patrons. And thanks to Majority Leader Cumbo's allocation in the last budget, we will have a dedicated teen space for young adults in the community. Though we are working hard to piece the funding together, the project needs \$5.5 million in construction costs to move forward, funding we had hoped would be in the January plan.

Conclusion

In just a few weeks, Brooklyn Public Library will welcome Greenpoint residents back to a stunning new facility. The Greenpoint Library and Environmental Education Center has been completely rebuilt from the ground up, and will offer increased indoor and outdoor space, expanded programs and special collections. And the Civic Commons, a brand-new public space created in Central Library should be open in time for Census day. It will house a passport office, IDNYC and bring together community and civic engagement programming at the library.

We would like to be celebrating more achievements with you.

While there is no easy solution to our capital predicament, we have demonstrated our ability to make the best use of the city's investment in libraries. We urge you to advocate for a robust capital allocation for libraries in the FY21 budget. \$300 million, shared among our systems, will allow us to fill our shortfalls, advance priority projects and improve our branch technology. We also look to you to solidify the city's investment in libraries by restoring and increasing operating funds by \$24 million. New Yorkers are relying on you to ensure that libraries, our most accessible, democratic institutions remain strong for all who come through our doors and that, as promised, they remain open wide for everyone.

New York City's libraries are and always will be for everyone. Together our systems are working with the city and community partners to make sure everyone counts in the 2020 Census and that we continue to be a source of endless wonder for children; a provider of hope to the unemployed; a place of discovery and learning for whomever has the inclination to walk through our doors. Help us continue to fulfill our mission.

Thank you.



Statement by Dennis M. Walcott, President and CEO, Queens Public Library

**New York City Council's Committee on Libraries & Cultural Affairs FY 2021
Preliminary Budget Hearing**

March 4, 2020

Good morning. I am Dennis Walcott, President and CEO of Queens Public Library (QPL). It is a pleasure to be here. Thank you, Chair Van Bramer, Speaker Johnson and the members of this esteemed committee for the opportunity to speak with you about our budget priorities for the next fiscal year. Additionally, thank you for the years of support you and all the members of the City Council have shown this dynamic institution. It would be impossible for us to meet the needs of our customers without your steadfast support and leadership. Therefore, it is with deep gratitude that I thank you on behalf of every person who works at, and is served by, Queens Public Library.

I am happy to report that Fiscal Year 2019 was another busy and productive year for us. We welcomed nearly 11 million customers through our doors. Our books, DVDs, magazines and other materials were circulated more than 11.5 million times. As the borough's technology hub, we provided more than 3.1 million computer or Wi-Fi sessions. We hosted over 6,200 digital literacy programs, which had more than 37,700 attendees. In December 2018, we made it easier for our customers to access our Wi-Fi by removing the prerequisite of entering a library card number. Now our customers, whether they have a library card or not, can instantly connect to our Wi-Fi in any of our locations.

QPL is one of the largest public library systems in the country and a national leader in the delivery of varied and innovative services to people of all ages and walks of life. More than 1.6 million customers participated in a QPL program during Fiscal Year 2019. This number surpasses the all-time high we set for our system just last year by 7%. More than 850,000 young people attended QPL programming for children and teens, a 21% increase compared to the previous year. Our Job & Business Academy provided over 33,400 hours of job search, financial literacy and technology training through more than 1,000 programs with a total attendance of nearly 20,000 customers. Over 3,500 adult learners registered for our structured 12-week ESOL program. Our Adult Learner Program (ALP) provided students with an astounding 251,700 hours of instruction. Of the 91% of participants who completed the post-test at the end of the course, 77% experienced education gains. In addition, we administered the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) exam to 2,000 students in English, and nearly 300 in Spanish, - a 196% increase, to obtain their High School Equivalency (HSE). The New York Reporting System Report Card, the State Education Department's grading system for institutions that receive Adult Literacy Education funding, has Queens Public Library exceeding the State's 70% benchmark with a 91.2% rate.

When the city empowers libraries, it empowers individuals, families and communities. Libraries are at the heart of creating a fairer City. This is what we strive towards, every day. In order to do this, we must build upon the great things accomplished last year under Speaker Johnson's leadership, and lock in those gains. We greatly appreciate Mayor de Blasio baselining his allocation of \$16 million to libraries in the Fiscal Year 2020 budget. **Chief among the Queens, Brooklyn and New York Public Libraries' (Tri-Li) expense request this year is the reauthorization and baselining of the Council's Fiscal Year 2020 \$14 million allocation to libraries.** This funding was critical as it allowed us to maintain six-day service and keep up with rising demand from our customers. For QPL, this funding allowed us to hire more staff, boost our collections,

address emergency maintenance issues across the system, and increase the capacity of our afterschool homework assistance and robotics programs.

In addition to this request, Tri-Li is asking for \$10 million in new funding (\$24 million total for Fiscal Year 2021) so we can increase access and expand opportunities for children and teens, address emergency maintenance issues throughout the system, and cover increased costs for maintaining library operations.

At the center of our efforts to expand opportunities for children and teens is our desire to eliminate late fines on their library cards. Library late fines, long used to encourage the prompt return of books and other materials, disproportionately affect lower income New Yorkers, and are a hindrance to the mission of public libraries to offer all people equitable access to knowledge, information, and opportunity. As library systems across the country continue to move toward fine-free borrowing while utilizing new models to incentivize fast returns, the City of New York must strongly consider the same to ensure it retains its position as the fairest big city in America.

In addition, QPL would be able to expand popular early learning programs, such as our Toddler Learning Center (TLC) and Kick Off to Kindergarten (K2K) initiatives. These programs would serve to supplement and enhance the de Blasio Administration's 3-K initiative. TLC is open to young children ages 18 – 38 months. This special program is presented several times a year in more than 30 QPL locations. Parents learn about nutrition, speech development, early literacy, and parenting skills, while toddlers become familiar with social environments at a young age. K2K is offered at 12 community library sites, and runs for eight consecutive weekly sessions. To prepare children ages 3 - 4 for kindergarten, K2K classes emphasize knowledge of letters and numbers, as well as promoting at-home literacy and conflict analysis strategies for parents. Classes are conducted by teaching professionals and teaching assistants.

There are also increased costs for maintaining library operations. Whether it is an increase in licensing fees for new software, increases in insurance costs or a new regulation that libraries must comply with, they all can have significant price tags associated with them. One such mandate is the installation of door lock monitoring devices on passenger and freight elevators to monitor and prevent automatic operation of elevators with faulty door contact circuits. This is an important public safety matter that must be addressed; however, it will cost QPL nearly \$300,000 to implement.

Serving as community cornerstones and pillars of literacy and knowledge for well more than a century, QPL and our sister systems are situated to help achieve an accurate and complete census count and to reach hard-to-count communities. With Census Day 2020 less than a month away, Tri-Li have collectively developed plans that build on our strengths as community conveners, digital access points, and trusted, safe spaces. As community conveners, public libraries are in every neighborhood. We are an integral part of the community's fabric. We can leverage existing relationships and partnerships with local organizations, businesses and community leaders. Since this will be the first census conducted primarily online, our ability to provide free computer and Internet access will be more important than ever. The Tri-Li plan for the 2020 Census is comprehensive – with the primary goals of connecting with the city's most hard-to-reach residents, providing digital access, and helping to answer questions so that every individual we meet takes the census. In order to achieve these goals, the Libraries are providing targeted census training to over 1,000 public service staff members. We are adding dedicated technology at locations in communities at risk of being undercounted, and we are working to ensure secure public access to the online census. We are enhancing our translation services to communicate better with hard-to-

count populations. Finally, we are working with our partners in government and in the community to provide targeted outreach in those neighborhoods. We thank the de Blasio Administration and the City Council for funding libraries to perform this crucial task.

Queens Public Library has a very active capital program. The Department of Design and Construction (DDC) manages QPL projects. Currently, there are 45 projects either active or in various stages of DDC's Front End Planning Unit, with a portfolio value totaling nearly \$390 million. Projects in this portfolio include, but are not limited to, roof and HVAC replacements, interior renovations, building expansions and replacement facilities.

QPL has more than one million square feet of library space, and all of it is heavily used. Maintaining our physical spaces is no small feat. Over the next 10 years, to modernize and bring our community public libraries to a state of good repair, **QPL's capital infrastructure and technology needs total \$491 million (\$466 million and \$25 million respectively)**. As I stated before this committee in October 2019, the biggest challenge we face as a system is the amount of shortfalls on our projects. As many of you are painfully aware, as soon as a shortfall is identified on a project, the process stops immediately. If presented with a shortfall on a project in September, for example, chances are we would be unable to recommence that project until the next fiscal year when, hopefully, the city would have provided new funding to help cover the funding gap. This highly inefficient process adds to project delays and costs and deprives communities of their library. **Therefore, one of the most important things the City can do to help libraries in the capital process is to create a dedicated pool of capital funds, strictly for the use of libraries, to address mid-fiscal year shortfalls.**

Of the \$491 million dollars needed to fully-fund QPL's Capital Program, **\$100 million is needed now to address shortfalls and funding gaps on existing projects. Therefore, Tri-Li is collectively asking the City for \$300 million in capital funding for Fiscal Year 2021.**

Queens Public Library transforms lives by cultivating personal and intellectual growth and by building strong communities. Our vision is a vibrant, informed, cohesive, and empowered society. I am proud to say that Queens Public Library does an outstanding job serving our diverse constituency. Our accomplishments have been many, but so too are our needs. With your help and increased generosity, we will be able to meet those needs.

Chair Van Bramer, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.



Testimony to City Council on the FY 2021 Budget for Cultural Affairs

To submit to the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs on March 4, 2020

Prepared by Dance/NYC

On behalf of the service organization Dance/NYC, which serves over 5,000 individual dance artists, 1,200 dance-making entities, and 500 nonprofit dance companies based in the New York City area, I join New Yorkers for Culture & Arts and colleague advocates working across creative disciplines in thanking the Council for the recent major increases in the New York City Cultural Budget and in requesting:

- 1. The City “baseline” the increases to the New York City Cultural Budget for FY 2021 and beyond; and**
- 2. The City allocate funding to workforce development within the arts and culture sector in order to properly pay, attract, and retain a diverse workforce that does not need to rely on multiple income sources in order to reside and work in New York City.**

The need and opportunity for funding is urgent. On February 10, 2020 the White House released its FY 2021 budget proposal. For the fourth year in a row, the administration proposed eliminating several pivotal cultural agencies such as the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to name a few. This poses a direct and pervasive threat to the right to creativity and artistic expression in our nation. Now more than ever, New York City’s increased investment in culture and the arts is needed to not only strengthen the City as a beacon for artists and audiences around the world, but to ensure that New York artists, cultural groups and advocates have the resources necessary to move from a position of surviving to thriving.

Healthy ecosystems require sustained, intentional support at every level. The ongoing affordability crisis in New York City stems from long-standing systems of oppression and continues to exacerbate sector-wide inefficiencies that result from one-time, short-term,



inconsistent funding commitments to arts and cultural organizations. Baselineing the City's budget will guarantee consistent funding increases and provide the necessary institutional funding structure to ensure a more equitable arts and culture ecosystem.

