

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND 1
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS
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16 B E F O R E: James G. Van Bramer,
17 Chairperson
18
19 COUNCIL MEMBERS:
20 Joseph C. Borelli
21 Laurie A. Cumbo
22 Mark Gjonaj
23 Francisco P. Moya
24
25

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
2 INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 2

3 A P P E A R A N C E S

4 Dennis Walcott
5 President and CEO of the Queens Public Library

6 Anthony Marx
7 President and CEO of the New York Public Library

8 Linda Johnson
9 President and CEO of the Brooklyn Public Library

10 Kathleen Hughes
11 New York City Department of Cultural Affairs,
12 Acting Commissioner

13 John Hyslop
14 President of Local 1321

15 Taryn Sacramone
16 Executive Director of Queens Theatre

17 Rob Fields
18 President and Executive Director at Weeksville
19 Heritage Center

20 Lucy Sexton
21 New Yorkers for Culture and Arts

22 Siri Horvitz
23 Director of Government Relations for Lincoln
24 Center

25 Tiffany Bryant
The Public Theater

Desiree Gordon
Director of Programs and Strategy at the Brooklyn
Arts Council

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 3

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Valerie Paley
New York Historical Society Museum and Library

Mary Rose Lloyd
Artistic Director of the new 42nd Street

Lisa Alpert
Vice President of Development and Programming at
Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn

Randy Bourscheidt
Founder and Director of the archive in New York
City Cultural Policy

Turquoise Martin
JustLeadershipUSA member

Elizabeth Henderson
Grants Manager at the 92nd Street Y

David Nussenbaum
Represent the Bronx Arts Ensemble

Jennifer Wright Cook
Executive Director of the Field

David Johnston
Executive Director of Exploring the Metropolis

David Chase
Associate Director of Institutional Relations at
Ballet Hispanico

Natalie Correa
Program Assistant with National Dance Institute

Sophia Allen
The Reach and Advocacy Coordinator for DanceNYC

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

4

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Kim Chan

Deputy Director at National Sawdust

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND 5
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [GAVEL] Good morning
3 everyone. We are ready. I want to welcome everyone
4 to the Fiscal 2021 Preliminary Budget Hearing for our
5 libraries. This is the Committee on Cultural
6 Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup
7 Relations.

8 We're first going to be hearing from our three
9 public library systems and there maybe one or two
10 members of the public who want to speak on libraries.
11 We have the Acting Commissioner of the Department of
12 Cultural Affairs, scheduled to testify at 11:30 and
13 then some additional members of the public who wish
14 to testify on the Cultural Affairs Budget and I want
15 to welcome everyone who is here today. I want to
16 start our hearing out of respect for the time of the
17 three Presidents and CEO's of the library systems.

18 I know other members of the Committee will be
19 coming and going throughout the day and because folks
20 have asked, these are reading glasses. That happened
21 this weekend, which is good sign that I have past 50
22 years of age.

23 UNIDENTIFIED: Welcome to my world.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, thank you. I
25 had resisted it for a while and looked at these

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND 6
2 INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

3 papers and really was just making it up at some
4 point. So, now, I'm actually going to read what's in
5 front of me now that I can see it.

6 So, welcome to Dennis Walcott President and CEO
7 of the Queens Public Library, Linda Johnson President
8 and CEO of the Brooklyn Public Library and Tony Marx
9 President and CEO of the New York Public Library and
10 we are now formally in session.

11 So, the Fiscal 2021 Preliminary Expense and
12 Capital Budget for our three public library systems
13 is robust but could always be more robust.

14 The Administration is proposing \$410.7 million
15 for the three systems in expense funding and the
16 preliminary capital commitment plan which covers
17 Fiscal's '20-'24 include \$762 million for the library
18 systems.

19 Now, I'm very proud to be a member of the City
20 Council that a year in and year out fights for our
21 public library systems and we have had some very good
22 years as it relates to library funding for the last
23 few years under this Speaker Corey Johnson and
24 previous Speakers and of course, as the Chair of this
25 Committee and as a member of the budget negotiating

team, I fight incredibly hard for our public library systems.

So, we are also finding ourselves in a period of some turbulence and obviously we'll have to see how things play out over the next few weeks and months to see if at any point the budget is adjusted in a way that is not how we would like to see it adjusted on behalf of our public library systems. But for now, we know what's in the budget, we know what's not been baselined and of course we know the libraries have additional needs that they are going to talk about and obviously, I will be there fighting every step of the way.

Last year, the Council allocated an additional \$15 million in funding for our three public library systems. That was in addition to a \$16 million increase in baseline funding that the Council fought for and urged. Needless to say, that \$15 million, which is being used for so many different vital programs and services needs to continue to be included and I'm sure our three President and CEO's will talk about not only that funding but additional funding that is needed for our libraries.

So, as it relates to the capital projects, I know that deferred maintenance and project shortfalls continues to be a concern of all three systems as well as their ongoing need to embark on new and exciting projects. Building new libraries, building new expansions, renovating existing libraries and we want to make sure that all that work can continue to be done.

It is the Council's responsibility to ensure that the City's budget is fair, transparent and accountable to New Yorkers and we certainly will continue to push for all of that to take place. I want to thank all of the folks, the men and women who work for the public library systems who are amazing public servants at all times and who are the first line of defense, and those who welcome people into the libraries. And we certainly will ask at least one question about Corona Virus and COVID and how you all are preparing to make sure that the staff are protected and knowledgeable about all that we should be knowledgeable at this particular time. And also, how the library systems believe they may be impacted by what's happening in our world today.

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND 9
2 INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

3 So, I know that City's first readers, adult
4 literacy and so many other things are being funded by
5 the Council and all the money that we fought for to
6 include in the libraries and I look forward to
7 hearing from all three of the systems and then, I
8 believe we may be hearing from DC37 Representatives
9 after the three President and CEO's speak. And then
10 we will get to our beloved Cultural Affairs after we
11 do libraries.

12 So, with that, I want to thank my staff, Jack
13 Bernatovicz my Legislative Director, Matt Wallace my
14 Chief of Staff, as well as the team on this Committee
15 Brenda McKinney our Legislative Policy Analyst,
16 Kristy Dwyer or Committee Council Brenda McKinney,
17 Legislative Policy Analyst Kristy Dwyer and the
18 Principal Financial Analyst Aliya Ali.

19 And with that, I will say that I think I'm lot
20 more fun when I read off the cuff and I do this
21 extemporaneously but it is also important to read
22 what is before me.

23 So, with that, I will invite you guys to testify
24 as you see fit.

25 DENNIS WALCOTT: Sure, so it's important to both
read and be able to see what you are reading. That

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 10

helps tremendously, so thank you Chair, I appreciate that. Since these are progressives, it has been a period of adjustment always as far as glasses are concerned.

So, good morning, I'm Dennis Walcott, President and CEO of the Queens Public Library. It is a pleasure to be here. Thank you, Chair Van Bramer, and thanks to Speaker Johnson and the Members of this 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 our dynamic institutions. 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 the Queens, Brooklyn and New York Public Libraries and I got to again, deviate a quick second because I was about to sit over there and then Linda said, no, no, no, you sit here because you've always sat here. She has always sat there and Tony's always sat there and why I mention that is because between the three of us at the libraries and your leadership, we have

made a great team, both where we sit and the advocacy and the implementation of programs at the New York public libraries and I thank you again for your leadership around that. Without you and others, what we are doing now would not be possible at all.

And Tony, you don't have to move, I'm just letting you know what happened beforehand. Mix it up next time, okay.

In Fiscal Year 2019, New Yorkers in every corner of our City relied on New York City's library systems to transform their lives and strengthen communities. We welcomed over 30.5 million people into our 217 branches. Our books, DVD's, magazines and other materials circulated more than 45.7 million times; more than 4.6 million individuals attended our 264,000 programs.

When the City supports libraries, it empowers individuals, it empowers families and communities. We greatly appreciate Mayor de Blasio's baselining his allocation of \$16 million to libraries in the Fiscal Year 2020 budget. Chief among our expense requests for this year is the reauthorization and baselining of the Council's Fiscal Year 2020, \$14 million in allocation to libraries.

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND 12
2 INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

3 Through your financial commitment, we have been
4 able to maintain six day service, preserve our
5 staffing levels, protect our collection budget and
6 address emergency repairs. We collectively hired
7 over 61 librarians, custodians, library workers with
8 this funding and have plans to hire even more. We
9 increased our collection budget enabling us to
10 acquire more books in multiple languages, eBooks and
11 other materials.

12 We have been able to address emergencies in our
13 buildings more expeditiously. My colleague Linda
14 will discuss our important capital needs in a moment.
15 However, for Queens, with the capital infrastructure
16 and technology needs that total \$491 million, it is
17 imperative to have these expense funds available so
18 that we can make needed repairs and avoid more
19 complicated costly and lengthy projects.

20 Public libraries are essential to creating a
21 fairer city. With your support, we have been able to
22 deliver for the city on some of the major initiatives
23 such as you know, IDNYC, Early Literacy, voter
24 registration and currently the 2020 census. In an
25 age when this information can spread rapidly in a
society where inequality continues to grow and, in a

time, when a climate of fear discourages new immigrants and others from participating in the American dream, libraries are needed now more than ever before.

We have great fortune of serving in a city whose leaders Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Johnson, Chair Van Bramer and all of you recognize the value of what we can do for the public each day. In order for us to remain New York City's most vibrant, trusted, open and democratic institutions, we must continue to have the necessary resources to build upon. All of the great things we have accomplished as a result of your leadership.

I now turn to my great colleague, the esteem Dr. Dr. Anthony Marx who will discuss our operational needs and our plans to increase access and expand opportunities for children and teens. Dr. Marx.

TONY MARX: Thank you, Deputy Mayor and President Walcott, and thanks to Chair Jimmy Van Bramer as always. A huge champion for all things library and all things New York, as well as of course to the Speaker and the rest of the committee and the entire City Council for your continuing strong support.

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND 14
2 INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

3 Thanks to that, libraries are doing more than
4 ever as Dennis described. We've been expanding
5 branches, expanding programs, ensuring an accurate
6 count in the Census and that's just the very
7 beginning. There are of course no shortage of needs
8 in New York and we are particularly mindful of those
9 amongst the most vulnerable in our populations. We
10 are uniquely positioned to help, we're the most
11 visited civic institution in New York and we are
12 proud, all three of us, all the libraries of New York
13 proud to do all we can. To continue to do this as
14 Dennis mentioned, we need \$24 million in restored and
15 additional operating funding in FY21. The bulk of
16 that is the \$14 million that Dennis was describing
17 that has not baselined in our previous budgets that
18 we rely on and without it, we will not be able to
19 sustain the gains that we together have made in
20 recent years.

21 In addition, we are asking for \$10 million of
22 funding for initiatives particularly to increase
23 access to our services and to best support the City's
24 priorities. The most notable part of this ask is, in
25 terms of City, supporting the city's educational
initiatives, especially for children and teens and

the center piece is finally, to request the
elimination of fines for children and teens.
Something that so many other major urban cities have
already done with success. We need to eliminate a
key economic barrier to entry for many families.

Currently, when card accrue \$15 in fines, they
are blocked. As of 2019, that meant 60,000 blocked
cards belonging to kids and teens, that's 6-0-. In
2017, when we did a full assessment, 80 percent of
the block cards of use were located in the lowest
income communities of New York. Those are already
communities where we know kids are not reading at the
rate, they are not borrowing library books at the
rate of the middle class or upper class neighborhoods
of New York and we just cannot let that stand.

So, we're looking for a solution here. Our front
line staff know that there are families in those high
need areas who simply avoid getting library cards or
checking out any material, simply for fear of the
fines. We shut out of the libraries for \$15, the
future of New York even though we will never receive
that \$15 anyway. We've been discussing and
evaluating this for a long time, we've had read down
your finds programs and amnesty programs. We've

maintained a Fine Free My Library NYC program for eligible public school students and we know from all that experience, as we know from experiences of our peer city's that the majority of library patrons simply return their books on time regardless of penalties.

So, it has no positive outcome for us, it only has the negative outcome for society for the City by keeping people from using the library. For instance, in my library NYC, participants checked out 30 percent more items than their counterparts because they had fine free cards. And after the 2017 amnesty, we saw a 60 percent increase in the percentage of children and teens who were previously blocked and then started checking out materials again. The most pronounced of course, in the lowest income neighborhoods.

So, we need to get kids reading outside of the classroom and this is clearly the right move at the right time, if not a bit late at this point. That we absolutely must get to.

In addition, we want to launch some new programs and services for helping kids and teens outside of the classroom. At the New York Public Library, we

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

17

are finally opening a permanent exhibition of our
treasures in November. We want to invest in
programming and bring this information. We want
every high school student in New York, all five
boroughs to come and see these amazing treasures and
learn what the library, all of our libraries can do
for them.

In addition, in Queens, they are eager to have
additional funding to expand their popular toddler
learning center and their kickoff to kindergarten
initiatives. At Brooklyn Public Library, they are
eager to expand their library and the tomorrow
program school outreach ESOL classes and to increase
book drops at 30 locations.

In addition to those educational initiatives, we
face rising costs particularly in IT and data based
licenses and maintenances of those data bases.

You'll be hearing from Linda in terms of the basic
capital needs, but we also have non-capital eligible
needs and emergency projects, whether it's boiler
replacements at our library for the blind, HVAC
across the systems, immediately being able to repair
leaks in roofs, so that the problem doesn't escalate
and end up costing all of us more money. Air

conditioning at the Schomburg for instance, just to name a few projects. The people of New York, as you know so well, rely on their libraries and they deserve them to be open, to be safe, to be in well repair and to be inspiring spaces.