Locally, the increased funding is needed to ensure the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) and our City's arts and cultural institutions are positioned to continue implementing the pressing recommendations from the CreateNYC 2017 Cultural Plan and 2019 Action Plan. Dance/NYC views these as significant milestones in and tremendous opportunities for advocacy on behalf of arts and culture in New York City; and would like to recognize the consistent, collective action required of the City to activate the benefits of the Plan. Moreover, with a vision for a sustainable, inclusive, and equitable sector in place, it is incumbent on the City to operationalize that vision through sustained, intentional funding and nuanced progress measurement over time. As the City continues to build out its evaluation framework, Dance/NYC strongly advocates for tracking the success of each planning strategy by "creative discipline" to ensure that the art form of dance, as well as all peer disciplines, are accurately represented and equitable served.

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

1. Increased grantee volume and funding levels, including funding for small-budget dance makers and fiscally sponsored artists who are impacted by inequitable distribution of resources and, as underscored by Dance/NYC research, are both more ethnically and racially diverse and more likely to include disabled and immigrant workers than larger groups;
2. The development and protection of affordable, accessible, eco-friendly and environmentally responsible facilities with a focus on dance rehearsal space, identified as the top need through extensive Dance/NYC survey studies across various segments of the City's dance communities;
3. An expanded diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda that expressly and continuously addresses: A) Disability rights, as called for by Dance/NYC's Disability. Dance. Artistry.



- research; B) Immigrant rights, as called for by Dance/NYC's Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Initiative and corresponding research; C) Racial justice;
4. Continuous allocation of funds to specifically support disabled artists, cultural workers and audiences, provide accessibility accommodations, and offer multilingual support programs for multilingual and non-English speaking New Yorkers for the express purpose of preventing organizations and presenting institutions from ever having to make the choice between offering access and quality programming;
 5. Increased dance education activity by DCLA grantees and strengthened collaboration with the Department of Education to make dance education a reality for every child, in every school, in every borough; and
 6. Ensuring that dance receives equitable funding dollars as compared to other disciplines (i.e. visual arts, music, theatre, etc.).

Community and culture are inextricably linked. These principles are the driving force behind Dance/NYC's organizational priorities, programs, and the lens through which we view the New York City arts and culture ecosystem at large. It is in this vein that Dance/NYC stands in solidarity with our colleague advocates across disciplines in the City to request increased funding for FY 2021. Let us therefore move beyond simply valuing the product of art and value the artists that make it by creating policies and structures that ensure equitable funding, living wages, and quality of life for the artistic communities that make New York City the vibrant cultural capital it is today.

Dance/NYC thanks Chair Jimmy Van Bramer, the members of the Committee, and the City at large for its partnership.

##

Lincoln Center

**Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.
Cultural Affairs Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 4, 2020
Testimony**

Good morning, members of the Cultural Affairs Committee. My name is Siri Horvitz, and I am the Director of Government Relations for Lincoln Center.

The vision of Lincoln Center is a world where “the arts are not for the privileged few, but for the many.”

Though much has changed since our founding in 1963, Lincoln Center remains dedicated to presenting the best of the performing arts and to reflecting the rich cultural diversity of NYC.

Today, we see ourselves as more than an arts presenter. We are also a civic institution with a responsibility to provide artistic experiences that improve people’s lives.

To this end, we are embarking on a multi-year plan to further diversify our programming and audiences; we are calling this Lincoln Center’s 51 District Promise.

Our promise is to significantly expand upon existing partnerships and forge new ones with organizations serving seniors, families, youth and teens to understand the unique needs of each community, tailor programming and arts engagement opportunities, and create a greater sense of belonging. A new full-time position will be created to support this effort, with a special focus on building connections and increasing arts engagement within NYCHA developments. We are dedicated to breaking down perceived and actual barriers, including new ways to distribute tickets, addressing transportation concerns, and piloting new dining programs.

At the heart of this campaign is the new David Geffen Hall, which Lincoln Center and the New York Philharmonic are working together to reimagine for the twenty-first century. Now more than 50 years old, the Hall has passed the commonly acceptable serviceable life for durable structures. The transformation of the Hall will not only yield a world-class concert venue, but also public spaces that will serve as the foundation for decades of artistic innovation, community activation, and educational and cultural advancement.

The Hall’s forthcoming renovation is the basis on which we will begin a new era of service and civic engagement and fulfill Lincoln Center’s 51-District Promise to the people of New York.

We are proud to call New York City our home, and grateful to the Committee for recognizing Lincoln Center’s role in the lives of all New Yorkers. We look forward to partnering with the Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs on our 51 District Promise and the renovation of David Geffen Hall.

Thank you.

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NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM & LIBRARY

TESTIMONY TO THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS,
LIBRARY AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2020

OFFERED BY
DR. VALERIE PALEY
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
DIRECTOR, NEW-YORK HISTORICAL'S CENTER FOR WOMEN'S HISTORY

Dear Members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs:

Thank you for your service to the arts and culture community in New York City, and thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on behalf of the New-York Historical Society, New York's oldest Museum. For over 200 years, New-York Historical has told the story of our nation's founding and history, using our vast collections to highlight under-told stories and diverse perspectives throughout that history. It is in very large part due to the continued support and generosity of the city government, in particular, the Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York City Council, that New-York Historical remains a strong, vibrant institution able to present exhibitions and educational initiatives reaching more than 400,000 students, teachers, and visitors each year.

We share the Council and Administration's commitments to **diversity and equity**. In my role as Director of our Center for Women's History, I have first-hand knowledge of what continued City Cultural funding has allowed us to achieve in terms of advancing public understanding of under-represented narratives and diverse voices, and I am delighted to share some highlights with you today.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

With generous **capital project allocations from the New York City Council and the Department for Cultural Affairs**, New-York Historical has made major institutional advances such as the establishment of the Center for Women's History on our fourth floor, which demonstrates how women across the spectrum of race, class, and sexuality exercised power and effected change through our nation's history. In 2019 we were delighted to partner with **Speaker Johnson and the Women's Caucus** to mount an exhibition featuring the first-ever portraits of important NYC women to hang in Council Chambers—a project that has been reinstalled this year for Women's History Month.

It is the annual support of the **Cultural Development Fund** that makes possible exhibitions like:

- *Stonewall 50 at New-York Historical* (2019), a suite of exhibitions and programs that examined the Stonewall uprising and the dawn of the modern U.S. gay liberation movement.
- *Women March* (open now), an immersive celebration of the suffrage centennial that explores women's collective action over time—including those women of color who were left out of the 19th amendment's privileges.
- *Black is Beautiful: The Photography of Kwame Brathwaite* (fall 2020), revealing how this artist paved the way for black artists in Harlem and challenged white beauty standards through his photographs documenting behind-the-scenes moments of the second Harlem Renaissance.

K-12 EDUCATION

The **Cultural Development Fund** and **Council-directed CASA funding** also fuels our K-12 educational programs, which serve more than 200,000 NYC public school students from all five boroughs and their teachers each year through field trips, classroom-based workshops, teacher training, and digital resources. More than 75% of the students we serve are from low-income households.

Of note is our new **Academy for American Democracy**, a four-day residency at the Museum for sixth grade students and their teachers that encourages in-depth, interactive study of the concept of democracy—training students to become engaged and active participants in the democratic process now and in the future. Using digital reproductions of ancient texts, artifacts, and works of art, students study the democracy through ancient Greece, the Founding Era, and the present day.

The Academy has welcomed classes from 14 schools in Manhattan and the Bronx: five with student bodies that identify as primarily Black/Latinx; two that identify primarily as Asian, and the rest as White/Asian or White/Asian/Latinx. Five schools also have English Language Learners making up more than 10% of their student bodies. **DCLA capital funding** from both the Council and the Administration will allow us to establish expanded classrooms and galleries to support this program reaching more than 3,000 students per year.

DIVERSIFYING NYC'S CULTURAL WORKFORCE

This city-funded programming has positioned New-York Historical to address the pervasive lack of diversity in American museum leadership staff and diversify the City's museum workforce. To address these issues, we developed a **Master of Arts in Museum Studies** degree program offered through City University of New York's School of Professional Studies (CUNY SPS). Its launch in fall of 2019 was the most successful roll out of a CUNY SPS MA program in the history of the school. By blending online programs with a hands-on practicum component at New-York Historical, it offers flexible scheduling and onsite experience, all in an effort to generate an equitable cultural workforce that reflects the cultural fabric of our City.

The program has enrolled 74 students in its first year. In our fall 2019 cohort, 39% identified as coming from non-white backgrounds, including Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and Native Indian. These students receive scholarships underwritten by private donors, and the initiative is a vital part of our larger institutional work towards centering diversity, equity, and inclusion across axes of race, gender, sexuality, and class in all aspects of our work.

LOOKING FORWARD

In the years ahead, New-York Historical is proud to build on this momentum in a variety of ways—most notably, through a **landmark partnership with The LGBTQ+ Museum**. Together, we seek to establish the world's first major destination for the exploration of LGBTQ+ history. It is the city's continued support that positions us to forge these partnerships and tell these stories, and we remain grateful to the Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York City Council for this steadfast funding.

Thank you.

*Valerie Paley, Senior Vice President and Director, Center for Women's History
(212) 485-9204 // Valerie.paley@nyhistory.org*

**Desiree Gordon, Director of Programs and Strategy
Brooklyn Arts Council
City Council Hearing Testimony
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Catalyzing Creative Ecologies, Together.
March 4, 2010**

Our Spheres of Impact are Creative Experiences, Creative Ecologies, and Creative Equations.

The Power of Art, Communities, and Arts-based Social Innovation

Brooklyn's Arts Council's ecological approach to its role in the field is only possible because of City Council's critical support, which we use to catalyze dynamic cultural interventions – educating, training, incubating, grant-making, presenting, producing, preserving, advocating - in the concentric and overlapping circles of artists, audiences, and communities.

We believe in Artists' power, so we incubate and invest in Artistic development, expression and engagements. We know that artists and communities thrive when they are connected to each other, so we aggregate imagination and connect resources to widen pathways for accessibility, sustainability and vibrance. We envision Art innovating society, so we activate cultural assets as solutions for a more just and joyful Brooklyn, a more civically inspired and compassionate world. Art exhibitions in East Flatbush amplifying immigrant experiences, and intergenerational theater workshops bridging the gaps of gentrification, and single mothers returning to creative practice to lead design workshops to young entrepreneurs, tell us that the work . . . is working

City Council funding is the bedrock on which Brooklyn Arts Council builds these systems of sustainability, infrastructure for imagination, and ecosystems of equity and expression.

Increased Regrant funding allowed us to meet an increasing percentage of the need for local arts funding across the borough, from 26% in 2017, to 43% in 2018, and 60% in 2019. For the 2020 cycle, despite the largest Regrant allotment in our history, we met 46% percent of the need, but this is because we had a 30% increase in applicants this year over last year. This is great news for us and for City Council – it means that, together, via webinars, technical assistance clinics and in-person info sessions in the least served areas of the borough, we are effectively enhancing visibility and increasing accessibility across cultures, incomes, genders, disciplines, neighborhoods. We ask that you do everything you can to

**Desiree Gordon, Director of Programs and Strategy
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baseline funding at or above this new summit, so that we can keep pulling more and more Brooklyn creatives up with us to enrich their communities.

Brooklyn Arts Council's Cultural Development Fund (CDF) funding drives our work across in multiple services modalities and areas from Brownsville to DUMBO, from Bensonhurst to Brooklyn Heights. We use CDF funding to drive civic engagement: Our Cultural Heritage programs support traditional artists as they navigate city agencies and processes like securing permits and incubates leadership so they learn to advocate for themselves. We use CDF funding to drive economic and workforce development: Our Professional Development programs resource cultural entrepreneurs with clinics and trainings for diversifying income, preparing taxes, and leveraging technology for business development. We use CDF funding to draw wider arcs of relevance between the Arts and other sectors; with greater CDF funding we can deepen the impact in those areas.