Your investment over the last years has made the libraries strong. In fact, just last year, the New York Public Library saw an increase of 23 percent in new card holders joining the library. There is great momentum here. We need to maintain that momentum as well as in our capital projects. In this era, which Dennis made reference to, so many of our democratic ideals are being attacked and New York City's dedication to one of the foundational elements of our democracy to libraries, is as strong a statement as well as a reality, as this City and its City Council can make in terms of investing not only in the future of our citizens but in the future of our republic.

We ask you to continue that investment and we thank you and now, I turn to Linda Johnson.

LINDA JOHNSON: Thank you Tony. Thank you, Chairman Van Bramer, as well as Speaker Johnson, Majority Leader Cumbo and Chair Dromm and member of

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 and I echo
my colleagues requests for the City's continued
support, perhaps most vehemently about the Fine Free
Initiative that we're all particularly excited about
and feel an obligation to be able to offer to the
citizens of New York City.

Our desire and your I'm sure, is to serve the
public at the level they've come to expect and that
they deserve. Today, we submit our Fiscal Year 2021
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 the capital request of \$300 million, \$100
million for each system.

Now, the next paragraphs of my testimony, you
could probably repeat to me verbatim. I've decided
to take a page from Dennis Walcott's play book and
say it's in the paperwork and the fact is, I just
can't sit here and once again talk to you about leaky
roofs, about HVAC systems that cost five times more

than they should to repair or to replace about the \$500,000 in expense funding that I had to spend on capital projects last year. About the \$52 million that the Brooklyn Public Library has in shortfalls and I think that my colleagues have similar numbers. \$100 million in one case and \$50 in the other. The testimony today in 2020, is exactly the same as it was for the last five years.

Now, five years ago, it was a highwater mark when we were included in the five year plan and truly, ten year plan rather, and truly, that made an enormous difference to us and so, we're not in a capital plan year but as a result, we need \$100 million for each system to make up for the fact that we haven't been able to do long term planning.

I don't want to whine and complain because there is some good news and so, while we have emergency needs and we have priority projects that need funding, there are a few projects where we have the funding to approach buildings comprehensively and, in those cases, we've made a lot of progress. Eastern Parkway, [INAUDIBLE 41:52], Canarsie, Brownsville and New Utrecht libraries for example. Full scale renovations like these are only possible because of

that one time inclusion of funds in the city's ten year capital plan.

We're proud to be including interactive public sessions and design charrettes for these projects, first with our DDC sponsored projects and 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 priority renovations and projects meet our technology needs.

But these projects are too few, our forecast for Fiscal Year 2021 includes \$35 million in priority infrastructure projects and branch overhauls. Without funding to meet these needs, we risk backsliding on all of our progress. We know what needs to be done to maintain our physical plant. For example, we're transforming a languishing infrastructure upgrade at Walt Whitman Library into a much needed full building renovation.

Initially, this library was in need of an HVAC system and a fire safety and accessibility, but the project now includes a new garden space exterior restoration and interior upgrades and as you've heard

me testify about in the past, the proceeds from our Brooklyn Heights Library redevelopment, an additional fund from the states downtown revitalization initiative, we will be able to renovate and reconfigure the main floor and meeting room to maximize space for patrons.

Though we are working hard to piece the funding together, the project needs an additional \$5.5 million in construction costs to move forward. Funding that we had hoped would be included in the January plan. 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 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 will be open in time for Census day. It will house a passport office IDNYC office and bring together community and civic engagement programming at the library. We would like to be celebrating more achievements with you and 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 2021 budget. \$300
million shared among our systems will allow us to
fill our shortfalls, advance priority projects and
improve branch technology.

We also look to you to solidify the city's
investment in libraries by restoring and increasing
operating funds by \$24 million dollars. New Yorkers
are relying on you to ensure that libraries are most
accessible, democratic institutions remain strong for
all who come through our doors and that as promised,
they remain wide open 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 this mission.

Thank you.

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND 24
2 INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

3 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much to
4 all three of our President and CEO's of our public
5 library systems and I also want to congratulate you
6 for working out the seating arrangement for the dais
7 so concretely.

8 I also want to recognize we've been joined by
9 Council Member Francisco Moya from Queens on the
10 Committee and so, needless to say, you know where I
11 am on all of this. This is the 22nd year in a row
12 that I have been at this hearing. The first 11, I
13 sat right there as a member of the Queens Public
14 Library staff and this is my 11th Preliminary Budget
15 hearing as the Chair of the Committee, 22 years
16 running.

17 LINDA JOHNSON: We would say who's counting but
18 we know.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And so, we've had some
20 difficult years over that time and then we've had
21 some big victories and we have working with this
22 Speaker and this Council had some big victories over
23 the last few years. And obviously want to continue
24 to build on that momentum as I think Linda said in
25 her testimony, and make sure that you can continue to
do the great work that all three systems do.

So, I wanted to ask a couple of things and just because it's front of mind for all of us and I have had some folks reach out to me about this question with respect to the corona virus. How are you preparing you know, the staff and customers? Obviously, our libraries are incredibly busy and we want that to continue to be the case and also, in some ways more relevant to what we're talking about today. Have you had any discussions or is there any thought to how this might affect the budgets?

TONY MARX: Thank you Mr. Chairman. So, we, I think we are all focused on this issue of course. There is not perfect information to put it mildly. We have to all be absorbing the information as it comes. In the case of libraries, we have to help people find that information. That is essential both for the continued health of everyone as well as to ensure that there isn't any unnecessary panic over what's happening.

Just yesterday, the senior staff of the library met after lots of convenings of groups of the staff and we announced that we would place a restriction on all nonessential business travel for staff for the next four weeks, simply as a precaution. That we are

encouraging staff to reconsider their personal travel. We're asking staff to self-monitor and quarantine, self-quarantine if necessary, especially if they've recently visited a CDC designated area or have come in close contact with those who have. Of course, staff will be compensated in these situations, we're ramping up cleaning of our facilities, we're working closely with the city health authorities and others and we are preparing plans for various eventualities since no one can fully know, but we need to be ready when those eventualities break in which ever direction, so that we have a game plan and that's exactly what we've been developing.

DENNIS WALCOTT: So, at Queens, we put out an all staff memo laying out basically what Tony just said as well as steps that people should take. We talked about and as you know, a fine line because you got to be responsive and make sure we're always sharing information.

So, we plan to post more information on our website. Also, we have the digital pieces in the library itself and we'll update people on a regular basis. We plan to do training for both the community

1 as well as staff and so, we've been planning for
2 that. We have our own internal task force that we've
3 been going over a variety of issues. We've been
4 working as Tony indicated with the New York City
5 Health Department as well as the state and also
6 following the CDC guidelines.
7

8 So, we've been very out front around this issue
9 and we are reinforcing the importance of washing
10 hands and the basics and making sure we're fully
11 stocked in that area. While we clean always on a
12 regular basis. I think you mentioned it earlier in
13 your comments about the areas of concern. I think
14 one of the things we have to be very conscious of is
15 the concern you say of the Cyber Center and how we
16 make sure we deal with that and make sure people
17 understand that it's cleaned on a regular basis and
18 it is sanitized and all. But it's all brand new as
19 well and so, we're very, very focused on always
20 getting up to date information both to the staff and
21 the public, so they are aware of what's going on and
22 again having programmatic information available for
23 the public as well.

24 LINDA JOHNSON: I don't really have much to add
25 to the responses of my colleague other than to say

also that Deputy Mayor Been has been in touch and obviously, as usual, we intend to be good partners and do exactly as suggested.

DENNIS WALCOTT: And as I look in the balcony, I see John up there. So, we make sure that we have ongoing communication with the union and making sure there is a constant dialogue with our teams as far as the information and listening back as well.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. That's great to hear, it's also great to hear that the Deputy Mayor has been in touch and that the Administration is obviously working closely. The libraries play an important role in every aspect of our city's life and so to with this moment and you are always helpful in giving information and actually reassuring the public. Alright, the libraries are so trusted, they are such safe spaces and such havens and just as important that they continue to remain so for the duration of this particular moment.

I want to recognize we are joined by Council Member Brad Lander from Brooklyn. Thank you for being here.

DENNIS WALCOTT: Chair if I may, I'm sorry to interrupt you but there's one other thing, especially

I think for some of our libraries in Queens and maybe my colleagues as well. If we continue to see the anti-Asian either comments or type of environment that's created out there, we plan and continue to do a lot of outreach in the community as well. And I think it's extremely important to have both the visibility as well as the reinforcement of the reality of what's going on and that includes making sure that we participate in local businesses and restaurants in the community as well, and I think that's an important point for all of us because there are those who just want to spread misinformation and really label a group of people and I think that's bad. It's wrong, it's racist and we have a responsibility to make sure we at the libraries continue to be upfront around that.

So, I'm sorry to interrupt you, just to reinforce that point.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely and it is so important for that message to come from Queens and thank you for pointing that out Dennis.

I want to talk a little bit about the request, the ask. Last year, we had a great year with significant increases. Some of that was baselined

and some of that was not. Talk to me a little bit about in particular the \$14 million from the Council side that was not baselined. How was that money allocated? Did you hire additional staff members with that funding and needless to say, talk about what would happen if you didn't get that money restored.

DENNIS WALCOTT: So, in Queens, we hired staff, 19 hires that if we didn't have the money, those hires wouldn't have taken place. In addition to that, we definitely boosted our collections and we added an additional \$500,000 to our collections, which people truly appreciated and you can see it on the shelves on a weekly basis.

It allowed us to address emergency maintenance issues throughout the system and as Linda always testifies about and does it so well. No, I'm being serious, about how, if those things are not addressed, they become bigger things and more expensive things and we have a responsibility to fix them as quickly as possible.

So, the City Council money for us allowed us to really address a number of those areas. Although not all, it had a significant impact on that and it also

in Queens, increased our capacity of afterschool homework assistance and allowed us to develop our new robotics program and really expand that as well.

So, both from a programmatic point of view as an emergency maintenance point of view and then from a staff hire, especially union hires. It allowed us to do all of those things.

LINDA JOHNSON: In Brooklyn, where we had \$9.2 million in FY2020, we hired 42 staff and will hire 13 more for a total of 55. New and expanded branch staff for Adams Street and Brower Park, the Welcome Center at Central, Brooklyn Heights and a new library in the cultural district in what we're calling Bam South Site. We've hired 23, we're hiring 10 more in that category.

We hired 4 Regional Directors, Tech mobile drivers, 2 more to hire, Custodial staff 4 hired, 1 to go and Public Safety Officers, we've hired 7 and capital planning and landscaping staff, we've hired 2.

We've increased our collections by \$2 million and we've increased programming and civic engagement programming in particular by \$200,000. Spruce up, maintenance and branches that were not capitally

eligible, we spent \$800,000. And so, our overall headcount at this time librarians 359 custodial, 85 maintenance, 20 in security, 51 TRS which is a technology category 93.

TONY MARX: Mr. Chairman, in terms of the uses in the current year of those funds, the two largest amounts were for non-capitally eligible maintenance repairs and cleaning. Close to \$2 million of that with compliance issues and a bit over \$2 million for library materials.

We also since we've been on hiring, though of course that's always met with attrition coming the other way, we continue to do that hiring, but in this case, we decided to apply these funds towards overtime simply because they weren't baseline funds. We didn't want to create permanent positions that we weren't sure we had funding to maintain.

So, we'd be delighted, not just delighted, we need to move this to baseline funding, so that we can do those additional hires.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. Needless to say, when we allocate funding to our public library systems, I believe we know that that money is spent well on behalf of the people that we all represent

and obviously, I certainly will be fighting for that money to be returned the budget. And the \$10 million additional and then the capital ask, talk to us a little bit about — I know you said some in your testimonies, but how important is that to you if we're going to keep the momentum and keep building on the successes that we've had?

TONY MARX: Sure, I'll just reiterate Mr. Chairman that the sort of, the lead in the \$10 million additional ask is the topic we've talked about over the years. Which is, how do we eliminate the single biggest barrier for low income kids and teens in New York for reading. And if we believe that reading is the gateway to a life of learning and opportunity and taking advantage of that, then why would we maintain a policy that we know is hurting us in meeting that goal. That for \$1.5 million a year for the three systems plus another, I think \$700,000 of additional material and outreach to kids, we can solve this problem or at least we can stop tying our hands behind our back to solve this problem.

In addition, there's the emergency capital needs and the other educational initiatives that we've described.

LINDA JOHNSON: Not to pile on but I think the three library systems in New York City are for the most part on the leading edge of what's happening in the world of libraries in the county. And when our staff attend conferences, whether it's the Public Library Association conference, the American Library Association, we are more often than not presenting as opposed to just listening to other libraries present and we're doing innovative work and it's making a difference, not only in our city but it's making a difference around the country.

This particular area, we are lagging, shamefully lagging and our colleagues from west to east, have all adopted some version of a Fine Free program over the course of the last few years. This is not a case where we're asking you to do something wildly innovative that hasn't been tried elsewhere. We are very late to the table on this.

DENNIS WALCOTT: And if I could just add and I think you very well know this but just for the public record, a lot of our colleagues in other library systems are entities of government as well. They're government agencies and so, then the government can adjust their budget priorities whereas as you well

know and again for the public record, we are all separate 501 C3 organizations, so thus, the ask is just more important because that type of dependency relationship that we have with you and the City Council and the Executive side, is so important versus it being a government agency and therefore the government can do a rounding error in the budget to address this.