Brooklyn Arts Council's CASA programs seed the borough with an incredible workforce of highly skilled teaching artists, who are also trained in techniques of cultural responsiveness, anti-racism, gender inclusivity and restorative practices. The benefit of arts programs for learning, for community cohesion, for decreasing rates of violence are well documented and, through CASA funding, Brooklyn arts Council covers wide swaths of ground all over our borough. If City Council sees fit to increase this budget, we do not ask for additional CASA awards but that each awards be increased from \$20k, where they've been for the past 5 to 6 years, to \$25k, a small increase to keep step with rising costs of living.

The Brooklyn Arts Council is grateful and proud to partner with the Council to help achieve the goals laid out in the City's Cultural Plan. When we consider the work the city has equipped us to do, we can't help but to celebrate how far we've come and how far we will go in our joint effort to Create NYC. We hope you will consider joining the party at our annual Grantee Celebration on Friday March 13th to help us disperse the needed and appreciated funds to the creatives that ignite Brooklyn's engines of innovation, imagination, and impact. Thank you.

New York Shakespeare Festival dba The Public Theater
City Council Testimony
3/4/2020

Conceived nearly 60 years ago as one of the nation's first nonprofit theaters, The Public Theater engages one of the largest and most diverse audiences in New York City in a variety of venues including the Delacorte Theater in Central Park and its landmark downtown home in the East Village, which houses five theaters and Joe's Pub. Last year, we offered more than 1,600 performances and welcomed over 350,000 people.

Since 1962, The Delacorte Theater, a city-owned structure in Central Park, has been home to Free Shakespeare in the Park. Since then, over 5 million people have attended performances for free. Each year we welcome over 100,000 attendees, and in 2019, we welcomed audiences from every zip code in New York City. In addition to distributing tickets for Free Shakespeare in the Park from our Astor Place home and in Central Park, we distribute tickets from community hubs throughout the five boroughs including libraries, recreation centers, and other cultural institutions. This summer *Richard II* and the Public Works' musical adaptation of *As You Like It* will be performed during our Free Shakespeare in the Park season.

We are planning a revitalization of the Delacorte Theater, which has not undergone a major renovation since its opening in 1962, and was last updated in 1999. **This project will allow more New Yorkers to experience free theater.** This will be accomplished not by adding more seats or expanding the theater's footprint in the park, but by streamlining operations and improving efficiencies made possible by the revitalized facility. Greater efficiencies will allow us to shorten the amount of time between productions, while also addressing ongoing infrastructural and accessibility challenges.

A revitalization will let us expand our Public Works program, which engages community members from all five boroughs to perform on the Delacorte stage alongside professional actors. **This would allow us to strengthen our relationships with our current partners: Brownsville Recreation Center, Center for Family Life, DreamYard, The Fortune Society, and the Military Resilience Foundation.**

The prospect of increasing opportunities for more New Yorkers to enjoy Free Shakespeare in the Park is truly a historic moment to ensure that the legacy of The Public Theater—not just that of a physical building, but the values of Free Shakespeare in the Park and Public Works, the values of equity, democracy, and artistry that we are stewarding today— will endure for generations. Thank you for your support of the project in the budget for the last two years. **For FY 2021, we are requesting \$6 million from the City Council.**



March 4, 2020

NYC Council Preliminary Budget Hearing

Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations

The Honorable Jimmy Van Bramer, Chair

Good morning, Chairman Van Bramer and members of the Committee. I am Taryn Sacramone, Executive Director of Queens Theatre, the Acting Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), and a member of New Yorkers for Culture & Arts. I am here today to provide testimony on behalf of the CIG, a coalition of 34 cultural organizations across all five boroughs.

I want to thank the Council for its support of all cultural organizations, artists, cultural workers, and the millions of New Yorkers we serve. You have recognized the important role that the cultural sector plays in making New York a healthier, safer, and more equitable City. That recognition is reflected in the City's first-ever Cultural Plan, and in the increases to the budget in recent years.

The members of the Cultural Institutions Group work in partnership with New York City to make culture available to all New Yorkers. To accomplish that goal, a unique private-public partnership was created over a century and a half ago. No other city has a Cultural Institutions Group – the CIG is a unique New York City accomplishment, and its creation and sustainment is one of the reasons that New York is the cultural destination that it is.

There are Cultural Institutions Group members of diverse disciplines and different scales throughout the boroughs – all with the same commitment to all. There are CIGs who bring millions of visitors from around the world, and CIGs who know not just their members' names, but where their kid wants to go to college. We are thrilled that the CIG expanded this year, with the addition of Weeksville Heritage Center, in the same year that we are celebrating the 150th anniversary of the American Museum of Natural History.

Our partnership with the City goes beyond culture – whether we’re offering memberships to IDNYC cardholders, celebrating World Pride, or supporting census outreach, we are partners. If it is important to New York City, it is a priority to the Cultural Institutions Group.

Collectively, we employ 16,000 full and part time employees, and serve 24 million visitors each year. While those numbers are important, we also wanted to consider what impact the CIG has on each and every New Yorker. We surveyed hundreds of people who had gone to kindergarten through high school in New York, and asked whether they had visited members of the CIG by the time they graduated.

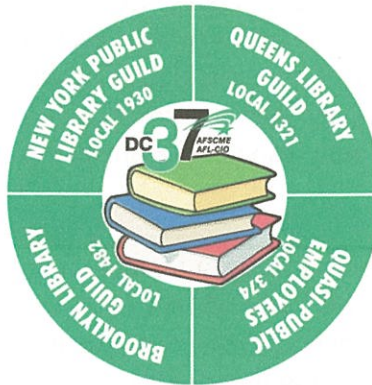
Over 99% visited at least one, with most visiting far more. All of the CIGs were represented. Respondents also shared some of their memories.

One person wrote that because there were not price barriers, “I could always visit a place of hope no matter what was going on in my life.” When I read that, it really resonated with me. *Places of hope*. There is a lot of uncertainty to the time we are living in. We need places of hope that ALL can access.

As a direct result of the Create NYC Cultural plan, each Cultural Institutions Group member developed a robust Access, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion plan, with specific, measurable goals. We examined how we can further advance our collective mission of culture for all, considering not just who comes through our doors, but who works in our administrative offices, backstage, or at the box office. Each member of the CIG is focused on Workforce Development, and together we are addressing all levels of employment, engagement, and leadership. We want to expand that work and work together in a way that is far more impactful for the entire cultural sector.

As you know, in FY2020, \$ 25.4M was added on top of the baseline to New York City’s Cultural Budget. As the Council determines its budget priorities for FY2021, we ask that that \$25.4M be restored, and that strong consideration be given to \$20M in additional funding for both the Cultural Institutions Group and the Program Groups. The portion of that additional funding that would be allocated to the CIG would be directed toward Workforce Development specifically.

Thank you for your time.



Preliminary Budget Hearing Fiscal Year 2021
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Joint Testimony of
Brooklyn Public Library Guild, Local 1482
New York Public Library Guild, Local 1930
New York Public Library Quasi-Public Employees, Local 374
Queens Public Library Guild, Local 1321
March 4, 2020

Chairman Jimmy Van Bramer and fellow committee members, thank you for giving my fellow presidents and I an opportunity to testify at this year Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations' hearing on the Mayor's preliminary budget for the three library systems'.

Val Colon, President, Local 1930; Ronaldo Barber, President, Local 1482; John Hyslop, President, Local 1321 and Joseph Reece, Vice-President Local 374, Leonard Paul being the president of Local 374, come before you united in our request for more library funding.

Five years ago, the three library systems' Presidents/CEOs asked the Mayor and City Council for adequate funding to provide six day service. The four unions representing the library's unionized workforce supported this request. Five years later, we are working these additional hours in larger spaces with more responsibilities but with less employees.

As representatives of the library's librarians, clerical staff, IT workers, custodians, drivers, and all the other libraries' unionized staff, allow us to emphatically state that this funding is not enough. We are open more hours trying to meet our customers' growing demands for more programs, more IT infrastructure, more adult literacy programs. Branches are incurring more wear and tear and require more cleaning. They are opening with two public service staff members and neither are a librarian. Some are operating without custodians. We do not have enough security to ensure everyone's visit and workplace is safe and secure.

At the Queens Library, staff are opening branches with two staff members for the whole day. We have staff constantly going from branch to branch because of staffing shortages. In order for the library to staff some branches on Saturdays, it has become the norm to request staff to work overtime. Major reconstruction projects that are creating larger, modern, and much needed library spaces have drained our human resources. Hunters Point pulled staff from all over the system and left shortages.

At the New York Public Library the staffing count actually went down instead of up as promised by management under oath before this body. At the New York Public Library there exists a revolving door where the staff is concerned. We continue to lose more than we gain and so the staffing level remains low. We are seeing more of our seasoned staff wanting to leave a job they have dedicated much of their lives to. And the lack of any real promotional opportunities have added to an environment of low staff morale.

At Brooklyn Public Library, similar to my fellow library systems, my members face the same issue - the increase in programs, patrons, and projects, yet not a corresponding increase in staffing. As my fellow presidents have testified, staff are overworked, stressed, and feel unsafe, especially when trying to calm irate or handle addicted patrons. One highlight of our low staffing at Brooklyn Public Library, is the lack of Special Officers to maintain safety and security for everyone at the branch. Every Brooklyn Public Library branch used to have one, but now twenty-nine officers rotate throughout the system leaving security gaps in all the branches.

Our patrons not only appreciate all of the services and hours we provide but demand more. Our members have proven that the printed word and the digital space coexist and thrive. We have proven that our programs and services are vital to our communities. We have proven that if a library is renovated or a new one is built, the community flocks to us. And when we are asked to aid in civic engagement projects such as voter registration, the Census, immigration rights programs, our members are at the forefront, creating a welcoming environment for all.

With the collaboration of this Mayor, the members of this City Council, and our New York City libraries, we have done great things. We need your help to maintain the level of service without exhausting our staff. Some of you are agriculturalists and expert growers, you know that the libraries are good grounds, and when you sow into these fertile grounds, it will produce bountiful fruits for our patrons and staff and the community at large for generations to come. Please do not fail us!



March 4, 2020

**New York City Council Budget Hearings,
The Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations
Submitted by Natalie A. Correa, Program Assistant, National Dance Institute**

Good morning, everyone. My name is Natalie Correa and I am a Program Assistant at National Dance Institute (also known as NDI). NDI was founded in 1976 by New York City Ballet principal dancer Jacques d'Amboise and leads the field of arts education with a model program that has been studied and replicated worldwide. NDI's pedagogy, the NDI Method, embodies Jacques' philosophy of joyful and rigorous learning for every child, the importance of teamwork and respect for others, and the power of performance.

At the root of the NDI Method is the belief that the arts have a unique power to engage children of every background, ability, and socioeconomic position, and motivate them toward excellence in an environment of inclusivity. We utilize dance and music to instill in students a love of the arts, a passion for learning, and a desire to strive for their personal best. Our program also helps foster the social development, global awareness, and cultural literacy of our partners.

NDI serves close to 7,000 children each week through our In-School Program and brings a full year of dance classes integrated with live music to students at over 44 New York City public schools. Our classes are taught during the school day alongside core curriculum, placing dance and music on par with math and science in our students' academic studies. Since inception we have reached over 2 million children—free of charge.



This year, we launched the NDI Collaborative for Teaching & Learning, a professional development program for teaching artists, dance educators, musicians, and organizations worldwide. Over 1,500 artists and educators have trained in the NDI Method, and have emerged with new teaching strategies that equip them to motivate, engage, and inspire diverse learners through dance and music.

Alongside my colleagues from New Yorkers for Culture and the Arts (also known as NYC4A), we thank and acknowledge the City Council for its major increases in the NYC cultural budget over the past few years. It is important to maintain robust funding for our City's arts organizations; we ask the Council to commit to increasing the budget going forward and to support smaller arts and culture organizations, which need increased funding simply to properly pay their current workforce, and to attract and retain a diverse workforce.

Thank you for allowing me to speak before you today. I would like to thank the Members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs and the City of New York for its ongoing support of the cultural community. As NDI's founder Jacques d'Amboise said, "The arts open your heart and mind to possibilities that are limitless." When the arts thrive, New York City thrives. Together, we are limitless.

Submitted by:

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**Ballet Hispanico
City Council Testimony
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
March 4, 2020**

Good afternoon. I'm David Chase, Associate Director of Institutional Relations at Ballet Hispanico. Thank you Chair Van Bramer and members of the committee for calling this hearing and for your support of the New York City cultural community and the Cultural After School Adventures program.

Ballet Hispanico is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. When it was founded in 1970 by National Medal of Arts winner Tina Ramirez she sought to give voice to the Hispanic experience and break through stereotypes. She identified a need to provide Latino children with a more meaningful direction, a more certain future, and she would do that by giving them a safe place to go and teaching them to dance.

Today, Ballet Hispanico is led by Eduardo Vilario, an acclaimed choreographer and former member of the Ballet Hispanico Company, whose vision of social equity, cultural identity, and quality arts education for all drives its programs. Ballet Hispanico's arts education programs now reach nearly 12,000 New York City school children each year.

Ballet Hispanico is known for three areas of programming: 1) the professional dance Company with an annual schedule of live performances at the Joyce and Apollo theaters as well as a national tour that travels to approximately 30 cities; 2) the Ballet Hispanico School of Dance annually training nearly 1,000 students of all ages and ethnicities and levels of experience in multiple dance forms at our headquarters on West 89th Street and; 3) the Community Arts Partnerships, or CAP, program reaching diverse communities in New York City and across the country with educational residencies and performances. On an annual basis through its nationwide and international performances and programs, Ballet Hispanico provides nearly 64,000 constituents, from diverse cultures and socio-economic levels, with an understanding of Latino culture through dance.

Ballet Hispanico's CAP program has been bringing arts education residencies to New York City Public Schools nearly since its founding. And the CASA program, in many ways, represents a continuation of our founder's legacy of providing after-school arts education to New York City school children. These after-school residencies are designed to improve student access to quality arts learning experiences through collaboration and coordination with school principals, arts educators, and members of the wider community. The residencies use dance, choreography, and performance as the starting point, and expand out to integrate these art forms with the classroom curriculum and related subjects including creative writing, cultural studies, history, and literature. The curriculum also draws from the New York City Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts. Ballet Hispanico residencies aim to provide more access and better arts education to children, thereby improving their 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 13 schools. Our CASA programs offer students a rich, multi-week exploration of dance forms from Spain and Latin America, interactive performances by our teaching artists, and excerpts of Ballet Hispanico's repertory in our Performances for Young People, performed in schools by our second company BHdos. The contrast of dance styles and genres within our CASA program allows the students to widen their perspectives of dance and culture while celebrating the rich diversity in our community's heritage.

Ballet Hispanico's CASA programs provide a structured, nurturing environment of after-school programming for students, some of whom are critically underserved and, thus, might not otherwise have the opportunity to engage in focused and monitored dance activities. This committee is very familiar with the benefits of an arts education which this program provides. Activities that support healthy physical, emotional, and academic growth and that instill greater discipline and self-confidence. Our program managers and teaching artists also reflect the diversity of New York, and many students see themselves in our staff and view them as role models. Our teaching artists are sensitive to the needs of bi-cultural and diverse students, they give all students a voice and they embrace all students regardless of their ability to dance.

Partnerships with schools are also beneficial to students insofar as they expand Ballet Hispanico's access to children who seek to continue their dance education. Ballet Hispanico Teaching Artists closely observe students in every CASA class and identify those who show a desire and ability to dance. Selected students are then recommended for tuition scholarships to attend the Ballet Hispanico School of Dance.

Ballet Hispanico has been, and will continue to be, a beacon for diversity. The art we create explores and celebrates the culture without the trappings of stereotypes. We foster the pursuit of art as a way of providing transformation through the exploration of the human condition. Our art often defies gravity, acting as a frontline against cultural division by releasing preconceived notions of culture and instead offering our audiences new perspectives.

As Ballet Hispanico celebrates its milestone anniversary this 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 for the opportunity to speak to you today.

CITY COUNCIL OF NEW YORK CITY TESTIMONY - March 4, 2020

Thank you Speaker Johnson, Chairman Van Bramer, and Members of the Cultural Committee for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Jennifer Wright Cook and I am the Executive Director of The Field, a 34 year old arts service organization based in lower Manhattan serving artists in all five boroughs.

Founded in 1986, The Field is a non-profit organization providing critical business services to performing and media artists in NYC and beyond. In 2018, under our stewardship, our 1,200 artists produced 4,105 new shows for ½ a million people around the world. Our ambitious artists include both big names and up-and-comers. They perform at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and in church basements. They receive prestigious grants from the MAP Fund and self-produce shows with budgets under \$1,000. From fundraising to producing, from budgeting to contracts, The Field is a vital solution to artists' business needs. Last year alone, Field artists raised \$2.45 million for their work with our personalized advice and support.

From Broadway choreographer Camille A. Brown to Broadway Director Rachel Chavkin, from Comedic Artist Maysoon Zahid to Grammy-winners Imani Winds, The Field has incubated and bolstered the careers of most of the ambitious artists who call NYC home.

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

In 2018 artists generated \$114 billion for New York State; yet the vast majority of the 57,000 artists living in NYC live hand to mouth, with inconsistent income, unstable housing, and no planning support to pay down student debt or map out a financial future. The vast majority of artists served by The Field are gig-economy workers, renting in lower-income neighborhoods with no savings or retirement plans. With NY's extremely high cost of living and very little income generation possible, artists can not afford to live and work here long-term.

Often artists have to choose: be an artist OR pay off your student loans. Be an artist OR own your apartment. Be an artist OR help your aging parents. Be an artist or help your kids go to college.

If New York City wants to invest in its most vibrant, income-generating sector, THE ARTS ARE IT.

In our 2019 survey called Artists Prospering!, 850+ artists told us directly what they need to thrive: planning services - and for financial planning services specifically. 850+ artists told us that student loan pay off and emergency savings were their #1 priorities. ½ of our respondents have \$50,000 in debt and they work freelance part-time gigs without benefits or consistent income.

They are struggling. And artists from historically marginalized communities struggle even more

In direct response to these struggles, The Field is launching new services to help artists improve their financial wellness, and to plan for resilient financial futures. Our new services will help artists be artists AND.....debt-free. Artist and.....apartment owner. Artist and...saving money for my future!

Leveraging cutting edge technology plus high-touch personalized service, The Field will scale our services to reach hundreds of thousands of artists to increase their financial resilience, increase their quality of life, and thus expand their artistic power and productivity.

We launch in late 2020 for 1,200 NYC artists. We scale assertively from there to serve 150,000 by late 2021 and more beyond and then national.

With our 34 years of excellent service for artists we are uniquely qualified to speak to the financial burdens facing New York artists. Our new programming is specifically created to address these pain points and to help artists overcome those burdens.

To date, we have raised \$650,000 in launch funding from lead NY funders and donors and we have a multi-year plan to achieve our Vision.

DCLA funding is a vital component of our ongoing work with artists in NY. We look forward to partnering with the City to

In closing, as a Member of the larger cultural community in NYC, you join your colleagues in asking the City to keep Culture harmless with \$25.5M in funding for FY21.

Thank you, Members of the Committee, for continuing to advocate for Culture.

More on The Field Online

- **[Our Vision for the future](#)**
- **[Artists Prospering!](#)**



**92nd Street Y: Written Testimony
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Preliminary Budget Hearing**

In the 2019-2020 School Year, 92Y:

- Works with **16,000+** NYC public school students and educators in all five boroughs through its Center for Arts Learning & Leadership
- Collaborates with **71** K-12 public schools, **50** of which are supported by the NYC Council
- Runs **13 unique CASA programs** in music, visual arts, musical theater, and dance in **the Bronx, Manhattan, and Brooklyn**

92Y TEEN INITIATIVES

TEEN PRODUCERS

A paid, two-year apprenticeship that prepares Bronx-based public high school students for careers in the arts and culture sector through:

- Internship placements that build skills in concrete areas such as marketing and web design
- Access to 1:1 college advisement and career readiness workshops
- Full scholarships for private lessons in 92Y's School of the Arts
- Attendance at cultural events across NYC
- Mentorship by 92Y staff and Teen Producers Alumni
- Live production experience during the citywide *Teen Arts Week*

Next year, 92Y will:

- Double the program by welcoming a new cohort of 10 Bronx public high school juniors while this year's 10 participants, as seniors, move on to Year 2 of the program (serving 20 students total)
- Continue to develop a robust Alumni Group who serve as mentors and lead workshops for the new cohort, help advise 92Y programming, and assist in producing the annual Teen Arts Week

TEEN ARTS WEEK (March 2-8, 2020)

- Piloted in 2019: a free, annual citywide celebration of youth arts engagement for teens, by teens
- 92Y collaborates with a network of **30 cultural organizations in all five boroughs**
- Teens can participate in 40 free art-making classes, performances, workshops, and exhibits and other events during the week – and learn about career pathways in the arts



FY19 Teen Producers cohort on stage at the inaugural *Teen Arts Week* Youth Summit



A student asks author Jess Keating a question about her book, *Cute as an Axolotl*, during a Discover Literature event

FOR
TEENS
BY
TEENS

TEEN ARTS WEEK

New York City | March 2-8, 2020

Free events at arts organizations in all five boroughs

Music • Dance • Film

Visual Art • Poetry • Theater

College Readiness • Career Exploration

Join the movement!

92Y.org/TeenArtsWeek | [#TeenArtsWeek](https://twitter.com/TeenArtsWeek)

92Y MoMA



THE MET

**MARK MORRIS
DANCE GROUP**

BAM

**Lincoln Center
Education**

WHITNEY

THE POINT
WHERE COMMUNITY AND CREATIVITY CONNECT

GUGGENHEIM

URBAN WORD NYC

STREB

**STUDIO
MUSEUM**

**MUSEUM OF THE
MOVING
IMAGE**

**HOOK
ARTS
MEDIA**

BRIC

THEONDALE

Projectivity

**MTC
MANHATTAN
THEATRE CLUB**

**VGC
DC**

GREEN SPACE
INNOVATOR OF DANCE IN QUEENS

icp
International
Center of
Photography

**NEW-YORK
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
MUSEUM & LIBRARY**

JAL
Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning

**single
hope**

Visit the website for a complete list of participating organizations.