So, I just wanted to again for the record, just to reinforce that important point.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and there is no one who is both a bigger supportive of public libraries than myself, but also someone who believes in a Fine Free policy. All of you have heard me tell the story of getting my first library card at the Broadway branch in Astoria in the early 1970's but I don't know if I've ever told publicly the story in this Committee that you know, we grew up with very little money and I did lose a couple of books and we weren't able to pay and I remember having my library card privileges suspended. And it was incredibly impactful and you stop going to the library, right, when you believe you are in trouble or you are not welcome there and reading and going to libraries,

they are both habitual and if you stop, then you stop that progress. You stop that lifelong reader from developing and obviously it's so impactful for communities and families that don't have very much money.

DENNIS WALCOTT: And the psychological piece I think is so important that you talk about because when I got this job, my biggest fear was, did I really pay all my fines and fees. And will somebody write that story that the new head of the library system still owes money from before.

So, the psychological impact that it has on preventing people from coming to the library and the habitual piece I think is so important as far as how we address it. So, I totally concur, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely. Sergeant at Arms, they are having a lot of fun in the hallway there, maybe we could let them know that we're actually having a hearing.

TONY MARX: Mr. Chairman, can I just say?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure.

TONY MARX: Just to reiterate, so we are late to do this as a policy. We are not late to this issue; we've talked about it for years. We've done a couple

systemwide amnesties and I remember during one of those amnesties, which was our way to try to get to this result that we hope now to finally get to in a permanent way.

I would have people come up to me and say, thank you, I don't even go in the library because I'm scared because I have fines, because I feel that vulnerable. That's crazy in New York, it's simply crazy and it's unfair to put it mildly because you know, other folks don't have to worry about that. And it's the folks who are worrying that we are most worried about.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Before I go to Council Members Moya and Lander, I also, I think I've told Dennis this story. When I joined the staff of the Queens Public Library in 1999, they had a program where we all had to go to a library, those of us who are not librarians and do the work of the branch for a day and I was at the Broadway branch, where I grew up as a kid and I wanted to go there and for a while I wanted to go behind the counter and check out books. And a young man came up to take out a couple of books and a block came up on him and I stood there behind the desk and this beautiful young child was

looking up at me and I told the staff, I couldn't do it. I didn't have the heart. Send me to shelve books now.

LINDA JOHNSON: And you over road the policy.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, we shouldn't be in that place. We just shouldn't be in that place. So, with that, I want to ask Council Member Moya and then we'll go to Council Member Lander.

COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Thank you Chair. Good morning.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good morning.

COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Just a couple of questions. President Walcott, thank you so much for being here and the great work that you do for Queens.

Just a couple of quick questions, what is the budget specifically for the Queens Public Library New American Program and what is the frequency of he workshops and programming at each of the libraries.

DENNIS WALCOTT: Hold on one second sir, so I can give you a direct answer to that and go to my program section and as you know, New Americans has been in existence now for a number of years. Hold on one second. Got it, New Americans program amount of participants 16,285 and if you break that down, ESOL

2,509, citizenship 767, immigration legal assistance
270, coping skills workshops 6,257 participants and
the cultural of arts 6,482 participants. Number of
programs 4962 and then you have the ESOL citizenship
program, immigration legal assistance to coping
skills workshop and cultural arts and the amount of
customers that we've had to turn away have been
roughly 969 due to a lack of money available for it.

The total budget, do we know the total budget?
And I'm looking to the audience for the first time.
If not, I'll get you that information.

COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: That would be great.

LINDA JOHNSON: Impressive.

DENNIS WALCOTT: Oh, thank you. I did a great
job.

COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Thank you. Can you just
give me, I can't leave without asking, can you just
give me a quick update on the status of the expansion
of the Corona Library?

DENNIS WALCOTT: Corona is moving along extremely
well and I must say and as thanks to your advocacy
and support, we have been able to move forward with
that and so, right now, we're working through the
process of getting the various variances for Corona

so we can start to build. And I have that
information here as well.

And give me a second, because I know it's here.
Here we go, so, Corona, you know, it's 10,500 square
feet, we're dealing with the expansion. We have the
new house, well, the house that's been there for
awhile and talking about the collapsing. So, we're
well on the way of moving forward with Corona.

So, this step we're at right now is around the
variance process, so we have all the variances in
places, so then we can start the work.

COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Great and then just back to
programming, programs that are targeted for immigrant
New Yorkers. Can the systems tell us about the
partnerships that it has with government entities and
non-for-profits? That provide immigrant, immigration
related information and programming.

DENNIS WALCOTT: So, I think all of us
collectively have relationships with the various city
agency around immigrant programs and we do the
partnerships. We do the legal part as well, so the
legal assistance programs. We have a relationship
with Know Your Rights and making sure that all of our
libraries have that in working with the City and the

state from all that line. I'm not sure if Linda or Tony have additional information, they want to add but we do a lot of work with the City especially around immigrants and programs.

COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Would you happen to know how much the budget has dedicated to that?

DENNIS WALCOTT: I don't think I have that separate allocation as far as the City agencies and the budgets we have with that. I'm not sure if my colleagues do.

LINDA JOHNSON: I will just say in terms of the budget in Brooklyn, we've increased our World Languages budget by 46 percent over the past year and are very focused as all the libraries are on ESOL classes on immigrant justice corp. And on the legal front, partnering with MOIA and the NY Citizenship Initiative, as well as with New York Legal Assistance Group.

TONY MARX: Councilman, so in terms of direct partnership with city agency in particular, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, we are participating in New York Citizenship to provide free legal help for citizenship applications. We have the New America's Corners, as you already asked about.

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND 42
2 INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

3 In everyone of our branches, we've been recently,
4 we've hosted 9 weeklong activations of the Mayor's
5 Office of Immigration Affairs programs. We host Know
6 Your Right Forums at branch libraries.

7 Beyond the direct partnership with the cities
8 agency, we've helped over 6,000 people achieve their
9 US Citizenship through those kinds of preparatory
10 courses. We've had over 700 appointments for clients
11 for one on one assistance. We welcome 15,000
12 attendee's during over 850 programs and services
13 aimed at the immigration community and there is much
14 more.

15 Beyond that, more generally, as we all know, the
16 libraries are the front line that the immigrant
17 community has always come to first in New York. That
18 feels welcomed and respected. We don't ask for any
19 proof of anything, which is why for instance we can
20 be such an invaluable partner in the Census, because
21 the immigrant community we know are the latest
22 immigrant community because we're all an immigrant
23 community in New York or almost all.

24 It has always trusted us, so that's another
25 example or in the English language courses that we
26 teach. The primarily for the immigrant community

which the New York Public Library has increased 600 percent in terms of seats and attendance in the last few years. And I know my colleagues have been doing exactly the same.

COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Great, just one last question. Sticking with what you just said about the census, libraries were offered \$1.4 million for census work in the Fiscal 2020 budget. Has all of this money been spent yet, and if not, how much is remaining and for what specific purposes?

TONY MARX: So, I'll be very word specific, it's not necessarily spent yet, it has been committed and so, we need to get the money in to actually spend it but we have committed the money definitely as far as the hiring staff.

So, we've already hired staff, we've already purchased a tablet. We're doing community outreach; we're going to the hard to count areas. We plan to have major programs and we're doing something for the youth I think the end of this week, a matter of fact as far as census reading thons taking place with the young people.

And so, we have really committed to that level of money that we've been allocated and hopefully we will

get the money in sooner than later. So, we are definitely moving 100 percent as far as all of our programmatic goals when it comes to the census.

COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Great, thank you very much. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Council Member Lander.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you Mr. Chair. I acknowledge it's true that no one loves and cares about the libraries more than you but I'm aiming for second. And it's great to be here with all three of you and feel lucky to have had some wonderful engagements with all three systems over the past year. You know, I'm still thinking back to the Stonewall 50 launch, which was remarkable and Dennis, you know, it's amazing, it was just a couple of weeks ago that we —

DENNIS WALCOTT: We're soaking wet.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: During the Lunar New Year Parade in Flushing. We're soaking wet, but also, I guess even though some of the first cases of Corona Virus had already at that point been identified in China. The kind of panic and the racism that goes along with it hadn't pervade and we walked by the Flushing Library and were talking about how it's like

the most active you know, neighborhood library branch anywhere in the country and like what an extraordinary gem it is and the center in so many ways of that community.

So, let's keep that spirit going and I appreciate all the work all three of you are doing and of course in Brooklyn, there's rarely a week that I'm not in the system. Both the branches that were renovating in my district and the ones that are you know, just sources of joy in the district and you know, I would be remiss in not saying thank you again for the all night of philosophy which is truly one of my favorite nights of the year. I got to go hear from Rebecca Nagle and of course the young students of Bard and other high schools who got to put on a student run panel this year, which for understandable reasons was maybe my favorite. It was really dynamite, so thank you for all of that and also, congratulations on the recently announced merger with Brooklyn Historical Society, which I'm excited. We don't need to spend today's time talking about it but I'm really excited to learn more and think about how we make sure we continue to get the resources to have it continue to be an even more vibrant and open part of our system,

that that library, I mean, the whole building is amazing. That library is incredible and I think what it can be a part, as part of our whole system, is really remarkable.

So, congrats on that. I am excited to learn and hear more about it.

LINDA JOHNSON: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Alright and let's see, so I will, I mean, I heard a little bit of the Corona Virus back and forth but I'm reminded especially and this is actually kind of in relationship to Queens because as Dennis knows, my wife, who is the General Counsel at Planned Parenthood of New York City, they did this great project with the Queens system a couple of years ago and you know, it had not occurred to me before that how many people would approach their librarians asking questions about sexual and reproductive health, but since an enormous number of our people in our communities that don't have anybody to ask questions about basic issues of sort of health and their lives. And so, the opportunities for the branch is not only to counter fear but to be sources of information and like, what that means because

obviously, if you're anxious than you're anxious about walking into a public space.

So, how you make them like from the point where you walk in, feel safe and welcoming. You know, communicate across all these languages. You know, how to think in both safe for your family and your community in welcoming ways, seems like a big challenge and a big opportunity.

So, I guess you had some back and forth on this but I wouldn't mind hearing just a little more about how you've started to think about how to deploy quickly in order to have your staff able to answer questions in ways that both give good accurate information but are also welcoming and inclusive and just signal to everyone both that they're welcome and encouraged to come and keep showing up and ask within the guidelines of safety as that evolves over time and encourage to ask their questions and get answers, which is so much of what we want from our libraries.

LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you for that question. We are obviously addressing both sides of the coin here. How to operate in a safe way and make sure that the patrons who come to the library are as safe as they can be. While at the same time, and

1 this is something that fits within our public health
2 initiative, which we started just a year ago. And
3 when we started that program, we were looking at
4 various diseases and topics that we thought should be
5 included. Corona Virus, needless to say, was not one
6 of them but we have the infrastructure and the team
7 in place to add this to its portfolio.
8

9 But I think of course, as in everything, the
10 library is a trusted source of information and so,
11 it's important not only that we are communicating
12 accurately but also, consistently with the city's
13 directives. As I mentioned earlier, Deputy Mayor
14 Been has been involved and we are ready and willing
15 to partner in any way we can to further the city's
16 messaging as well as our own.

17 TONY MARX: And I'll just reiterate that what
18 Dennis and you both have talked about which is, it's
19 not only we need to be informed. We need to not
20 panic and we need to not turn on each other. Those
21 are powerful messages that we need to be a part of.
22 We are of course training our staff; we are working
23 through various systems that we've been discussing.
24 We need to be able to offer the advice to people who
25 come because they've always come to us for advice.

We need to make sure that our frontline staff, Mr. Chairman are not fighting about fines instead of helping people on this or any other subject. And we need to make sure that if people choose to, they can come to us for online advice, both in terms of contacting us but as well as receiving our material. It's yet another reason why we've been working very hard at the question of eBooks and increasing the provision and use of those. So, that if people choose to stay home or have to stay home, they can continue to learn and read and move ahead.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: But let's hope it doesn't get there but if there are any at scale quarantines, what an opportunity to have like a public library eBook outreach opportunity to what we could be doing in our time at home.

TONY MARX: We should do that outreach anyway, God willing not for that reason.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Amen.

DENNIS WALCOTT: And I think that words are so important. And so, I think, like my colleagues, we have great people who are here, who are back at our libraries and we had a senior staff meeting yesterday and discussion also on Monday as far as the use of

words when we're putting out memos to people and being very sensitive about that and really doing some fine tuning on how we communicate both to staff as well as to the public, because obviously, we have a job to inform people and to keep the information there but that balancing act of not scaring people, especially with the unknown. And we work, and I know collectively we work very carefully around that balancing act, because it's important for people to hear it. Hear it as far as updated information and as the Chair knows, on our team, we have an RN who is part of our team as well as librarians and other staff and we incorporate their vision and feedback into this process. And this is going to sound weird coming from me because I'm a person who doesn't have Facebook or Instagram or any of that stuff, but the importance of social media as well and making sure we ramp up our social media content around this topic.

So, people who are on social media – one of the things we noticed and I guess you guys know this better than I do, since I'm part of the 20th Century, is that people really responded to social media videos and the posting of social media videos and trying to incorporate that more and more in our

dialogue with the community. So, that way people hear it, they see it and it reinforces the value that we have as libraries. The trusted institution and the institution that's open to others.