Teen Arts Week Events

MONDAY, MARCH 2

Teen Arts Week Launch Event • 92nd Street Y • Manhattan

NYC Brooklyn Regional Poetry Slam • Urban Word NYC • Brooklyn

Me, My Mask, & My Word: Mask-Making & Spoken Word • Sing for Hope • Manhattan

TUESDAY, MARCH 3

First Draft Uncensored Youth Open Mic • Urban Word NYC • Manhattan

I See Me: Exploring Visual Representation at ICP • International Center of Photography • Manhattan

Dance and Create: Drop-in Contemporary Dance Class • Mark Morris Dance Group • Brooklyn

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4

Studio Works: Teen Art Night • The Studio Museum in Harlem • Manhattan

Hip Hop/Create Move and Groove Dance Class • Dance Entropy / Green Space Studios • Queens

Never Records - Recording Session • Brooklyn Academy of Music • Brooklyn

The Art of Gardening • The Point CDC • The Bronx

THURSDAY, MARCH 5

Open Art Space • Museum of Modern Art • Manhattan

Filmmaking Workshop • Hook Arts Media • Brooklyn

Poetry Workshop • Hook Arts Media • Brooklyn

Playwriting Workshop and Tickets to *The Perplexed* • Manhattan Theatre Club • Manhattan

Painting 101 • Projectivity Group • Staten Island

Teen Beats and Blends • Projectivity Group • Staten Island

FRIDAY, MARCH 6

Vida Americana Teen Night • The Whitney Museum of American Art • Manhattan

I Submerge: Jam Night & Game Night • Museum of the Moving Image • Queens

Youth Media Screening • BRIC • Brooklyn

SATURDAY, MARCH 7

Studio 57 Live • Carnegie Hall • Manhattan

Saturday Sketching • The Metropolitan Museum of Art • Manhattan

Women's History Wiki Edit-a-Thon • New-York Historical Society • Manhattan

Saturday Sketching at the Guggenheim • Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum • Manhattan

Teen Action Club • STREB • Brooklyn

Theater Festival Artist Exchange Workshop • Irondale Ensemble Project • Brooklyn

Scavenger Hunt: Tour Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts • Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts • Manhattan

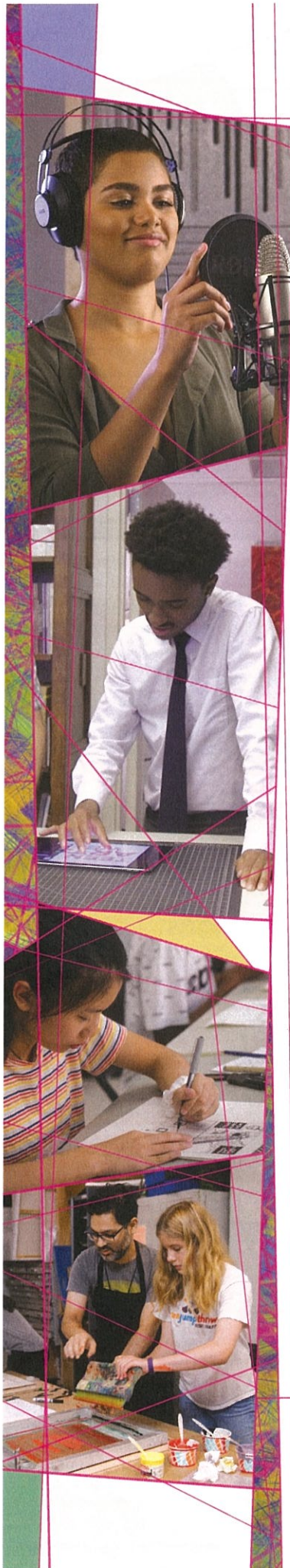
The Arts for Life! Arts Workshops and College Access Workshop • Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning • Queens

Events are subject to change. Visit the website for a complete listing.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT—RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!

92Y.org/TeenArtsWeek • #TeenArtsWeek

Teen Arts Week and 92Y's Teen Producers program receive support from The Cowles Charitable Trust; Hasty Pudding • Institute of 1770; Robert Lehman Foundation, Inc.; Pine Tree Foundation; The Pinkerton Foundation; Liya and Joel Reiss; Ronald Saltz; and The Weininger Foundation, Inc. These programs are also made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts under Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's Regional Economic Development Council Initiative, the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development and the New York City Council.





Sample Teen Arts Week Activities by District: District 35

Teen Arts Week 2019 in District 35

During Teen Arts Week 2019:

- Five participating cultural organizations were in District 35 – BRIC, Irondale Ensemble, BAM, Mark Morris, and Brooklyn Museum
- Students with residential zip codes in District 35 participated in Teen Arts Week events at six organizations in three boroughs - STREB, Brooklyn Museum, Irondale Ensemble, BAM, Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning, and The Guggenheim
- 142 students from Brooklyn attended Teen Arts Week Events

Teen Arts Week 2020 in District 35

URBAN WORD NYC

NYC Brooklyn Regional Poetry Slam (Takes place at Central Brooklyn Public Library)

Mon, March 2, 6-8 pm

The first NYC Youth Poetry Slam Regional Competition! 5 poets from this slam will advance to the Grand Slam Finals on Sunday, April 5th at Harlem's Apollo Theater. The top 5 winners earn a spot on the Urban Word NYC Slam Team and will represent NYC at the Regional Poetry Slam. Cheer in the audience or come with one poem to compete with.

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

Let's Talk: LGBTQ+ Art and Identity

Tue, March 3, 5-7 pm

Join teen staff in *InterseXtions: Gender & Sexuality* for a teen-led discussion around artwork by LGBTQ+ artists, discussions on social issues, and an art making experience centered on identity. Participants will get a behind-the-scenes look at the museum.

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP

Dance and Create: Drop-in Contemporary Dance Class

Tue, March 3, 5:30-7 pm

Led by our Arts Immersion Teens, this all-levels contemporary dance class includes a chance to create your own choreography! Starting with a warm-up, this class will progress into choreography as well as an opportunity to reflect on what you create together. The reflection will include information about what a career in dance might look like, as a choreographer, performer, teacher, or arts administrator!

BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC

Never Records – Recording Session

Wed, March 4, 2-5 pm

Do you have a song, poem, or spoken word you've been wanting to record? Join New York-based conceptual artist and musician Ted Riederer as he explores the potential of a recording studio as an artistic community hub. Participants will take part in a three-hour recording session, at the end of which they leave with a freshly cut vinyl record and a digital file of their music.

BRIC

Youth Media Screening

Fri, March 6, 4:30-5:30 pm

Concrete Stories is BRIC's annual youth media festival—organized for youth, by youth, and celebrating the work of local media makers 21 and younger. Join us as we view and discuss examples of short media pieces from past Concrete Stories festivals. Learn about BRIC's Teen Programs and how to submit your work for this year's festival!

IRONDALE ENSEMBLE PROJECT

Theater Festival Artist Exchange Workshop

Sat, March 7, 2:30-3:30 pm

Join us for an hour-long workshop co-led by Irondale Young Company and the artists from Irondale's On Women play festival. Participants will hear about productions performed in the festival and then collaborate to create a piece based on the themes.

Testimony of Bronx Arts Ensemble: NYC Council Hearings 3-4-20

David Nussenbaum, Executive Director

Dear City Council Members:

I represent the Bronx Arts Ensemble and our many constituents throughout the great borough of the Bronx. Our mission is *'to bring music and related arts to Bronx schools and neighborhoods. We contribute to the cultures of our Bronx communities through live performances and innovative arts education that stimulate creativity, imagination, and aspirations.'*

Those of us in the BAE family believe passionately in the transformative power of the arts to empower individuals and build inclusive communities. Every year we assist 5000 public school students to learn *art-making* at 40 schools, almost all of them in the Bronx. We also captivate audiences of over 15,000 at *free community concerts* in neighborhood libraries, churches, senior centers, galleries, and parks. In doing so we *provide employment* to a diverse team of over 100 talented professional artists.

New initiatives this year are:

- A new partnership with NY Public Libraries to perform *children's musical theater* at 7 Bronx branches
- 19 *senior center concerts* in the Bronx, under the leadership of councilmembers Torres and Gibson
- A new *after-school education program to teach stringed instruments*, underwritten by Assemblyman Dinowitz, to eventually build a Bronx youth orchestra.

One future aspiration is to deepen our commitment to our Bronx students through the creation of a weekend arts academy, featuring more individual attention than can currently be offered at our in-school programs.

Local art-making is critical to community development. In today's economic environment many jobs are being automated; educators and business leaders appreciate that arts spark key 21st-century learning skills: communication, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. We are grateful for the important role the City Council plays in supporting art-making both in the schools and in our communities, and respectfully ask that it baseline its grant level for arts and culture in the coming budget. Thank you in advance for your ongoing support of Bronx arts and the Bronx Arts Ensemble.



March 4, 2020

**Testimony to the City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs and Libraries
Submitted by Turquoise Martin, Member of JustLeadershipUSA**

Dear Council Member Van Bramer and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing the opportunity for public testimony today and your leadership on this issue. My name is Turquoise Martin and I am a member of JustLeadershipUSA, as well as an undergrad student at Hunter College. I want to highlight the opportunities New York City has, but is not currently taking, to immediately invest in the types of community resources that can create safety by strengthening and stabilizing communities. We can do this, even with cuts from the state, by beginning the long-overdue work of divesting from overfunded systems of law enforcement.

Each budget cycle, New Yorkers passionately and articulately make the case for desperately-needed funding for housing, education, libraries, healthcare, youth programs and more. In each budget cycle, they walk away with only a fraction of what is needed. Every time that happens, gaping holes widen in our social safety net, and law enforcement agencies are once again relied upon to respond to challenges they will never be equipped to address - challenges of public health, poverty, and inequality.

This is a choice, and our elected officials have the power to make a different choice.

Decades of mass criminalization have extracted vast resources from Black, Brown, and poor communities. We all want to live in strong, safe, healthy neighborhoods, and our communities have the solutions, but not the support. The #buildCOMMUNITIES platform, launched in January 2019 and updated this month, draws on the collective wisdom of over 40 organizations and more than 200 residents of communities most impacted by mass incarceration. The platform highlights areas of need, as well as many programs that are already working, but in dire need of greater investment. I'm pleased to share a copy of that platform with you today.

One particular need that I want to highlight today is Community Programs and Services. Specifically the demands for investments to community-led centers, public libraries and

organizations focused on social justice and activism. When I was younger, I was cared for by family members because my mother could not. My family cultivated my love for learning and reading. When I was 10 years old, my caretakers passed away and I was placed in foster care. I stayed with families who padlocked their fridges and their children would destroy the books I read. I found a safe haven at the Tremont Library on Washington Ave in the Bronx and I would stay there until closing. Although I faced challenges, programs in my community balanced the scales. Today I am a CUNY undergrad studying Mandarin as a third language. My 15 year old son is a high school student with 12 college credits who attends The Brotherhood/Sister Sol Program and would greatly benefit from accessible transportation and an unlimited student metrocard. We talk a lot about families but I also want to acknowledge the young people who may not have families and would benefit from the support of such programs and more spaces for mentoring, positive encouragement and the opportunity to build community they may otherwise not have.

We know that your committee would probably like to fund all of our needs. And that New York City is capable of doing so. This year's budget allocates over \$14 billion dollars annually into the New York City Police Department, the Department of Corrections, the New York City Department of Probation, and District Attorneys. And last year the Department of Corrections could only account for ScanTrons and more puppies for the K9 unit.

We need you, to urge the Mayor to reinvest in the communities that need the investments the most and make our City truly safer, fairer, and more progressive .

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Turquoise J. Martin
JustLeadershipUSA



Green-Wood Cemetery
 March 4, 2020
 Testimony for the New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings

Good afternoon Chair Van Bramer and members of the Committee.

My name is Lisa Alpert. I am the Vice President of Development and Programming at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn.

For anyone here who does not yet know about this National Historic Landmark cemetery, you may be wondering why a cemetery is speaking to the Committee on Cultural Affairs at all. I'm excited to tell you how we are re-imagining and expanding what this extraordinary historic landscape can be. For geographical context, Green-Wood is in South Brooklyn and borders Windsor Terrace, Boro Park, Prospect Park South, Kensington, Park Slope, and Sunset Park. It spans 478 acres.

And of course, we are a cemetery. We'll always be a cemetery and honoring the legacies of those who've gone before us is core to our mission.

But we also offer an unexpectedly diverse range of cultural and educational programs including workforce development for jobs in masonry restoration; workshops in environmental justice; a major program with Cornell University on how large urban greenspaces can fight climate change; and our school programs serve over 4,000 students annually.

We host classical music concerts in our catacombs, film screenings, twilight tours, a wonderful Day of the Dead event, contemporary art installations on the grounds and more. Our popular Nightfall event welcomes over 2,000 attendees to the cemetery for a nighttime odyssey with artists, musicians, filmmakers and about 10,000 LED lights along the winding paths. Our trolley tours and walking tours are almost always sold out, including our annual Gay Green-Wood tour co-hosted with our friends at NYC LGBT

Sites. Last year, 330,000 people came to Green-Wood to attend a program, to visit a loved one, or just to stroll through the historic landscape in peace.

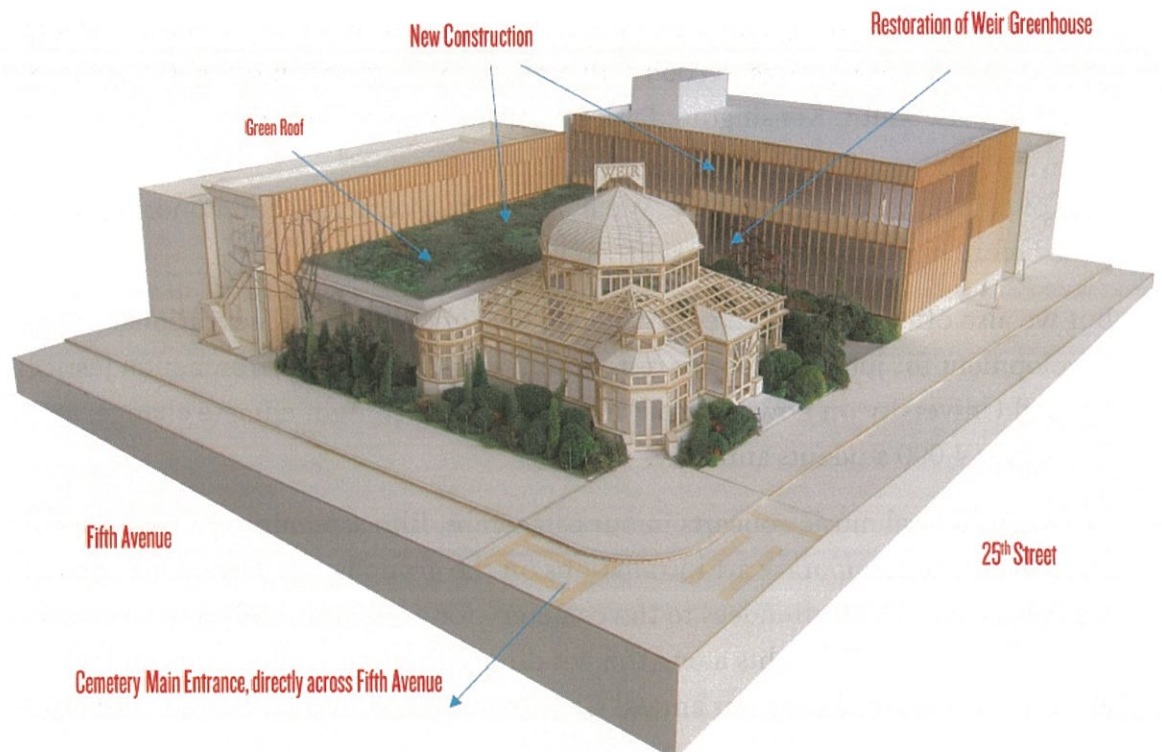
At Green-Wood, we are creating a new kind of cultural institution for New York City – one that's been right here in front of our eyes for almost 200 years. We like to say "Brooklyn's Newest Cultural Institution is Actually Its Oldest."

But we have a problem. While we have hundreds of acres of outdoor space, we currently have no indoor space for programming. That means most of our programming comes to a screeching halt for about four months a year. Also, if it's raining really hard or snowing, we have to cancel stuff.

We need indoor space. Our new Education and Welcome Center will expand the community's cultural and educational capacity and allow Green-Wood to offer its programming year-round – which is especially important in South Brooklyn, a part of the borough that is, culturally, significantly underserved. While we have raised 65% of the capital needed to fully fund the project, we are seeking public support from the Department of Cultural Affairs and the City Council. It is our hope that as you weigh the budget priorities for Fiscal Year 2021, you will see the value and potential return on investment our Education and Welcome Center will bring to the many families that visit Brooklyn's newest cultural – and oldest – institution. Thank you.

Lisa W. Alpert, Vice President of Development and Programming
718-210-3011 | lisa_alpert@green-wood.com

The Education and Welcome Center at Green-Wood Cemetery



Hello and thank you so much for this opportunity to speak with you about the importance of the performing arts. My name is Mary Rose Lloyd and I am the Artistic Director of the New 42, where it's our mission to make performing arts and cultural engagement a part of everyone's life, from the earliest years onward.

In 1995, thanks in part to the generosity and vision of the City and State, our nonprofit launched, steering the revitalization of 42nd Street by creating The New Victory Theater, New York City's first and only nonprofit performing arts venue for kids and families. Through our international programming, the New Victory is a lens to the world, showcasing artistic disciplines and traditions from a multitude of cultures. We believe audiences of all ages deserve theatrical stories that embrace a variety of narratives, art forms and themes, and that introducing arts experiences that creatively spark imagination serve to broaden a young person's understanding of the world and their place in it.

Indeed, we are proud that Elisabeth Vincentelli in the New York Times Sunday Arts wrote, and I quote, that "The New Victory has radically altered the very way we think of children's entertainment ...the New Vic's essentially reclaimed kids from decades of saccharine, intellectually offensive offerings. This is theater - in the widest sense of the word - that's challenging for all because it doesn't talk down to anybody."

Through our summer dance series, New Victory Dance, we showcase the incredible artistry and diversity of New York City's top choreographers and dance companies with performances specifically curated for young audiences. This initiative provides daytime dance performances and dance education to City-run summer schools, subsidized day camps and social service agencies. New Victory Dance reaches more than 4,000 New York City kids every summer with free tickets that are underwritten by the New 42.

The New Victory also champions innovative, venturesome performing arts creation. Through our [New Victory LabWorks](#) program, New York City-based artists of all disciplines receive support to make new, original works for audiences of all ages. Expanding the canon of high-quality performing arts made for family audiences, more than half of the projects incubated at the New Victory have developed into full productions, touring uniquely American creations across the country and around the world.

During each school year, as the largest provider of live performing arts and arts education to NYC schools, the [New Victory School Partnership program](#) makes it possible for 40,000 kids to join their classmates and see the same exciting live performances as the public does, for just \$2 a ticket, or in the case of New Victory Dance, for free. And for these same students, we visit their classrooms across the city and guide them in free arts workshops inspired by the show on stage. We also train NYC teachers in artistic professional development so that educators can begin to incorporate the arts into their daily curriculum.

Each season, New Victory serves over 60,000 NYC family members with an average single ticket price of just \$18. We have been championing fantastic arts programming for children since our inception and are looking forward to our 25th anniversary season next year, when we plan to highlight our accomplishments while further focusing on greater access to the arts for young people and families. We are looking to take our programming and engagement activities into all five boroughs of New York City through partnerships with other cultural organizations to bring quality performing arts for all ages into their communities. While concentrating on breaking down physical and financial barriers for all of New York's families and school kids, we are doubling down on our belief that access to the arts is a basic human right for all young people.

In November 1989 the United Nations adopted the Conventions of the Right of the Child (CRC) in Geneva, Switzerland, the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights - civil, cultural, economic, political and social. With this document the United Nations extended Human Rights to children, including the right to survival, development, protection from abuse and exploitations, and participation in family, cultural, and social life. Open for signature, ratification and accession, the 54-article document was subsequently adopted by 193 UN countries, with the exception of Somalia and the United States.

Articles 31.1 and 31.2 of the CRC emphasize the rights of the child to rest and leisure and "to participate freely in cultural life and the arts." The belief that children exist in time and are not adults in training can seem novel to some. But think what the adoption of this very simple notion would do for our country's humanity. Whatever is going on in national politics, we must continue to put the children of our community first. Investing in the arts as a mirror to the world to developing human beings is paramount.

However, a recent study shows that while US federal government funding for the arts equals .02% of the nation's GDP, countries in Europe, Scandinavia and Australia each spend .30% on the arts - a 15x greater federal government commitment to the arts than in the U.S. It seems out of order for a country who prides itself on the freedom of thought. The opportunity to change the conversation about the arts from frill to necessity, about funding from subsidy to investment, from serving humans to nurturing the humane, is something we're committed to.

The arts are essential, not add-on.

What better way for us to discuss everyday issues than by vicariously experiencing them through live performance together?

Our role in promoting greater cross-cultural understanding, in helping individuals develop their maximum talents and capabilities, in promoting the full range of human intelligence - not merely academic intelligence - all indicate that arts and culture stand to rise in the hierarchy of educational priorities.

Theaters and schools are engaged in an increasingly symbiotic relationship. Especially as arts education funding dwindles in school systems, theaters of all sizes have assumed more and more of the burden of training young people and exposing them to the arts. In some of our partner schools, the New Victory is the sole provider of arts curriculum. Many of these students have never entered a theater before, much less believed that the medium was for them or had anything to say to them.

Theater functions as a complement and contrast to the digital media all around us - "entertainment" is everywhere. Live performing arts are one-to-one experiences, listening and responding, acting as a caring mentor in every child's journey to discover their beliefs, their voice, or their unique identity as an individual.

In 1963, less than a month before that fateful day on November 22, John F Kennedy spoke about the importance of the arts as a reflection of one's culture. "I see little of more importance to the future of our country and our civilization than full recognition of the place of the artist... When power leads men towards arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the areas of man's concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of his existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses. For art establishes the basic human truth which must serve as the touchstone of our

judgment. We must never forget that art is not a form of propaganda; it is a form of truth."

So, art should be motivated by a concern for justice and establish basic human truths which become the touchstone of our judgment.

Adults have made up their mind about the world around them. Young people are still questioning it. We need the arts for young people in order to ask the questions that no one else is asking. To challenge the world as we think we know it. To be a young person is to be a stranger to a wider world that never quite gets you. Art has a responsibility to reflect the world of its audiences. But also it should go one step further. It should show them the world they don't know, tell them the stories they haven't heard, ask them the questions they haven't thought of, send up provocations for young people to find the answers. It's they who must find them. It's their future.