And so, I just want to put that out there because to me, what I found during this process, words really matter in how we communicate and get to the public.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I really appreciate you saying that and I think you know, if anything can redeem social media from the ways in which it courses and makes us worse and more fearful and more hostile versions of ourselves, that is the kinds of communications and inspiration that comes from our libraries. Those sexual and reproductive health guidelines you have, like I tear up when I read them. If people haven't looked at them, you should look at them. It's accurate, it provides accurate information and it's a gorgeous document and you know, I joke about that all night philosophy, but it's kind of true in the libraries as well.

Like, you can feel yourself getting better as a human being when you're in spaces like that and this is a good time to be mindful of what an opportunity that really is.

So, just, I have one budget question. First, I just want to say Chair, I fully join the Fine Free Campaign and would love to work with you and our colleagues to try to make that a priority of the Council's in this year's response in our work. Like this is just such a great opportunity. You know, with it had been in the budget itself, but what an opportunity for us to push and make this a thing that I think that I think New Yorkers really get.

But I want to ask about the Capital Budget for a minute because I noticed in Linda, in your testimony, you're saying that the libraries are not included in the ten year capital plan. Now, this is an off year, there isn't a new ten year capital strategy but you know, four or five years ago, whenever it was, there was all this fan fair. We were for the first time including the libraries in the ten year plan. There was new money in the system, headed out for the year so we didn't just keep doing this thing where we just roll this years money to next years money and pretend that's a new commitment. By my read, for FY21, there's \$4.5 million of new money in capital for the library systems in the preliminary budget.

So, what's going on here? Like, this doesn't seem to me to be living up to the fan fairing commitment that the Administration made with the systems a couple of years ago. I mean, of course, we'll push for more capital for the systems and \$100 million for each of the systems seems very reasonable to me, but I guess before we just dive in, where are we? Am I wrong that this reflects something of a walking back from that ambitious planning and pushing together? Let me just ask that.

LINDA JOHNSON: Sure, so, the ten year plan was five years ago and each of us committed to overhauling five libraries for \$100 million, \$20 million for each. Of course, at this point, five years later, costs a lot more than \$20 million to overhaul a library and there was a lot of fan fair as their should have been.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: It was great.

LINDA JOHNSON: It was terrific and the work that we've done and are in the process of doing is making an enormous difference in the communities.

So, that's all great. The problem is, it happened one time and then we went back to our same old ways which is basically receiving about \$15

million a year in capital money to take care of a ridiculous number of square feet and not only the square footage. Yeah, if you look at \$15 million over in Brooklyn's case, 1.2 million square feet, nobody would say that's possible but it's also buildings that are small.

So, that's a lot of roofs. That's not two or three roofs, that's 60 roofs, 60 boilers, 60 HVAC systems. Many, multiple, you know, complicated systems.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Oh, and we've seen the consequences like at Windsor Terrace where if the money for the roof and the money for the HVAC aren't put together at the same time, then you have to close the library two different times and everyone is frustrated.

LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah, exactly and there are also the things that I didn't talk about but the unexpected closures because the system fails, that's a terrible thing. But I mean, I think that you know, the thing that perhaps speaks the loudest is the fact that with 60 libraries, we currently have 90 different projects with DDC, which goes to your point.

1 You know, this is just not the way to operate and
2
3 with \$15 million and no ability to plan for the
4 future, we end up addressing emergencies and taking
5 care of problems when they are at their most
6 expensive because we don't have the money to do the
7 maintenance or even to address things when they are
8 initially discovered.

9 DENNIS WALCOTT: So, I've become so adapt around
10 the issue of capital. I never in my wildest dreams
11 imagined the nuances involving capital and the
12 building of libraries and the repair of libraries and
13 what it actually means. It's a complicated process.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I'm glad to know it's
15 invaded your dreams as well because capital projects
16 management, I am embarrassed to admit how often -

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: Having the capital issues always
18 in front of me and luckily again, we have great
19 staff. I have my VP of capitals and architect and
20 has developed a great relationship with the City but
21 there's always shortfalls. There are always the
22 unexpected.

23 I think one of our most complicated projects is
24 about to come up and talk about keeping me up at
25 night, it will keep me up at night because it's

something not a building of a new library is putting
a new elevator in Flushing and we can't close
Flushing.

And so, how do you scope out a plan to put a new
elevator in the Flushing Library, the busiest library
in the country and maintain the services and the
shortfalls that will exist with that and shortfalls
and shortfalls and shortfalls and what it means. And
I know that you, the Council Members get tired of us
when we come around asking for more money and more
money and more money, but it's the reality of both
the cycle of the budget and the increasing of costs
but also the shortfalls that exist and how we have to
plug that.

LINDA JOHNSON: As Dennis was talking about
Flushing, the same is true at the Central Library
we're in our most ambitious ever renovation project
there and we are committed not to closing the library
at any time. Elevators infrastructure, you name it,
we're touching it but we will not close and I think
that as Dennis said as well, the short fall issue is
dramatic and I don't know if you were here for my
testimony but the fact is that between the three
library systems we have right now, over \$200 million

in shortfalls, \$100 in Queens and over \$50 at each of
our systems NYPL and Brooklyn Public Library.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Shortfalls for previously
funded projects that have come in at more expense of
additional capitals needed just to fund projects we
have already had hoped to get funded.

LINDA JOHNSON: In some cases, to finish projects
right. To finish projects that have started and they
start to borrow from you know, Peter to pay Paul and
it is an absurd game because it ends up costing so
much more to do the work.

TONY MARX: So, my colleagues have addressed the
specifics and you know, despite all that, we're
making incredible progress and really hats off at
Brooklyn and Queens. I know that my team, the team
at New York Public is doing incredible work and we're
starting to really see that on a systemwide basis but
that is despite instead of because of some aspects of
how the city administers and has long administered
its capital projects and I would just say as a former
political science professor, something is wrong here
on a system level and we've been saying this for
years and years and nothing would make us happier
than to partner with the City Council and with the

Administration to try to think of alternative ways to solve this problem, so that we can get these jobs done instead of paying twice as much, taking twice as long. Let's get these jobs done and use the citizens dollars for effective investments in capital improvements.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So, I'll turn it back to the Chair here. First, I do have like a political science podcast that I listen to about the challenges of capital projects management that I'm going to forward to you.

TONY MARX: Please do.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: We did just pass a bill here to get all of the city's capital projects online in one tracking data base, so we can start to even diagnose the problems in the system because right now, we don't even have the information available to do it. And I know that this is another thing that the Chair is passionate about, so let's just work in the response to you know, do everything we can not to play out the usual game, where we like at the end put the little money in for capital but do what we can to address this together.

So, thanks to the three of you. Thank you,
Chair.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you Council Member
Lander for your love of our public library systems as
well and I just want to say, I for one, do not get
tired of you coming back and asking for more money
every year, because that's exactly what you should be
doing on behalf of the people that you serve and that
we represent and you need that funding.

And, that announcement was historic five years
ago, but we need the administration to continue to
commit and recommit and recommit to actually
finishing the job. Just starting it was a very good
and historic move but you have to finish what you
started when it comes to building, rebuilding,
repairing, renovating, fixing our libraries. So, all
that has to be done.

To the Fine Free program, I just wanted to ask,
what is your specific dollar amount or figure that
you associate with us being able to achieve a Fine
Free public library system?

TONY MARX: Again, it's \$1.5 million to cover the
lost revenue for the three systems and another

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND 60
2 INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

3 \$700,000 to ensure the collections and the
4 programming to make that work.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, it's \$2.2 million
6 citywide.

7 TONY MARX: Citywide, that's all it takes.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: To eliminate fines and
9 fees.

10 TONY MARX: But it needs to be -- we need it
11 baselined because it's an ongoing part of our budget.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I understand that it's
13 an ongoing situation but it's just \$2.2 million.

14 TONY MARX: Correct.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That and the grander
16 scheme of things is so incredibly worthwhile and it's
17 one of those things where it's a relatively small
18 amount of money that would make enormous difference.
19 Right, sometimes you need a lot of money to make a
20 big difference. This is a relatively small amount of
21 money that would absolutely be a game changer in how
22 we approach a public library service and services.

23 TONY MARX: Mr. Chairman, can I just go back for
24 a second just on the ten year capital plan. While
25 that was fabulous historical move, we missed two
cycles to add to it. While we are here asking as

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND 61
2 INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

3 Linda has eloquently described for \$100 million for
4 each system to keep us going to not lose the
5 momentum, we are very focused and look forward to
6 working with the Administration that has been taken
7 the lead on this to really use the opportunity next
8 year, which is the year in which it opens again to
9 fill the ten year capital commitment, so that we can
10 continue with the momentum that I think has made all
11 of us proud.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That would be a great
13 legacy for Mayor de Blasio to leave for the City of
14 New York. I know we've been joined by Council Member
15 Mark Gjonaj from the Bronx; Council Member Joe
16 Borelli from Staten Island and I believe Council
17 Member Gjonaj has a question.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you Chair. The
19 much awaited Westchester Square branch, I believe the
20 budget calls for \$32 million. Can you give us an
21 update on this project? Is it fully funded? Are we
22 ready to start putting the shovels into the ground
23 and if not, what is it going to take?

24 TONY MARX: Well, Councilman, first I love the
25 question and appreciate your patience though we've
all had to be way too patient on this one. This has

gone on way too long and you know we're delighted by the progress we've made and thanks to your support, the plan as you know is a brand new 12,000 square foot branch library and we have experienced significant cost overruns because of how long this is taken going back to our previous discussion. The project is now, I'm very pleased to say fully funded. We're working with DCAS and DDC to purchase a property from the Huntington Free Library and to review the design in light of delays. We know this has always been a complex project. In some ways perhaps it was envisioned in too complex a way in terms of the various missing pieces that have taken us years to bring together. We did, and that meant the subdivision of a lot; the creation of a new tax law at the purchase of property and the demolition of an existing building but this project remains a priority for the city, for you and for us and we're continuing to work with DDC, DCAS and the Law Department and DOB to get this done. It's way past time.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: It certainly is and I couldn't have said it better myself. When will that contract be signed? When will we close? What do we

need to do? There is no moving forward, there is no discussion of designs until the sale takes place.

TONY MARX: We are working as hard as we can with our colleagues at DCAS to get to that result and as soon as we do, you'll be the first to know.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Is there a timeframe? My constituents want to know. Everyone keeps asking the same questions. Is there any type of timeframe?

TONY MARX: We hope that we will get that resolution of the key remaining piece somewhere in about a six month window and then we'll be able to move. That's our aim, that's what we've been told and I hope we will be able to keep to it, sir.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Can I ask that you keep me in the loop of things.

TONY MARX: Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: If there is any issues, I can help.

TONY MARX: We're all in this together.
Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I want to help expedite this.

TONY MARX: Thank you, sir.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: If I can play a role in
it in any way or fashion, I'm happy to do so.

My next question constantly we get requests from
our libraries as Council Members for the limited
discretionary funding that we have available and we
know how important these libraries are to our
communities and we want to make sure we're there for
them.

When we look at the budget of \$96 billion and
compared to the very limited discretionary funding
that Council Members have, there's an unfairness
here, and the wants and the needs and the demands are
so great. They can't fund any of the projects aside
from some minor door renovations, ramps, it's amazing
that we're still looking to have ADA compliance
issues. I mean, isn't this a city and government
responsibility and not individual Council Members
responsibility? What are we doing to bring these
properties up to full ADA compliance and in a manner
that they warrant to be upkeep?

TONY MARX: So, we couldn't agree more, because
of the age of many of our buildings, of our 92
facilities, we have 15 that are not fully compliant.
We currently have projects -

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND 65
2 INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

3 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: How many did you say?

4 TONY MARX: 15, one-five, sorry, apologies. We
5 currently have projects approved or in process that
6 will reduce that by it's either seven or eight, so
7 we're about to cut that number in half. But in this
8 day and age, there shouldn't be any and we're eager
9 to get this solved. It's gone on way too long. So,
10 you have my absolute agreement on that front, sir.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: But we can agree on the
12 importance of it but dragging it out for this period
13 of time is unfair to the disabled, the ADA community.
14 It is an injustice that we are allowing to happen.

15 TONY MARX: I totally agree. One of the ways
16 that we can do this is when we get robust funding in
17 the ten year capital plan, which we were just
18 discussing. When the City Council works with us and
19 the Administration to get us the \$100 million per
20 system of capital requests that Linda was describing
21 that way. We have the resources to solve these
22 problems systemwide. Otherwise we keep doing, sort
23 of Band-Aids. We keep doing one year approaches.
24 They don't, you know, we can't get in front of the
25 problems unless we have the resources so that we can
do it in a planful way.

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND 66
2 INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

3 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: So, what is the dollar
4 amount if you know it to bring these 15 libraries up
5 to ADA code and compliance.

6 TONY MARX: So, I will get you that number
7 specifically sir.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Chairman, I'm going to
9 ask Chairman that we follow up with this. It's an
10 injustice to this community. It's been too far and I
11 don't think that number is going to be as significant
12 as many fear and it must be a priority. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much
14 Council Member for your passion for your libraries
15 and all the libraries and we will indeed follow up
16 and continue to put pressure on the Administration to
17 do what is basic and right on behalf of the people of
18 the City of New York, which is to make sure that our
19 capital program for all of our public library systems
20 are adequately funded.

21 I believe the Cultural Affairs Commissioner;
22 Acting Cultural Affairs Commissioner is on her way
23 but I did want to ask Dennis if you have an update on
24 Court Square?