I am Lindsey Buller Maliekel, Director of Education and Public Engagement at the New 42, focusing specifically on the families and youth of New York City.

What would it look like if all the kids of New York City - the cultural center of the United States - were invited to see world class theater and dance and circus and puppetry?

What would it look like if we decided that the arts are a human right and an essential part of childhood?

What would it look like if New York City - America's cultural standard bearer decided that New Yorkers had a right to arts?

I am so proud to be part of a city that has chosen to open the doors of so many arts institutions to our community through NYC Culture Pass and the Create NYC Cultural Plan and many other programs.

And I am struck by how many young people still feel like they are not particularly welcome in one of New York City's storied theaters. Kids who grew up 2 miles from Times Square - in Harlem or Brownsville or Parkchester or Flushing or Port Richmond - who don't feel like they belong there, until they enter the New Victory doors and see young people just like them, working as Ushers who welcome them into our historic venue.

One of the main learnings from my own experiences welcoming families and kids into a theater, is that it can't stop at opening the doors to spaces. We have to intentionally build relationships with all kinds of NYC residents. We have to look at our workforce and the shows on our stages to ensure that New Yorkers feel that they belong - that the art is FOR THEM. We have to do the work.

I have been honored to work at the New 42 since 2004 doing the work to ensure every New Yorker - especially our young New Yorkers - belong and deserve access to the performing arts and performing arts engagement.

At the New Victory Theater in Times Square, we welcome 40,000 school kids a year for 2\$ a ticket. But we also visit their classrooms for free to invite them to create as artists. We use the themes of our shows to relate to their own lives and help them learn about lives very different from their own.

Every year, we also welcome 60,000 family audience members and invite them to learn about the arts by spending time together in our lobbies, where every child and adult can try some new skills, learn more about the subjects and cultures on stage or just spend some quality time together playing. We also send them additional arts activities they can do at home, together.

This additional engagement around every show has some very solid research behind why it makes such a difference. We completed a 5 year, longitudinal study with research firm WolfBrown that shows us that young people who have an opportunity to learn from teaching artists before a show were almost twice as likely to identify that the show was impactful across a range of measures--including an appreciation for the artistry, the desire to try new things, an appreciation of someone's life that is different from their own and the capacity for self-reflection. AND, this deep level of arts engagement also made them want to go again, and in the future.

But at the New 42, exposure to the arts is more than the shows on stage. Across our organization, we have created over 500,000 hours of paid employment for teenage and college age New Yorkers. Our theaters are staffed by professional young people who reflect New York City and who are dedicating their time with us towards college access and college success.

For one of these programs, we approached CUNYArts and Cultural Corps to partner on a college success program for CUNY community college students with risk factors that make it harder for them to graduate. Our Duke Theater is now staffed completely by CUNY students who are either the first generation in their family to go to college or speak English as an additional language. And New 42 as a whole has almost 20% percent of our own staff that came up through our own Youth Corps programs.

In our other spaces, namely the New 42 Studios, we have hosted more than 800 Broadway shows in rehearsal to help bring their beautiful art to New Yorkers and the world, and we support New York based artists who want to make shows for young people. Those artists have now made over 50 new shows that are out in the world touring for young people!

This kind of work is vital to ensuring that every New Yorker - from the earliest ages onward - can feel the excitement and awe, emotion and resonance, joy and learning that comes from attending live performances. At the New 42, we do the work necessary to not just open our doors, but to invite New Yorkers and honor their experiences in our spaces. To ensure that they see themselves reflected AND see a world that is unfamiliar...this is vital work.

And what would happen if we all decided that every young New Yorker living in the cultural heartbeat of the USA had a right to be included? We are working alongside so many arts organizations in the city who are striving to do the work necessary to work toward that reality. Can you take steps to prioritize this access and engagement to the arts as part of the city's priorities?

161-04 Jamaica Avenue, 5th Floor
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Exploring the Metropolis, Inc.

Workspace Solutions for NYC's Performing Arts Communities

New York City Council
Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations
Committee
Council Chambers – City Hall
Preliminary Budget Hearing Testimony FY21
Wednesday March 4, 2020 11:30 AM

Since 1982, Exploring the Metropolis (EtM) has focused on solving the workspace needs of New York City's performing artists. Currently, we administer the EtM Con Edison Composer Residencies and the EtM Choreographer + Composer Residencies, now taking applications. Capping five years work in the borough of Queens, last August we moved our administrative operations to a shared workspace at the Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning, in order to be closer to the artists and communities we serve.

In the last decade, our residency programs have:

- **Provided more than \$1,000,000 worth of no-cost rehearsal space and cash awards to New York City artists**
- **Supported more than 100 composers, choreographers and performing artists with free space and stipends, and provided more than 50,000 hours of free rehearsal space**
- **Supported more 80 free public programs for thousands of New Yorkers**

Previous EtM Artists-in-Residence have gone on to win recognition from the Jerome Foundation, Grammys, Latin Grammys, Pulitzer Foundation, the Kleban Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, Baryshnikov Arts Center Cage Cunningham Award, American Composers Orchestra, New Music/USA, MacDowell Colony, Larson Foundation and the

Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

Artists at all career stages in NYC need this support not just emerging artists. Workspace can be prohibitively expensive even for those at a more established level.

Last year, we were happy to receive a sizeable increase in Cultural Development Fund awards from DCLA. We ask that these increases be baselined in order to build upon the work of CreateNYC.

For FY 21, we fully support increased funding for workforce development for the Cultural Institutions Group, including our partners at JCAL and Flushing Town Hall. We also ask the Council to remember that smaller organizations like EtM need increased funding in order to properly pay and retain our own workforce. EtM makes it a policy to offer health coverage to all employees, full and part-time. This policy increases our administrative costs, but it is one we feel is necessary.

Thank you to Councilmember Jimmy Van Bramer and the Cultural Affairs Committee for the opportunity to testify. We would also like to thank Councilmember Van Bramer for his exemplary stewardship of this committee over the past decade.

ARTs East New York Inc.

Testimony on the 2020 Preliminary Budget

Cultural Testimony

FOR THE RECORD

Good Morning, my name is Catherine Mbali Green-Johnson. I am the Founder and Executive Director of ARTs East New York Inc. Thank you Chairperson Jimmy Van Bramer and the City Council for the opportunity to testify. For the past 10 years my organization has focused on providing diverse and innovative approaches to cultural programming for the community of East New York, Brooklyn. Staging an 8-week multicultural performance festival at our local farmers market, traveling with students from East New York Family Academy to Cienfuegos, Cuba for cultural research, transforming a 20,000 sq.ft. vacant lot into a cultural hub by retrofitting 12 shipping containers into storefronts for local entrepreneurs and studio space for local artists and lastly hosting exhibitions at our Community Cultural Center. All of this, located in the heart of East New York, and all of this without adequate and sustainable funding mechanisms. Yet, these are merely just a few highlights of the long list of initiatives we have offered to our constituents over these years.

I am here today, to join with other members of the cultural community, to not only ask for a budget funding increase to the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) that is to be equally divided between the CIGs (Cultural Institutions Group) and the CDF (Cultural Development Fund). I am here today to request that this committee requires the DCLA develop a Stabilization Trust for underfunded local cultural organizations that are located in Affordable Housing units and are at risk of displacement in aggressively gentrifying communities.

In just a few weeks, ARTs East New York will be closing the doors of our Community Cultural Center. There have been numerous reasons for this decision, late payments from city agencies, philanthropic funds that don't reach communities like East New York and while there is a plentiful portfolio of programmatic funds available, there continues to be a huge gap in general operating funds that ensures that organizations like ours can sustain our work. This approach to funding will protect small grassroots organizations across New York City from this same fate. Our Cultural Center is located in a new Affordable Housing building in East New York. We were the first of the 3 non-profit organizations to move into the storefront units while the additional 4 units remain vacant to this day. We activated the streetscape and provided building residents and neighbors in the area with our town hall events, exhibition openings, jazz brunches and youth music and arts programming where none had been offered previously. Grassroots organizations serving

local communities that are funded by DCLA and are located in affordable housing units should be better protected and treated with the same considerations as the cities Cultural Institutions Groups (CIG's) in an effort to sustain and preserve what makes this city so great.

As we all know, arts and culture play a central role in New York's cultural identity, history, and economy. The arts are a magnet, attracting businesses and keeping them here, creating jobs and subsequently increasing property values. As a result of these, artists and arts organizations are being rapidly displaced out of the City due to the spiked demand and prices for real estate.

According to a May 2017 Forbes article, New York City markets have endured substantial increases in rent during the last six years; often producing double-digit rent growth that is not sustainable over the long-term. With rent increases averaging 30 percent, keeping space for arts and culture organizations have become a significant challenge.

To mitigate this issue, a Stabilization Trust creates innovative financial vehicles to secure permanent space for community arts and culture organizations located in neighborhoods that have been historically underfunded by DCLA yet have endured over the years of

disinvestment. This enables arts entities to sustain the creativity and capacity necessary to promote lively and stable neighborhoods.

Chairman, the Committee can do this ensuring that DCLA establish this Stabilization Trust by offering the following:

- Creating a new and inventive approach to asset development for cultural organizations
- Contributing to neighborhood revitalization strategies with arts at the center of economic and community development.
- Forging unprecedented public-private partnerships by demonstrating a new philanthropic strategy for the arts by recycling financial resources.
- Mitigating space challenges for arts organizations in one of the hottest real estate markets and most important cultural communities in the United States.
- Serving a mix of cultural organizations, artists and a community of people that is diverse by age, race, gender, economic status and cultural background
- Identifying Affordable Housing opportunities to secure sustainable space for grassroots arts organizations in selected NYC neighborhoods
- Building the capacity of cultural organizations to lease or own property
- Bundling leases to sustain affordable rents for those not prepared to buy

This new increase would provide DCLA with the fiscal capacity to increase funding for underfunded groups that secures space for community arts organizations and assist in the development to strengthen their financial and organizational capacity to purchase permanent facilities and navigate complex real estate issues. By collaborating with local arts councils, businesses, civic leaders, funders and artists, this increase celebrates, promotes, and preserves artistic and cultural traditions and innovations in every community across the five boroughs. This request is in alignment with the goals of the NYC Cultural plan that we all invested so much time and money in creating. In that document we collectively agreed to have NYC remain a vibrant and thriving home for arts organizations that will foster creativity, community participation, economic development and neighborhood well-being. This monumental increase to the Department of Cultural Affairs and Stabilization Trust furthers those goals and is yet another step towards investment to sustain at-risk arts and cultural organizations across this great city. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to our continued partnership.

City Council Hearing

March 4, 2020

Catherine A. Green-Johnson

Executive Director/Founder

ARTs East New York Inc.

National Sawdust testimonial for City Council DCLA budget hearing on culture

National Sawdust is a dedicated arts and cultural workspace for artists to rehearse, create, document, and share their work with audiences and for New Yorkers to strengthen community bonds across cultures, musical tastes, and differing backgrounds. Department of Cultural Affairs and City Council support from Councilman Levin are essential and critical components of our artist residency, community engagement, and performance programs. As a woman-led and founded organization, our programs prioritize opportunities to empower women, non-binary, and underrepresented voices.

We believe that artistic expression empowers all of us to create a more inclusive world. Our arts education program, Student CoLab, engages young people by using the power of music discovery to inspire interdisciplinary art making which reflects their own experience of the world, impacting both their lives and the lives of people within the community. One Student CoLab participant told us, "*I have learned that music is a safe place. That I can express myself without fear...*" Each year up to 20 young people from El Puente Beacon Leadership Program participate in a three-month program of workshops and performances through Student CoLab. El Puente uses pre-professional arts and sports as a tool for young people to create and influence social change, peace, and justice.