25 DENNIS WALCOTT: I do, in that we are submitting
our lease requirements to the landlord that we are

looking to move into and then get feedback from the landlord on what we are saying are our requirements from a lease perspective and hopefully that will turn around within the next several days to week or so.

So, yeah, we're zeroing in on one in particular and so, that will be going out.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That is a good update, obviously we will stay in close consultation on that. Seeing no other questions and with the Department of Cultural Affairs imminent, I will say thank you and keep close the libraries portion of our Preliminary Budget hearing this morning.

Thank you to all of you and we will obviously continue to stay close throughout this budget season. Thank you.

Good afternoon everyone. If you were here for the libraries portion of the hearing, library folks in the back of the room please depart. We are going to do the Cultural Affairs portion of the hearing now. We are going to reassemble and we talked libraries and now we're going to talk culture and thank you very much everyone for being here. And I believe for the first time as the Acting DCLA Commissioner Kathy Hughes is here. Obviously, she is

no stranger to the Department or to these hearings but we will be hearing from the Acting Commissioner in a moment and I know there are many members of the cultural community who are here with us today and after we hear from the Acting Commissioner, then we will take public comment and testimony.

The unions representing public library employees have one person that's going to speak on behalf of all of them and John will be the first person up when we get to public testimony and then we'll hear from the CIGS and some other folks in the cultural community. But welcome to the cultural affairs portion of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Fiscal 2021 Preliminary Budget hearing and this is my eleventh here as the Chair of this Committee through this budget process. A process that has seen some significant victories on behalf of the community that we all know and love and it was last year when Commissioner Finkelpearl departed. That as he departed was very proud to mention that the budget for the Department of Cultural Affairs was the highest that it had ever been in the history of the Department of Cultural Affairs.

Something that I am equally proud of because we all worked together on that; the Council, the Administration, myself and Tom and as we await the appointment of a permanent cultural affairs Commissioner, we are fortunate to have the very talented and dedicated staff at the Department keeping things running and going at the Department.

So, right now, the budget for DCLA stands at \$148.1 million and the Preliminary Capital Commitment Plan, includes \$1.1 billion for our cultural' s from Fiscal 2020 to 2024, but what we need is some more baselining of the expense and capital budgets. We need to be mindful of any potential PEGS and cuts that we saw the Director of OMB not rule out for agencies and of course there are tens of millions of dollars in City Council Cultural initiatives which of course I'm enormously proud of that we once again need to fund, so that CASA and SU-CASA and cultural immigrant and other amazing programs continue in the robust way that we all want and need them to be.

We also need to make sure that that funding is getting disbursed to the organizations in a timely manner and I certainly will be asking the Acting Commissioner some questions about that. Whether or

not we're getting the funding out in a timely manner to all of the recipients of CEF and all the Council initiatives as well.

So, we are anxious to get to work once again on what I hope will be another very successful budget for the Department and for our cultural community in the City of New York and obviously, you have my unyielding commitment to be a fighter for this community as I always have been and making sure that the City Council continues to be your best and most strident ally and I know we've done some great work, I know we have more to do but I feel good about what's been accomplished and where we go from here.

So, I am interested to know how the Department is functioning, how it's working, how you all are continuing on with the mission and with that, I will ask the Acting Commissioner Kathy Hughes to deliver her testimony.

KATHLEEN HUGHES: Thank you very much Council Member Van Bramer and Good morning.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: One second Commissioner.

KATHLEEN HUGHES: Of course.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Because we do not swear in the Public Library Directors because they're not

actually city agencies but you do have to be sworn
in.

COUNCIL CLERK: If you can please raise your
right hand.

KATHLEEN HUGHES: I'm left handed; it takes me a
second.

COUNCIL CLERK: Do you affirm to tell the truth,
the whole truth and nothing but the truth before this
Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
questions today?

KATHLEEN HUGHES: I do.

COUNCIL CLERK: Thank you.

KATHLEEN HUGHES: Good to go?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You may begin.

KATHLEEN HUGHES: Thank you and good morning.
Jimmy Van Bramer, I feel good about what's been
accomplished so far as well and I thank you for your
role in all of that.

I am here today to testify in regards to the
Mayor's proposed preliminary budget for Fiscal 2021
and I am joined by a number of my colleagues here at
the agency and I'm actually going to point them out
for you because I am very proud of the committed and
capable staff that work at DCA, this is just a few of

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

72

1 them. Terri Richardson who is the Assistant
2
3 Commissioner for the Cultural Institutions Group;
4 Ryan Max who's our Director of Internal Affairs;
5 Harriet Taub who is Director of Materials for the
6 Arts Program, a program I know you'd love deeply and
7 Se Kim who is our ACCO, Amanda Jacobson who is with
8 our Council Senior net, Angela Blocker who is the
9 Director of Capital Program, Kendal Henry the
10 Director of Percent for Art, Pranita Raghavan who is
11 the General Counsel and Shirley Levy our Chief of
12 Staff and not last or least, Sheelah Feinberg, the
13 newest member. You may recognize Sheila from her
14 days at the Department of Finance and she joined us
15 as Deputy Commissioner just a few months ago. We're
16 really happy to have her.

17 Who else is here? Dionne is here and oh,
18 Philippa, you're hiding behind someone and Philippa
19 Shao Director of Finance and Dionne Sonogram[SP?] who
20 is also in the Commissioners unit.

21 So, back at 31 Chambers, there actually are a few
22 people left and at Materials for the Arts in the
23 warehouse in Queens and everyone else is doing the
24 work of reviewing applications and preparing payments
25 and moving materials and taking care of business.

So, we're happy to be here. They may be called on to help answer some questions.

I'm going to start with a review of the figures from the preliminary budget. The FY21 DCLA Preliminary Budget is as you mentioned, just shy of \$148 million, \$147.6 to be exact and that includes: \$105.7 million for the Cultural Institutions Group; \$28.6 million for the Cultural Development Fund; \$5 million in baseline funding increases 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 and \$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 the City Council initiatives that you referenced and City Council member items, as well as the Mayoral increases. It's also comparable this figure, to the preliminary budget proposed for the agency over the last several years.

For Fiscal Year 2020, our budget is currently \$212 million, that's a slight increase from the budget at adoption due to a handful of technical

adjustments. And as you pointed out, this is the largest City allocation in the agencies history. It's an achievement we owe in no small part to our close and valued partnership with the City Council.

Work on distributing Fiscal 2021 funds is already underway. The deadline to make an FY21 capital funding request from the borough presidents was last Friday. Applications for Council support and Mayoral capital funding are due on March 24th and to date, we've received 113 requests from over 90 organizations and those requests total more than \$500 million in capital funding and we anticipate this number will grow somewhat as we approach the March 24th deadline. Our capital team is already hard at work reviewing these applications.

Currently, the agencies 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 and the agency also routinely provides capital funds for decidedly unglamorous projects that are essentially running cultural facilities and they are critical to running those facilities.

Things like boiler replacements and HVAC upgrades. Recent and upcoming highlights from our capital portfolio include: At MoMA PS1 in Queens, City capital funds which are supporting a boiler replacement project, that's an upgrade that will ensure a safe, comfortable and stable environment for visitors and for artwork. The project is fully designed and construction and construction should begin later this year. And to my point about unglamorous 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. It includes the gut renovation of the building previously used as a bank branch, redesign of the entrance for a better street presence, creation of a small reception area, administrative space for up to 25 staff and some large flexible multipurpose event space on the street level and more. The project was substantially completed 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 a state of the art exhibition gallery space as well as 68 seat jazz club. The organization's research collections, currently housed at Queens College, will be moved to a new archival center on the second floor of this new facility and the project has secured LEED gold certification. Supporting environmentally sustainable capital projects has long been a priority of 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 or 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 of examples for project that come in all shapes and sizes helping to ensure that New Yorkers have access to the most remarkable cultural facilities, no matter where they live.

And let's turn not to some updates on agency programs and initiatives.

Application for the Fiscal 21 Cultural Development Fund were due February 18th. We received over 800 applications for funding and this was due thanks in part, to the workshops that the agency hosts across the City. Over 300 people attended those and we also, for our first time ever, did an application webinar for anyone who couldn't attend a workshop or who wanted after a seminar, to brush up on some aspect of what we presented at the workshops,

those are application based. And the annual peer panel review process will begin March 26th 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 each of these panels.

For the CreateNYC Leadership Accelerator program, we received over 120 applications. This is the fourth round of that program and the professional development program trains diverse, mid-career cultural workers to advocate for themselves. To establish supportive peer networks, and ultimately move into leadership positions within the cultural sector. Once past participant recently took to Twitter to share their enthusiasm for the program, writing, "If you are 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 NYCulture

and other have drastically impacted how I communicate, problem solve, and influence those I work with." And that's 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 the City's remarkable artistic talent to help rethink our approach to public service. We encourage artists and arts collectives to apply to work with one of the four agencies participating in the 2020 PAIR program, that's the New York City Civic Engagement Commission, the Department of Sanitation, the Commission on Human Rights, and the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. Those applications are due March 29, and selections will be announced later this spring, for programs that take place through Fiscal 2021. The current group of PAIRs are deep into implementing their

projects and we will share updates and public programming that's connected to those projects in the months ahead.

On January 23rd, as you may know, there was a massive fire that destroyed a City-owned building at 70 Mulberry Street in the heart of Manhattan's Chinatown. No one was seriously injured, thank God, but a number of local organizations utilized space in this community hub, including two cultural groups, HT Chen and 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 New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services, the Department of Records and Information Services, the 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 its history. We attended a community board meeting on Staten Island

last month to present 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 PS 101 in Brooklyn. I'm sorry, I mispronounced his name, it's Gerakaris. 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 demographic study indicated that our cultural workforce does not reflect the diverse residents of our city. And what we were able to capture this time around, as a result of a survey that relies on self-reported data rather than human resources files, was information on disability status as well as sexual orientation. The pilot study included 65 DCLA constituent groups and we plan to roll it out to all of our grantees early in the next fiscal year. IT will provide a wealth of new data that we can use to better understand and address the barriers we face as a field and to help any organizations in their efforts to employ a diverse workforce.

But we are 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

1 organizations. And the Leadership Accelerator
2 program I mentioned just earlier, these programs have
3 been created alongside new, dedicated grant programs,
4 like CreateNYC's Disability Forward Fund and the
5 Language Access Fund. And all 33 current members of
6 the Cultural Institutions Group have created and
7 formally adopted plans and are acting on them to
8 foster more diverse, equitable, and inclusive work
9 environments and hiring strategies. From the
10 elimination of unpaid internship programs, to hiring
11 new senior level staff focused on diversity, these
12 plans are already paying dividends. There is a
13 genuine enthusiasm and willingness to do the real
14 difficult work needed to correct these generations in
15 the making problems. We're not going to fix them
16 overnight but we're proud of the work that we've done
17 alongside our cultural partners so far and this is
18 still just the beginning.

19
20 And finally, I'd like to take the opportunity to
21 highlight some of the amazing cultural programs
22 happening this month for Women's History Month and
23 the centennial of women's suffrage. First, I want to
24 applaud the City Council for partnering with the New
25 York Historical Society on the latest portraits added

to the Women's Voice 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, Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Austen among them.

And the Women's Suffrage NYC Centennial Consortium which is chaired by the head of the Staten Island Museum. They have a big exhibit coming up to celebrate this. And the Director of the Center for Women's History at the New York Historical Society and that consortium and its members will be putting on performances, exhibitions, and all sorts of activities this month and throughout the year and you can visit womenssuffragenyc.org for details on further programming. We're 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 and in this election year, that could not hold more meaning.

And, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I'm happy to answer any question you may have.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much
Commissioner. So, we will obviously begin and
earnest the budget at negotiation as we proceed down
the road towards the exec and then ultimate adoption
but I want to go back and talk a little bit about
what I mentioned in my opening statement about moving
money out that was allocated.

Obviously, we have heard from some of our
organizations that money was allocated in budget
adoption in June, has not been delivered to the
agency. So, can you update us on where we're at and
give us some number on what percentage of funding is
out the door, is going to be out the door, where are
we at with CDF and the Council Cultural Initiatives
but you know just how important this funding is and
folks shouldn't have to take out bridge loans to keep
going as they received healthy amounts of funding at
budget adoption but if they are not actually feeling
it, it puts them in a very difficult position.

KATHLEEN HUGHES: I appreciate that and believe
me, having done this for 38 years, I know the
difficult position it puts them in. So, we are
working our very best to move those funds as quickly
as possible.

When the budget was adopted, we were the very fortunate recipients of some additional funds that were not expected at the level at which they were received. We had to spend a little time portioning those and at the same time, we were also dealing with the fact that there were a number of staff that were on family leave. I don't think it's anything in the water, but there were people that were out all at the same time that actually had an impact on the timing.

We did begin CDF funding as quickly as we could. As you know, any of those allocations that are above \$100,000 or actually \$100,000 and above have to go to the Comptroller and that's an involved process that encompasses many at the agency in preparing that material for the Comptroller and delivering it and then waiting as the Comptroller reviews that.

Virtually, all of the CDF payments are out the door unless there is some impediment. Sometimes that involves an organization not getting paperwork in. There is a lot of paperwork in bureaucracy as you know and we started acting on the initiatives as quickly as we could. I'm not going to tell you that we are as far a long with those as I would like us to be. The SU-CASA initiative was just finalized

recently and those funds are starting to flow but they are behind the other five initiatives. The anti-gun initiative is almost totally out the door as initial payments and the others range between those two but a number of those were larger this year. As you know, you were very generous as a Council with the initiatives and some of that additional money took a little while to get apportioned appropriately and in the budget through the transparency resolutions that it needs to go through.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, you know, we fight, I fight like heck every year to get those increases and we have seen CASA and other programs tripled and quadrupled and of course, cultural immigrant created. Does the Department have enough staff to move these grants through in a timely way, because when looking at your headcount for the agency in the PMMR and then of course the dramatic increases in funding, particularly for the Council Cultural Initiatives but also for CDF now. Your headcount is remaining fairly static and yet the funding is skyrocketing in some cases. Does the agency have the staff it needs to actually be able to move these grants out as quickly as possible. Would you recommend additional staff to

handle these initiatives and to handle CDF? You know, we may have a new Commissioner coming in relatively soon and this is an ongoing issue.

KATHLEEN HUGHES: It is an ongoing issue and I appreciate the question. You'll be pleased to know that we are adding four staff to the programs unit to help us tackle the work. It's a good problem to have right? More money is a great problem to have and we appreciate the great involvement that you have and investment you have made in this process but we have recognized it as something that we need to attend to and we are adding staff. I've interviewed several people already and we hope to bring some on board in the coming month.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's good, that it is a good problem to have. That you have a lot more money but it is and I know you know this, it is also not a good problem to have for the in many cases, small cultural organizations that are just not receiving the funding as quickly as they desperately need it.

So, I'm glad to hear that there is additional staff coming on board to potentially help with it so that in the coming years, we fight for even more

1 money and we're not in the same position. So, how is
2 the Department operating? Is the day to day the same
3 as it always is and obviously, you've got the senior
4 team here but how are things going and is it a
5 challenging time for the agency or is everything
6 going smoothly?
7

8 KATHLEEN HUGHES: It's a terrific time for the
9 agency. I have the good fortune of working with
10 people that are amazingly committed to what they do
11 and care about. There are people that just are
12 devoted to the field and you see that in the work
13 they do. You know, I temporarily have moved over
14 from a position where I was in charge of one aspect
15 of the agency but it's been very revealing to me to
16 see the depth of commitment that exists throughout
17 the agency. I don't think I fed you that question
18 but I appreciate being able to answer it because I
19 really do think that the will is there and the
20 capability is there and the challenges are ones, we
21 are meeting. And with your partnership, we'll
22 continue to do that.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Let me confirm that you
24 did not feed me that question. So, there is, for the
25 Fiscal 2021 Preliminary budget, there is unallocated

baseline funding of \$5 million for CreateNYC,
cultural plan initiatives. When will this funding be
allocated and where will it go to? This too seems
like something that we have been talking about for a
while.

KATHLEEN HUGHES: We're working on that with the
office of Management and Budget. Since it isn't
allocated yet, I can't tell you where it will go to
but it will certainly go towards the create NYC
initiatives that were mentioned in the testimony.
That commitment to making sure that what the agency
funds reflects the diversity of the organizations and
the cultural workers in the field is an important
aspect of the use of that money.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, Weeksville is going
to be joining the CIG family formerly. Can you
update us on what's happening and what will be
happening as a result of that being formalized? I
know there is a big announcement next Friday, so talk
to us about Weeksville.

KATHLEEN HUGHES: Sure, I'm happy to tell you, I
don't think I brought the photograph but we
documented it this morning when I signed the first
license agreement with a new institution in 20 years.

The last Commissioner who oversaw that was Skyler Chapin.

Weeksville is an incredible addition to the panoply of cultural institutions that belong to the CIG and we have worked with Weeksville for years and years now on the program side. I'm happy to pass it along to Terri Richardson on the capital side and we've worked closely with them over the past several months to really look at the planning process that's needed to give that organization some good stable footing as it moves forward. I believe Rob is here and might be testifying later.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: He is.

KATHLEEN HUGHES: I hope that many of us can turn out on the 13th for the actual onsite inauguration of this new institution and I think it's going to really be a terrific asset, not just to the Brooklyn community but to the city and to the nation.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, he is here, I spoke to him earlier and we all plan to be there for what will be a very important and historic day for our community.

So, I know we have a number of people signed up. I also know that we have, we hope, an announcement of

a permanent Commissioner coming soon. So, I won't hold you too long but you know, I trust the agency is as committed to the CreateNYC Cultural Plan and its programs that have been funded. Because it is one of the things, we are all really proud of is that it wasn't just a plan that collected dust on a shelf but there's actually been real money put behind it and I know that meant a lot to Tom, as it does to me as well.

KATHLEEN HUGHES: Was it a question?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: It sort of was.

KATHLEEN HUGHES: I agree with everything you just said. The commitment is absolutely there. It's a genuine commitment and it wasn't just Tom's commitment, it wasn't just the Mayor's commitment, it's all our commitment.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, absolutely and I apologize, I'm getting used to these new reading classes thing.

KATHLEEN HUGHES: I can't get used to them, I'm sorry, I had to take them off.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sometimes I can see everything and sometimes I can't see anything. So, with that, I just want to say thank you Commissioner

Hughes for your decades and decades of service to the Department and to the City of New York and to the Cultural Community. I don't know if we'll be having a conversation quite like this one again, but I appreciate everything you've done for this Department and for the City of New York.

KATHLEEN HUGHES: Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. With that, we will move to the public portion of the testimony and as I mentioned, I just want to also let everybody know that we have this room until 1:00 p.m. We have a number of people signed up to testify, so we're going to go to a timed clock. First, we're going to hear from our public library unions that represent public library employees who are part of DC 37 and only one person will be speaking on behalf of them all.

So, we will give John a couple of more minutes but John Hyslop, who is President of Local 1321, DC 37 representing Queens Public Library workers and Joe Reece is here from Local 374 of DC 37 as well. But John will testify and then we are going to go to all of the wonderful people who are scheduled to testify on behalf of the Culturals and we'll do panels and

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND 94
2 INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

3 Taryn Sacramone representing the CIGs and Rob Fields
4 from Weeksville and Lucy Sexton from New Yorkers for
5 Culture and the Arts will be the first panel and then
6 we will move on from there and I apologize again for
7 instituting a time clock but we do have another
8 Committee who will be here at 1:00 in this room.

9 So, John, feel free to begin as soon as you would
10 like.

11 JOHN HYSLOP: Chairman Jimmy Van Bramer and
12 fellow committee members, thank you for giving my
13 fellow presidents and I an opportunity to testify at
14 this years Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries
15 and International Intergroup Relations hearing on the
16 Mayor's preliminary budget for the three library
17 systems.

18 Val Colon President of Local 1930; Ronaldo Barber
19 President of Local 1482; John Hyslop President of
20 Local 1321; and Joseph Reece here Vice President
21 Local 374; Leonard Paul being the president of Local
22 374, come before you in united in our request for
23 more library funding.

24 Five years ago, the three library systems'
25 Presidents and CEOs asked the Mayor and the 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 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 more branches on Saturdays, it has become the norm to request staff to work overtime. Major

reconstruction projects that are creating large, modern and much needed library spaces have drained our human resources. Hunters Point for example, 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 staff is concerned. We continue to lose more than we gain and so staffing levels remain 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 issues, 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 and 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 used to have one but now 29 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 services without exhausting our staff. Please do not fail us.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you John and perfectly timed as usual. So, obviously you know how deeply I regard our public library workers and so,

I'm disturbed to hear some of the things that you just reported. Obviously, some of which I know, some of which I don't before today, but needless to say, you have my commitment to not only maintain the various substantial gains that we've made in the last few years in particular but to continue that work and to continue baselining because I certainly did hear Tony Marx say that they did not bring on permanent new full time employees because of the funding in baselining but there was significant baselining last year.

JOHN HYSLOP: Yes, there was.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That I believe could've allowed for more permanent full time employees. Certainly, the other systems did do that. So, we will continue to monitor all of that but I think the commitment on behalf of me, the Council, this committee, is to continue to push for even more and even more baselining which I hope will address some of the issues that you talked about, although some of it is management.

JOHN HYSLOP: Yes, and we know that you and the City Council, you and your leadership on the Council

has done great things for us and that baselining was
integral definitely for us but we need more.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, we've gone, and
you and I have known each other for a very long time
from places where we had only five day service, were
threatened with less than five day service and then
had to fight to get six day service, then got it
baselined then got additional funding, additional
baselining and that is where we have been for the
last few years which is a very good place but we want
and need even more.

JOHN HYSLOP: Correct, yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, with that, thank
you.

JOHN HYSLOP: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I believe John is
representing all of the Local Presidents, Mr. Reece
but thank you for your work. Thank you for
everything you do for the people of the City of New
York.

JOHN HYSLOP: Thank you Jimmy.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And with that, we will
move to public testimony from some of our great
leaders in the cultural community. Taryn Sacramone,

Rob Fields, Lucy Sexton. We are on a clock, so I apologize. We're going to be moving fairly quickly through this and then the next panel is it looks like Siri Horvitz, Valerie Paley, Tiffany Bryant, Desiree Gordon. Then three more panels after that.

Whoever want to go first, start. Taryn? Good afternoon, is your microphone working? Is the red light on in front of you?

TARYN SACRAMONE: Now it is.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: It is.

TARYN SACRAMONE: I'm Taryn Sacramone, I'm Executive Director of Queens Theatre, Acting Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group and a member of New Yorkers for Culture and the Arts. I'm hear today to provide testimony on behalf of the CIG, 34 cultural organizations across all five boroughs.

I want to thank the Council for its support. You have been a champion in recognizing the importance of the entire cultural sector in keeping the city healthy, equitable, safe. The CIG works in partnership with the City to make sure that culture is available to all New Yorkers. There are CIG members of different disciplines in all five boroughs. CIG's who bring millions of visitors from

around the world and some of us who know all of our members by name and where their kid hopes to go to college.

We are thrilled that the CIG expanded this year with the addition of Weeksville Heritage Center. Our partnership goes beyond culture, whether we're doing census outreach or celebrating world pride, we are partners. If it's important to New York City, it is a priority to the Cultural Institutions Group. We talk about employment numbers. We employ 16,000 people; we serve 24 million visitors each year but that doesn't necessarily get that the impact that CIGs have on individuals.

So, we put a survey out to people who grew up in New York City asking how many CIGs they had been to by the time they graduated high school. Over 99 percent had been to at least one. Most of them had been to more than seven, more than nine. 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."

We need places of hope that all can access. Last year, each CIG member developed a robust access, equity, diversity and inclusion plan and now, we are

focusing on workforce development. We are looking at all levels of employment and we want to expand that work in a way that is impactful for the entire cultural sector.

As you know, numbers?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, sure, wrap it up a little bit.

TARYN SACRAMONE: \$25.4 Million was added on top of the baseline to New York City's Cultural Budget last year. As you are considering your priorities, we would like to see that that \$25.4 million be restored and that strong consideration be given to an additional \$20 million to be divided between the CIGs and the program groups and a portion of that allocated to the CIG who go to Workforce Development. Places of hope, places of hope.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you Taryn. Great job as the Acting Leader of the CIGs. Can we just make you the permanent leader of the CIGs?

TARYN SACRAMONE: That is not my decision.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right, I love John, I love John but I hear he's coming back since this hearing started, so. I look at the Twitter, I look at the Twitter, he is coming back but you know, you'd

be a great permanent Chair to, just saying. Sorry
Rob.

TARYN SACRAMONE: Thanks Jimmy.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Having a little fun.
Having a little fun here today as well. Rob.

ROB FIELDS: Good morning. Good morning Chairman
Van Bramer and members of the Committee. I am Rob
Fields, the President and Executive Director at
Weeksville Heritage Center.

As many people know the newest member of the
Cultural Institutions Group and as you are all keenly
aware, the first in over 20 years. You're all aware
of this and when I say all, I mean members of the
City Council because many members of the City Council
played a significant role in making this happen.
We're grateful for the support we've received from
you Chairman Van Bramer, Member Laurie Cumbo in her
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. I want to thank you all for that support.

That support allows us to continue working with
other cultural institutions across the city,
including Brooklyn Museum, BAM, Brooklyn Children's

Museum, and the Museum of the City of New York to name a few. In addition to taking our relationship with DCLA to a new level and again, I want to shout out Acting Commissioner Hughes and her committed staff. We'll also be able to continue to deepen our work with NYCHA, with the New York City Human Rights Commission, DYCD and the Parks Department.

Why do people visit Weeksville? There are a couple reasons for that. First, Weeksville invites all New Yorkers to learn a little known piece of the 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 and culture and civic engagement programming in a way that centers Black history, culture and creativity right in Central Brooklyn.

We're all aware of the positive impact the arts has on communities. Weeksville has been engaging youth through partnerships with OBT, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow. Cristo Rey Academy and Bed-Stuy Restoration Corporation and over the years, we've given over 20 students experience in 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, museum and field in archival studies and 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 evolve.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Rob, can I just ask you to wind it up.

ROB FIELD: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Just because we're under a time constraint here with another committee coming in at 1:00.

ROB FIELD: Absolutely. So, I'm just going to wrap up by reiterating our request for support for the Workforce Development for the FY20 funding to be restored and asking that the \$24.5 million that was added last year to be baselined included in this new budget. So, thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and as you were speaking Aliya was talking about the tour for the committee. They went and they loved it and I look forward to I'll be there with you next week as well.

1 ROB FIELD: Absolutely, it's going to be fun.

2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

3 ROB FIELD: Thank you.

4 LUCY SEXTON: Hi, I'm Lucy Sexton of New Yorkers
5 for Culture and Arts. Thank you, Chairman Van Bramer
6 and City Council members, for allowing me to testify
7 and for all the work you do for arts and culture in
8 our city.