National Sawdust's Artists-in-Residence Program supports a diverse group of 8 mid-career music and multidisciplinary ensembles and artists for the creation of new work. The program is unique in that it provides artists with options for support that correspond to where they are in the development of their projects. Some may require more rehearsal time and space as they begin a new project. Others who are further along in the development may want to focus on production in preparation for their public performance. Some may want to expand their capacity as artists by exploring teaching artist opportunities. Artists are encouraged to experiment with adventurous ideas and take advantage of as many components of the residency as they can over the course of the year.

As an example of the impact of our residencies, the musician Yuka C Honda has said, "[As a self-taught musician], I never knew that I was allowed to explore the deeper side of musical ideas that were hibernating inside me. Being a National Sawdust artist-in-residence made me realize these dreams.... My life has become so enriched by discovering that the possibilities that live in my creative consciousness can be realized. National Sawdust as showed me this! "

Yuka is one of the over 40 artists and ensembles who have participated in these Dept of Cultural Affairs and City Council funded programs. This year's increased DCLA support has helped us guarantee an even higher level of support for these programs. We are grateful for the increased funding and encourage you to guarantee these increases in the budget moving forward.

DCLA supported projects at National Sawdust reach an average of 20,000+ audiences annually with 150+ performances. Over 70% of the artists and audiences served are New York City residents. Participating artists receive over 400 hours of workspace to create, rehearse, and record their work - an increasing vital and rare opportunity for NYC artists. NS additionally provides over 540 hours of career development to over 30 artists and ensembles annually through its residency programs.

In this era of contemporary gentrification, it often feels as if the cards are stacked against artists and small organizations in NYC and yet National Sawdust stands out for proving that an artist-run creative incubator can succeed in reinvigorating how NYC's essential civic vitality is fostered through music to connect people living in a polarized moment in history. To further stabilize and guarantee that National Sawdust can increase its contributions to NYC's cultural vitality, we are currently in the quiet phase of a capital campaign to acquire our building from its owners. The early and enthusiastic support from Councilmember Levin and the Brooklyn Borough President for this effort has galvanized our efforts to build support for this campaign. For this and for the continued program support, thank you.

WEEKSVILLE HERITAGE CENTER

March 4, 2020

**NYC Council Preliminary Budget Hearing
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations
The Honorable Jimmy Van Bramer, Chair**

Rob Fields, President & Executive Director, Weeksville Heritage Center

Good afternoon, Chairman Van Bramer and members of the Committee. I am Rob Fields, President and Executive Director of Weeksville Heritage Center, the newest member of the Cultural Institutions Group and, as you all are keenly aware, the first in over 20 years. You're aware of this because many members of the City Council played a significant role in making this happen. We are grateful for the support we've received from you, Chairman Van Bramer, member Laurie Cumbo in your role as Majority Leader, Speaker Johnson, our own council member Rob Cornegy, Jr., and Daneek Miller, as well as many other members of the New York City Council. Thank you, all.

That support allows us to continue working with other cultural institutions across the city, including the Brooklyn Museum, BAM, Brooklyn Children's Museum, and the Museum of the City of New York, to name a few. And in addition to taking our relationship with DCLA to a new level, we'll also be able to continue and deepen our work with NYCHA, the NYC Human Rights Commission, DYCD and the Parks Department.

Why do people visit Weeksville? There are a couple of reasons. First, Weeksville invites all New Yorkers to learn about a little known piece of our city's history, as well as its black residents who were building a community of thriving institutions in the decades leading up to the Civil War. And today, Weeksville mixes historic preservation, education, arts & culture and civic engagement programming in a way that centers black history, culture and creativity right in the heart of Central Brooklyn.

We're all aware of the positive impact the arts has on communities. Weeksville has engaged youth through partnerships with OBT (Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow), Cristo Rey Academy and Bed-Stuy Restoration Corporation and over the years have given over 20 students experience of working at a cultural institution based in Brooklyn. To address the lack of diversity in the museum field, we've been running an internship program for graduate students in library science and museum and archival studies. Between 2016 and the end of this calendar year, we will have provided 15 students with valuable exposure to the field. And, yes, this is something we'd like to see evolve.

Going forward, we want to be thoughtful about how we grow our workforce development efforts. We are currently working with the City to offer space to a local aquaponics farm. As part of their being on-site, they'll offer a green market on the weekends, as well as programmatic activations and training in urban agriculture for local residents. Further,

we'd like to work with our landscape architect to develop training for local residents to learn landscape architecture and grounds care.

Today I'm here not only as a proud representative of Weeksville, but also as a representative of the CIG. What we'd ask the committee and the City Council to consider are the following:

To expand Workforce Development work at each of our institutions, we are asking the City for an additional \$20M in FY21 funding - \$10M of which would go to the CIG, \$10M of which would go to the program groups.

It is our understanding that the City may be facing a budget shortfall from the State. As partners of the City, we ask that if these budget constraints make this additional funding infeasible for FY21, that the City ensure that at a minimum we are held harmless, including all baselined and non-baselined funding from FY20. For all FY20 funding to be restored, we ask that the \$25.4M that was added last year on top of the baselined budget be included again this year.

In closing, I'd like to thank the Committee Chair, Members of the Committee and the City at Large for its support of our cultural community.

New Yorkers for Culture & Arts

160 Sixth Avenue #2

NY NY 10013

NY4CA.org

Remarks to Preliminary Budget Hearing on Cultural Affairs

Mar 3, 2020

LUCY SEXTON LUCY@NY4CA.ORG

Thank you Chair Van Bramer and City Council members for allowing me to testify, and for all the work you do for arts and culture in our city. New Yorkers for Arts and Culture is a citywide coalition working for a city in which every citizen has the ability to engage in the life-affirming, community-strengthening power of culture.

In the past two years this Committee, under Chair Van Bramer and Councilmember Dromm's leadership has done extraordinary work increasing support for culture, resulting in the largest cultural budget in NYC history—bigger than that of the NY State Council on the Arts and even bigger than the National Endowment for the Arts. Which also points up how much those budgets to be increased!

The work of the city's first cultural plan CreateNYC has begun to make inroads in the inequitable funding practices, but more work needs to be done to ensure that cultural groups and

artists working in every neighborhood of every borough has what they need to survive and thrive.

Last year another big success was the induction of Weeksville Heritage Center into the Cultural Institutions Group. But it shouldn't have taken their having to launch a crowdfunding campaign to make that happen. And we shouldn't have to wait another 20 years to see another organization become part of the CIG. We need a transparent process and timeline.

This year I want to bring ARTs East NY to your attention. They are one of the ONLY cultural assets in that neighborhood and they do extraordinary work: providing space for art classes, theater performances, community gatherings, and much more. Two of my favorite programs are their Farmers Market happenings where they set up art making booths and small performances in the farmers market to help ensure that the market survives. They also convert old shipping containers into art studios for artists residencies, in a program called ReNew Lots. Their founder and director Catherine MBali Green-Johnson came to a cultural convening in Brooklyn last week and announced they would be closing their doors in April if they do not receive emergency funding. Catherine couldn't be here today but I am forwarding her statement to the committee.

At a time when we are more and more aware of the way that culture affects all aspects of community life, from improving education outcomes to increased longevity for seniors to

lowered incarceration rates, we should be ashamed that we are not supporting cultural organizations at sustainable levels.

So we support our colleagues call for an increase of \$20M to the budget, we call for the reinstatement of last year's \$25M increase after adoption, and we implore the committee to work now to baseline the much needed increases to the cultural budget you have made in the past few years. We will be seeing a huge turnover in city government in 2021 and we want to be sure this legacy of robust cultural support is protected and built on.

New Yorkers for Culture & Arts is in the middle of a series of cultural convenings in every borough where we are gathering arts and culture groups to discuss how we can improve policy to make our work sustainable and strong. The response has been incredible with an amazing 90 plus groups attending last week's discussion in Brooklyn. We are a strong and active sector that is critical to every aspect of the lives of New Yorkers and to the vibrancy of our city. We look forward to working with you all on ways that we can transform this city and be leaders in the creation of a city that works for all its citizens.

Thank you for all your work on behalf of the many artists and cultural organizations across the city.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/4/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kim Chan

Address: 80 W 6th St

I represent: National Sawdust

Address: _____

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Name: RANDALL BOARSCHIEDT

Address: 127 W. 70 St / 10023

I represent: Archive of NYC Cultural Policy

Address: 121 Ave of Americas / 10013

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Name: DAVID NUSSENBAUM

Address: _____

I represent: BRONX ARTS ENSEMBLE

Address: 80 VCP South, BX 10463

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Name: Sophia Allen

Address: 218 E 18th St, Garden Floor, New York NY 10003

I represent: Dance / NYC

Address: _____

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Name: Natalie Correa

Address: 217 West 147th Street New York, NY 10039

I represent: National Dance Institute

Address: 217 West 147th Street New York, NY 10039

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Name: Desirée Gordon, Brooklyn Arts Council

Address: 20 Jay Street, 616 BK, NY 11201

I represent: Brooklyn Arts Council

Address: _____

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Name: Jennifer Wright Cook

Address: Queens Public Library 1

I represent: The Field

Address: _____

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Date: 3/4/2020

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Name: Joe Reece

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: Local 374, DC37

Address: (NYPL)

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/4/2020

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Name: John Hyslop

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: President Local 1321, DC37

Address: (Queens Public Library)

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Date: 3/4/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Valerie Paley

Address: _____

I represent: New-york Historical Society

Address: _____

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Name: Tiffany Bryant

Address: _____

I represent: The Public Theater

Address: _____

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Name: David Chase

Address: _____

I represent: Ballet Hispanico

Address: _____

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Name: Siri Horvitz

Address: _____

I represent: Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts

Address: _____

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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Name: Elizabeth Henderson

Address: _____

I represent: 92y

Address: _____

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/4/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lindsey Maliekal and Mary Rose

Address: Lloyd

I represent: New 42nd Street Theater

Address: _____

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Name: LINDA E JOHNSON

Address: R

I represent: BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

Address: _____

*CULTURE (DELA) **THE COUNCIL** *GREEN INFATTMENT
THE CITY OF NEW YORK *STORMWATER
RUNOFF

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Name: LISA ALPERT

Address: _____

I represent: GREEN WOOD CEMETERY

Address: _____

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Name: Dennis M. Walcott

Address: _____

I represent: Queens Public Library

Address: _____

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Name: Anthony "Tony" Marx

Address: 445 5th Avenue NY, NY 10016

I represent: New York Public Library

Address: _____

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Date: _____

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Name: Taryn Sacramone

Address: Queens Theatre

I represent: CIG

Address: _____

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Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rob Fields

Address: Weeksfield

I represent: CIG

Address: _____

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Name: Lucy Sexton

Address: _____

I represent: NY4CA (New Yorkers For Culture + the Arts)

Address: _____

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Turquoise Martin

Address: 178 Avenue D NY NY 10009

I represent: JustLeadership USA, Hunter Cnty

Address: 1900 Lexington Ave

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DAVID JOHNSTON

Address: _____

I represent: EXPLORING THE METROPOLIS

Address: JAMAICA, NY

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Acting Commissioner Kathleen Hughes

Address: 31 Chambers St

I represent: NYC Dept of Cultural Affairs

Address: _____

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