9 We are a citywide coalition working for a city in
10 which every citizen has the ability to engage in the
11 life-affirming, community strengthening power of
12 culture.

13 In the past two years, we've been noted that
14 there's been huge increases. We now have a city
15 cultural budget that's bigger than MICSA, that's
16 bigger than the NEA which is fantastic but also
17 speaks to how MICSA and the NEA should be receiving
18 better funding.

19 The work of the city's first cultural plan has
20 begun to make inroads in the inequitable funding
21 practices, but more work needs to be done to ensure
22 that artists working in every neighborhood of every
23 borough have what they need to survive and thrive.
24 We've been noting the success of Weeksville, but that
25

fact that it took 20 years for another organization. The fact that it took Weeksville launching a crowd funding campaign to get our attention. The fact that we still do not have a transparent process by which an organization might become a CIG. There are all areas which we need to work on.

This year, I want to bring to your attention ARTs East New York. They are one of the only cultural assets in that neighborhood. They do extraordinary work providing space for art classes, theater performances, community gatherings. Two of my favorite programs are their Farmers Market happenings, where they set up art happening in the Farmers Market to get the Farmers Market some traffic. They also convert old shipping containers to set them up for artists residencies, in a program called ReNew Lots. They came to our cultural convening last week in Brooklyn and Catherine MBali Green-Johnson, their founder, announced that they would be closing their doors in a few weeks.

This is unacceptable, at a time we are more and more aware of the way the culture affects all aspects of community life. We cannot be allowing cultural organizations in underserved communities to continue

to live at the edge and to be falling off that edge
to regularly.

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

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

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and I am very
familiar with Arts East New York and Catherine has
been before the Committee a number of times.

LUCY SEXTON: Yeah, she sent me her testimony.
She is caught in other work and other meetings. I
will be submitting the testimony.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, we should
definitely follow up and talk offline about how we
can be of help because she is great, they are great.

So, thank you. With that, I will dismiss the panel. Just for the record, I love John Calvelli.

LUCY SEXTON: I'm telling him. I'm telling him what you said.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, but I may love Taryn Sacramone a little bit more if that's alright.

So, with that, thank you to this panel and we will hear from Siri Horvitz, Valerie Paley, Tiffany Bryant and Desiree Gordon. If you are here, those four, please come to testify and the next panel is Elizabeth Henderson, Lisa Alpert, Lindsey Maliekel, I'm sure we're saying that wrong and Mary Rose, that's from one institution though right. Got it, okay, alright, whoever wants to start first, feel free to go.

SIRI HORVITZ: Hi. Good afternoon members of the Cultural Affairs Committee. My name is Siri Horvitz and I'm 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 reflect in the
rich cultural diversity of New York City.

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 in 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 21st 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 Gefen Hall.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Perfect, with three seconds to spare.

1 SIRI HORVITZ: I practiced.

3 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Very good. Next.

4 Hello, my name Tiffany Bryant, I am here from the
5 Public Theater. I know you are very familiar with us
6 but I will just give a little bit of history for the
7 benefit of everyone else here.

8 The Public Theater engages one of the largest and
9 most diverse audiences in New York City in a variety
10 of venues including Delacorte Theater in Central Park
11 in our landmark downtown home in the East Village,
12 which houses five theaters. Last year, we offered
13 more than 1,600 performances and welcomed over
14 350,000 people.

15 Since 1962, the Delacorte Theater, a city owned
16 structure in Central Park has been home to free
17 Shakespeare in the Park. Since then, over 5 million
18 people have attended performances for free. Each
19 year, we welcome over 100,000 attendees and last
20 year, we welcomed audiences from every zip code in
21 New York City.

22 In addition to distributing tickets for free
23 Shakespeare in the Park, from our Astor Place home
24 and in Central Park, we distribute tickets from
25 community hubs throughout the five boroughs including

libraries, recreation centers and other cultural
institutions.

This summer, Richard the II and the Public Works
musical adaptation of As You Like It will be
performed during out Free Shakespeare in the Park
season.

As you know, we are planning to revitalization of
the Delacorte Theater, which is 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 theaters footprint, but by streamlining
operations and improving efficiencies made possible
by a revitalized facility.

Greater efficiencies will allow us to shorten the
time between productions while also addressing
ongoing infrastructure and accessibility challenges.

I just want to thank you very much for your
support of this project in the budget for the last
two years and we look forward to support this year.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much and
I appreciate your partnership with the Fortune

Society. Great organization based in my district.
Thank you.

DESIREE GORDON: Good afternoon Cultural Affairs
Committee. My name is Desiree Gordon. I am the
Director of Programs and Strategy at the Brooklyn
Arts Council. We are Spheres of Impact are Creative
Expression, Creative Ecologies, and Creative
Equations.

The Brooklyn Arts Council ecological impact in
the field is only possible because of the City
Council's crucial support, which we use to catalyze
dynamic cultural interventions, education, training,
incubating, grant making, presenting, producing, and
advocating in the concentric circles of artists,
audiences and communities.

We believe in artists power and so we incubate
and invest in Artist development. We aggregate
imagination and connect resources for sustainability
and we activate cultural assets as solutions for more
just and joyful Brooklyn, a more civically inspired
and compassionate world. Our 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 and design workshops for
young entrepreneurs, tell us that that work is
working.

City Council funding is the bedrock on which
Brooklyn Arts Council builds these systems of
sustainability and ecosystems of equity and we thank
you.

Increased Regrant funding has allowed us to jump
from 26 percent to 46 percent in terms of meeting the
need that we are seeing in our applications. This is
great news for us and for the City Council. It means
that together , via webinars, technical assistance
clinics and in person info sessions, we are
effectively enhancing the visibility and increasing
accessibility across cultures, incomes, genders,
disciplines, through all neighborhoods in Brooklyn.
And we ask that you do everything that you can to
baseline the funding at or above this new summit, so
that we can keep pulling more and more Brooklyn
creatives up with us.

Brooklyn Arts Council's CDF funding drives our
work across multiple service areas from Brownsville
to DUMBO, Bensonhurst to Brooklyn Heights. Our
Cultural Heritage programs support traditional

artists as they navigate city agencies and we use CDF funding to drive economic and workforce development. Our PD programs resource cultural entrepreneurs with clinics and trainings diversifying income, preparing taxes, and leveraging technology for business development. We use the CDF funding to draw wider arcs of relevance between the Arts and other sectors, and with greater CDF funding we can deepen the impact in these areas.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and I went ahead and read the rest of your testimony.

DESIREE GORDON: Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I appreciate the CASA discussion and it's a big day in Brooklyn on Friday March 13th.

DESIREE GORDON: We hope to see you if you can.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Because it's Weeksville and then your annual grantee celebration and before I became a Council Member, I was president of the Queens Council in the Arts, so I am particularly fond of our five boroughwide arts councils and of course, we have had massive increases to the arts councils, partly because I believe so much in the work of them.

So, I'm glad to see you guys doing so much more
with that money.

DESIREE GORDON: Thank you, thank you, we ask
that you baseline it.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely, thank you.
Welcome again.

VALERIE PALEY: Thank you. Thank you for the
opportunity to testify on behalf of New York
Historical Society, New York's oldest Museum.

WE share the Council and Administration's
commitments to diversity and equity. As Director of
our Center for Women's History, I know what continued
city cultural funding has allowed us to achieve.
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, the first of its kind
in the nation.

For two years, we partnered with Council Speaker
Johnson and the women's caucus to mount an exhibition
right outside, featuring the first ever portraits of
important New York City women to hang in Council
Chambers. Support from the DCA's Cultural

Development Fund helps us mount exhibitions exploring the African American experience, LGBTQ plus history and culture, the struggle for suffrage and the more stories that remain underexamined in textbooks.

These exhibitions reach more than 200,000 public school students in our museum or through our in school and digital education initiatives each year.

Our newest program, the Academy for American Democracy, offers 6th grade classes, a free four day residency of the museum, so students can become more engaged and active future participants in the democratic process.

In it's pilot year, we've served 24 classes from a wide range of public schools, many serving a majority low income population and our short term goal is to increase service to 3,000 students annually.

At the post-secondary level to address the pervasive lack of diversity in American Museum Leadership staff and in the city's museum cultural workforce, we've launched a master of arts in museum studies, a degree program offered through the city of New York School of Professional Studies, almost 40

percent of the initial NA student cohort identify as people of color.

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 plus museum that seeks to establish the world's first major destination for the exploration of LGBTQ plus history. It is the city's continued support that positions us to forge these partnerships and tell these important stories.

Thank you so very much.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much. You know, my regard for your institution and for the work that you do and needless to say, I am thrilled with any progress we make towards that LGBTQ plus museum. As a gay man, it is incredibly important that our stories be told and told again and again.

So, thank you very much all of you for being here today. Next panel, Elizabeth Henderson, Lisa Alpert. I have Lindsey Maliekel and is Mary Rose, but one of you is testifying right. Okay, but we're going to keep that to two minutes. Thank you.

Okay, and then Randy Bourscheidt is – I don't see him now. What's that? Oh, she's on her way, okay, so then, we will push her to the next panel.

So, Randy Bourscheidt you are on this panel and is Turquoise Martin? Turquoise Martin, if you'd like to join this panel as well.

TURQUOISE MARTIN: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh, do we not have enough chairs? Alright, why doesn't the dynamic duo get started though as we're waiting, yes. I am anxious to see how the two of you are going to do two minutes.

MARY ROSE LLOYD: Yeah, I've already cut half of it but you have the full thing in front of you. Hello, 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 42nd Street, 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, 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, are 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.

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.

I have 45 seconds, oh, my gosh. Okay, I'm going to skip to this. Each season, New Victory serves over 60,000 New York City family members with an average single ticket prices of \$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.

And I'll finish just by saying 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 in a wider world that never quite gets you.

Theater should show the kids that the world they don't know, tell them stories they haven't heard, ask them the questions they haven't thought of, send up provocations for young people to financiers. It's they who must find them. It's their future.

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND 123
2 INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

3 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Who's next? You keep
4 passing, everyone keeps passing, why don't you just
5 go?

6 UNIDENTIFIED: It's like you don't want to do
7 this.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, you're up.

9 LISA ALPERT: Hi, good afternoon Chair Ven
10 Bramer. My name is Lisa Alpert, I'm the Vice
11 President of Development and Programming at Greenwood
12 Cemetery in Brooklyn.

13 I'm excited to tell you how we are reimagining
14 and expanding what this extraordinary historic
15 landscape can be. For geographical context, we are
16 in South Brooklyn, we neighbor seven different
17 neighborhoods and span 478 acres.

18 We offer an unexpectedly diverse range of
19 cultural and educational programs including workforce
20 development for jobs in masonry restoration, workshop
21 in environmental justice. Major program with Cornell
22 University on how large urban green spaces can fight
23 climate change and our school programs serve over
24 4,000 students annually.

25 We host classical music concerts in our
catacombs, film screenings, twilight tours, a

wonderful day of the dead event, popular night fall event welcomes about 2,000 people every for a nighttime odyssey with artists and musicians and film makers and about 10,000 led lights along the winding paths.

Our tours and walking tours are almost always sold out including our annual Gay Greenwood Tour, which is co-hosted with our friends at NYC LGBT sites. Last year, we welcomed over 330,000 people to our grounds.

At Greenwood 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, which means that most of our programming comes to a screeching halt for about four months of the year. We need indoor space, our new education and welcome center will expand the communities cultural and educational capacity and allow Greenwood to offer its programming year around, which is especially important in South Brooklyn, a

part of the borough that is culturally significantly underserved.

While we have raised 65 percent of the capital needed to fully fund the project, we are seeing public support from the Department and City Council to complete the project. It's our hope that you will weigh the budget priorities and see the value of this wonderful program.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much.

LISA ALPERT: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: 330,000 people...

LISA ALPERT: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Is a lot of people.

LISA ALPERT: It's a lot of people.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's great, congratulations.

LISA ALPERT: Yeah, we can do a lot better. We can do more.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great. Randy, do you want to go next and then we'll --

RANDY BOURSCHIEDT: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chair of the Committee. I Randy Bourscheidt, I'm Founder and Director of the archive in New York City Cultural Policy.

Because I've been in this field for 40 or 50 years and had the honor and pleasure of hiring Kathy Hughes, who you heard from earlier. I have a sense of pride at the accomplishment that we've all done but I have to point out that your personal leadership and your colleagues on the Council have really led the way in this and I thank you for this.

And so, as Commissioner Hughes said, we have the highest budget in history. The highest public budget for cultural affairs in the nation. We have \$1 billion in capital projects. This represents great progress but rather than being content, I urge you and I know you're inclined to think this way to, to build on this important foundation and continue to see this important aspect of New York life, uniquely important aspect grow.

In particular, I'd like to ask you to think about the capital budget. I know Commissioner Hughes spoke about that with nearly \$1 billion in place, there are a lot of other needs. My colleague to the right, just mentioned one potential one for example. We need to build the infrastructure of culture in this city to continue to build it.

With those facilities, we can then do programs, which serve the entire population and which to a few other very important things such as, attracting tourists who are a major, major part of New York City's economy.

So, thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you Randy very much.

TURQUOISE MARTIN: I'm sorry. Good afternoon, thank you Committee Chair 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 JustLeadership member, as well as an undergrad student at Hunter College. I want to highlight 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 the cuts to the state by beginning the long overdue work of divesting from overfunded systems of law enforcement.

Each budget cycle, we passionately make the case for definitely need of funding for housing,

education, libraries and youth programs. In each budget cycle we only walk away with a fraction of what is needed. 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 and we all want to live in strong, safe, health neighborhoods and our communities have the solutions but not the support. So, the build communities platform has been updated this month and it highlights areas of need, as well as many programs are all ready working and I'm pleased to share a copy of that with you today.

But one particular need that I want to highlight today is Community Programs and Services. Specifically, demands for reinvestments to community led centers, cultural programs, 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, they passed away and I was placed in foster care. In foster homes, where there was padlocks on refrigerators and the children destroyed my books.

I found a safe haven at the Tremont Library on Washington Avenue and I would stay there until closing. Although I faced challenges in my life, programs and cultural learning balanced the scales. Today, I am CUNY undergrad studying Mandarin as a third language. My 15 year old son is a high school student with 12 college credits. We live in the lower east side, but he goes to high school in Brooklyn and he attends the Brothers Sisters Sol program in Harlem and he would greatly benefit from an unlimited student MetroCard, right. But we talk a lot about families but I also want to acknowledge that young people who may not have families and would benefit from the support of such programs and more spaces for mentoring positive encouragement and an opportunity to build community they may otherwise not have. I'm going to stop there. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. So, a lot of people testified today. I think that might have been the most important testimony so far that I've heard all day, a. You can talk about libraries all day for me because I am a library person and it's just a great story, congratulations and thank you for infusing our discussion of libraries and culture with

a really progressive social justice and equity based
argument for what we all do for work.

So, thank you very much.

TURQUOISE MARTIN: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I know that he next
hearing is gearing up, but we still have a few more
people to testify, Elizabeth Henderson is with us
now? She is. David Johnston, Jennifer Wright Cook,
David Nussenbaum. If the four of you are still here,
please come to the front and we will – and then we
have one last panel that has Kim Chan, David Chase
Sophia Allen and Natalie Correa on it and that will
be our last panel for today before the next hearing
begins.

Alright, feel free to go right into Elizabeth.
Make sure your mic is working.

ELIZABETH HENDERSON: Okay, thank you. Hi, my
name is Elizabeth Henderson, I'm a Grants Manager at
the 92nd Street Y. Many people are familiar with
92Y, a very old cultural and community center in the
city but a lot of people when they think of 92Y, they
think of our location on the upper east side of
Manhattan.

What less people are familiar with is the fact that we do work citywide with over 16,000 public school students and educators throughout all five boroughs. So, every year we work with about 70 different K-12 public schools to provide free arts programs, both after school through CASA, as well as many year long in-school programs providing arts instruction at school and bringing the students to 92Y for performances and events. And we're very grateful to the City Council for its support of those programs.

In addition to the 70 public schools that we collaborate each year, 92Y is really proud of a network that we have formed over the past two years with 30 different cultural organizations throughout the city.

So, we are working with those 30 different cultural organizations to produce an initiative that's actually happening right now, this week, called Teen Arts Week. It's happening March 2nd through 8th. So, Teen Arts Week is put simply kind of like New York City's restaurant week, but in stead of restaurants, it's free arts programs for teens.

So, this week, we're having teens attend different classes, workshops, performances at organizations all throughout the five boroughs of New York City. Earlier this week, we had hundreds of teens at 92Y to watch five different teen citizen artists awards. Teens who have made contributions to their communities be honored for their work in the arts, as well as performances by Urban Bush women and the High Bridge Voices Youth Choir.

Later tonight, some teens will be attending at an event at BAM, where they will have a three hour recording session with a professional. They will get to walk away with a final album in their own digital recording.

Later this week, there will be open mics for teens at the Queens Museum, at the Museum of the Moving Image. Things are happening all over.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

ELIZABETH HENDERSON: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: We have to move on as you can see but thank you very much. We love the 92nd Street Y.

ELIZABETH HENDERSON: Oh, sorry, thank you.

DAVID NUSSENBAUM: 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. Each year, we assist 5,000 public school students to learn art making at 40 schools. Almost all of them in the Bronx and that's through CASA programs, so thank you very much City Council and DCLA, as well as an in school contract with the DOE.

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 the New York Public Libraries to perform

childrens musical theater at seven Bronx branches.
19 senior center concerts in the Bronx under the
leadership and support of Council Members Torres and
Gibson. An after school education program to teach
string instruments underwritten by Assemblyman
Dinowitz to eventually build a Bronx youth orchestra.
And I also want to give a shout out to Mark Gjonaj
who has funded some summer concerts.

One future aspiration is to deepen our commitment
to our Bronx students through the creation of a
weekend arts academy. Local art making is critical
to community development. Today's economic
environment, many jobs are being automated.
Educators and business leaders appreciate that the
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 respectively ask
that it baseline it's grant level for arts and
culture in the coming budget.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, Jennifer.

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND 135
2 INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

3 JENNIFER WRIGHT COOK: Hi, thank you Chairman Van
4 Bramer and members of the Cultural Committee for the
5 opportunity. My name is Jennifer Wright Cook, I'm
6 the Executive Director of the Field, a 34 year old
7 art service organization based in lower Manhattan
8 serving artists in all five boroughs.

9 Our vision for the future is to take the starving
10 out of starving artists. It's ambitious, it's
11 audacious, and we have a plan to achieve it.

12 In 2018, artists generated \$114 billion for New
13 York State. Yet the vast majority of the 57,000
14 artists who call New York City home, live hand and
15 mouth with inconsistent income, unstable housing and
16 no plan to pay off their debt or to map out a
17 financial future.

18 The vast majority of artists living in New York
19 City are gig economy workers, renting in low income
20 neighborhoods with no saving and no retirement. With
21 New York City's extremely high cost of living and
22 very little income generation possible, artists can
23 not afford to live and work here for long term.

24 Artists have to chose be an artist or pay off
25 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 really wants to invest in its most vibrant income generating sector, artists are it. The arts and culture sector is it.

In 2019, we did two national surveys and three focus groups in New York City with artists of color. 850 arts across the country in New York City, told us what they need to thrive. Financial planning services. 850 artists across the country and in New York City told us that they need help with the student loan payoff and emergency savings. These are their number one priorities. 50 percent 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 historic marginalized communities are struggling even more. In direct response to these struggles, the field is launching new services to take the starving out of starving artists. 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. Artists and apartment owner, artist and saving money.

3 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you Jennifer.

5 David?

6 DAVID JOHNSTON: Hello, my name is David
7 Johnston, I'm the Executive Director of Exploring the
8 Metropolis and since 1982, Exploring the Metropolis
9 has focused on solving the workspace needs of New
10 York City's performing artists. Currently, we
11 administer the EtM Con Edison Composer Residencies
12 and the EtM Choreographer and Composer Residencies
13 which is taking applications as of this morning.

14 Capping five years work in the borough of Queens,
15 last August, we moved our administrative operations
16 to a shared workspace at the Jamaica Center for Arts
17 and Learning, in order to be closer to the artists
18 and communities we serve.

19 In the last decade, our residency programs have
20 provided more than \$1 million worth of no cost
21 rehearsal space and cash award to New York City
22 artists.

23 We've supported more than 100 composers and
24 choreographers with free space stipends, providing
25 more than 50,000 hours of free rehearsal space. We

have also supported more than 80 free public programs
for thousand of New Yorkers.

We have also had as our selected artist
approximately one-third of them are immigrants,
residents of New York from Turkey, Singapore, Hong
Kong, South Africa, Mexico and Kosovo. Last year, we
were happy to receive a sizable 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 FY21, we fully support increased funding for
workforce development for the Cultural Institutions
group, including our partners at Jackal in Flushing
Town Hall. We also ask the Council to remember that
smaller organizations need increased funding in order
to properly pay and retain our own workforce.

Thank you to Council Member Van Bramer and the
Cultural Affairs Committee for the opportunity to
testify and we also thank Council Member Van Bramer
for his stewardship of this Committee over the past
decade.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much to
you all. Our last panel is Kim Chan, David Chase
Sophia Allen and Natalie Correa.

Alright, who wants to start?

DAVID CHASE: I will.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Go for it, begin.

DAVID CHASE: Good afternoon. I'm David Chase
and I'm the 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 New York City
Cultural Community and in particular, the culture
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
breakthrough 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 Vilaro
an acclaimed choreographer and former member of the

company whose artistic vision response to the need
for social equity, cultural identity and quality arts
education for all.

Ballet Hispanico's arts education programs now
reach nearly 12,000 New York City school children
each year. From the beginning, education has been
the backbone of Ballet Hispanico and today, education
continues to be imbedded in all of our programs.

The CASA program in many ways represents a
continuation of our founders legacy of providing
after school arts education to New York City school
children. Ballet Hispanico is conducting residencies
in 13 schools this year. The residencies use dance,
choreography and performance as the starting point
and expand out to integrate these into other areas
including cultural studies, history and literature,
thereby improving the students overall academic
performance and success.

The curriculum for the program also draws from
the New York City blueprint for teaching and learning
in the arts. 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. As Ballet Hispanico celebrates its milestone anniversary this year, it is deeply gratifying for us to participate in CASA.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. We love Ballet Hispanico, we love CASA. I want to recognize Council Member Lancman from Queens has joined us. He's here for the next Committee but I know he loves ballet and CASA, just like anybody else. Next.

NATALIE CORREA: Good afternoon, buenas tardes everyone. My name is Natalie Correa and I am a Program Assistant with 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 believe that the arts have a unique power to engage children of every background, ability, and socioeconomic position and motivate them to excellence in an environment of

inclusivity. We utilize dance and music to instill in students a love for the arts, a passion for learning, and a desire to strive for their personal best. Our program also helps foster the social development and global awareness and cultural literacy of our partners.

NIB 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.

Alongside my colleagues, we wish to thank and acknowledge the City Council for its major increases in the NYC Cultural budget over the past few years but I remind you that 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 increase funding

simply to properly pay their current workforce and to
retain a diverse workforce.

As NBI's founder Jacques d'Amboise said, "The
arts open your mind and your heart to possibilities
that are limitless." When the arts thrive, New York
City thrives. Together, we are limitless.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much.
Great testimony. There is a lot going on here in the
room but your voice was heard.

NATALIE CORREA: Yeah, thank you.

SOPHIA ALLEN: Good afternoon, my name is Sophia
Allen and I'm here today as the Reach and Advocacy
Coordinator for DanceNYC, as well as an independent
artist and dancer living in the City.

So, the work that I am doing is to directly
increase the impact of the work that we're here for
today and I'm also a direct recipient of that work,
of that impact.

On behalf of the service organization DanceNYC,
which serves over 5,000 individual dance artists and
500 nonprofit dance companies in the City, I join my
colleague advocates working across creative
disciplines and first and foremost, thanking the

Council for the recent increase in the budget and requesting that the City baseline these increases to the New York City Cultural Budget for Fiscal Year 2021 and beyond. As well as asking that the city allocate funding to workforce development within 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 live and work in New York City.

The ongoing affordability crisis in New York stems from longstanding systems of oppression and continues to exacerbate sector wide inefficiencies that result from inconsistent funding commitments. Baselining the City's budget will counteract this by providing the necessary structure in which New York artists, cultural groups and advocates have the necessary financial resources to move from a position of surviving to thriving.

Locally, the increased funding is needed to ensure that the Department of Cultural Affairs and our city's arts and cultural institutions are positioned in a way to continue implementing the pressing recommendations from CreateNYC's 2017 cultural plan and 2019 action plan.

DanceNYC views these significantly as milestones and opportunities for advocacy but we would like to remind the council that in order to reap the benefits of these plans, it requires consistent and collective action.

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 nuance progress measurement over time. DanceNYC strongly advocates for tracking the success of these strategies by creative discipline to ensure that dance as well as all peer disciplines are accurately represented and equitably served.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, we love DanceNYC.

SOPHIA ALLEN: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Last but certainly not least.

KIM CHAN: Okay, hi, I'm Kim Chan, I'm the Deputy Director at National Sawdust. We are artist incubator in Brooklyn that provides workspace for artists to rehearse, create document and perform their work for audiences and for New Yorkers to

strengthen community bonds across cultures, musical taste and differing backgrounds. The support we receive from the Department of Cultural Affairs and the City Council are essential components of everything that do. We are a women led and founded organization. Our programs prioritize opportunities to empower women nonbinary and underrepresented voices.

Your support has helped us reach more than 20,000 audience members annually with more than 150 performances. Over 70 percent of the artists and audiences served are New York City residents. Participating artists receive over 400 hours of workspace and over 540 hours of career development each year.

We believe that artistic expression empowers all of us to create a more inclusive world and as an example, one participant in our arts education program student co-lab has told us that, "I have learned that music is a safe place, that I can express myself without fear." And that the kind of transformation that we seek for all of the participants in all of our programs. This years increased support has really helped us guarantee a

higher level of quality and support for the participants in our programs. We are grateful for this funding and we do encourage you to continue the increase funding moving forward.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much and I know that there is a public safety committee meeting right after this and the Police Commissioner is coming, but I kind of like it that a lot of folks who maybe didn't intend to hear some compelling testimony from artists in the City of New York, are in fact hearing about and learning even more about just how amazing artists are because there is no New York City without artists and culture and the arts. And we have achieved record funding for Cultural Affairs and Libraries in the City of New York but there is more to be done.

So, I want to thank all of you for representing artists across the City and with that, this hearing is adjourned. [GAVEL]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date April 1, 2018