



## Legislation Text

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### Res. No. 644

Resolution calling on the United States Congress to pass, and the President to sign, legislation to support arts and humanities programs that address and fight systemic racism.

By Council Members Ossé, Louis, Hanif, Hudson, Fariás, Rivera, Cabán and Riley

Whereas, Access to arts and cultural resources is important to the well-being of all communities, but access is too often blocked in low-income communities and communities of color; and

Whereas, The University of Pennsylvania’s Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) researched community access to arts and cultural resources in a three-year study in New York City (NYC), which concluded with a 2017 report entitled “The Social Wellbeing of New York City’s Neighborhoods: The Contribution of Culture and the Arts”; and

Whereas, The SIAP report noted that if “culture is an intrinsic element of wellbeing, the unequal distribution of cultural resources stands out as a major challenge to social justice” and that this unequal distribution “is deeply etched into the contours of social class, race, and ethnic inequality”; and

Whereas, The SIAP study found, for example, that the presence of cultural resources in a neighborhood was correlated with an 18 percent decrease in serious crime and a 14 percent decrease in child abuse and neglect cases; and

Whereas, The SIAP study informed CreateNYC, the 10-year comprehensive cultural plan adopted in 2017 that guides the work of NYC’s Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) in its outreach to fund cultural organizations serving historically underserved neighborhoods and to address racial and ethnic disparity in accessing arts and cultural resources; and

Whereas, Dennis Inhulsen, Chief Learning Officer for the National Arts Education Association,

commented that exposure to arts and cultural resources outside of school is important for young people because the arts are “about community and culture and understanding how people live and celebrate life”; and

Whereas, According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress’s 2017 study, entitled “New NAEP Data: Deep Rifts in Access to Arts Education,” test results for nearly 9,000 eighth grade students nationwide showed statistically significant differences for Black students and white students, with Black students scoring 29 points lower in music and 30 points lower in visual arts; and

Whereas, According to a 2012 study by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), entitled “The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies,” high school students of low socioeconomic status, but with high arts participation, have a dropout rate of only 4 percent, which is five times lower than the dropout rate of their peers with low arts participation and comparable socioeconomic status; and

Whereas, According to the NEA study, 71 percent of young adults of low socioeconomic status, but with high arts participation, attended college, compared to only 48 percent of their peers with low arts participation and comparable socioeconomic status; and

Whereas, According to PolicyLink’s 2017 report, entitled “Creating Change through Arts, Culture, and Equitable Development: A Policy and Practice Primer,” arts organizations serving communities of color are typically much smaller and less financially secure than arts organizations in predominantly white communities; and

Whereas, According to PolicyLink’s report, a study found that NYC’s population was 67 percent people of color, but that only 38 percent of the staff and board members of cultural organizations were people of color; and

Whereas, Since the establishment of the NEA and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in 1965, their programs have sought to support the arts in communities of color and to “address funding disparities that overwhelmingly favored mainstream arts and cultural groups,” according to PolicyLink’s report; and

Whereas, Federal legislation, entitled Advancing Equity Through the Arts and Humanities Act (H.R. 3239), was introduced in May 2023 in the U.S. House of Representatives by Representative Barbara Lee to support arts and humanities projects that would directly fight systemic racism and would be funded through a competitive grants program carried out by the NEA and NEH; and

Whereas, H.R. 3239 would require the NEA and NEH to collaborate on anti-racism initiatives with public and nonprofit entities, including government agencies, universities, museums, and nonprofit, faith-based, and community-based organizations that serve and are led by people of color; and

Whereas, H.R. 3239 would require the NEA and NEH to review their existing programs in order to include strategies to fight systemic racism in current and future arts and cultural programs; and

Whereas, H.R. 3239 would require the NEA and NEH to provide free grant writing assistance as well as culturally and linguistically appropriate technical assistance for organizations interested in applying for competitive grants and technical support; and

Whereas, H.R. 3239 would require the NEA and NEH to prioritize in their grant making public and nonprofit organizations that are led by BIPOC individuals (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color); that have a majority of BIPOC executive staff and board members; and that have a history of effective and ongoing antiracism work; and

Whereas, Representative Lee commented that H.R. 3239 “recognizes the countless advantages of engaging in the arts, particularly for young people” and “acknowledges the cultural and social importance of representation in the arts and the obstacles that prevent marginalized communities from accessing these resources regularly”; and

Whereas, Representative Lee noted the role of the arts historically in the fight for equity worldwide and remarked that “[c]reative expressions such as music, poetry, paintings, and other forms of art have been instrumental in conveying emotions, communicating complex ideas, inspiring action, and achieving impossible goals”; and

Whereas, H.R. 3239 was endorsed by more than 150 national, state, and local arts organizations, including organizations in NYC, such as Carnegie Hall, New Yorkers for Culture & Arts, Dance/NYC, New York City Arts in Education Roundtable, and Kinding Sindaw Heritage Foundation; and

Whereas, According to the Siena College Research Institute in its survey supporting the development of CreateNYC, 97 percent of NYC residents believe arts and culture are important to the overall quality of life in NYC; and

Whereas, In the 2019 Action Plan update of CreateNYC, DCLA’s Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl wrote that “ensuring that our cultural community is open, equitable, and accessible to all is something that will require ongoing collective effort”; and

Whereas, The objectives and strategies in NYC’s Action Plan, which guides DCLA’s work in the NYC arts and cultural community, are in harmony with the spirit of H.R. 3239; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the United States Congress to pass, and the President to sign, legislation to support arts and humanities programs that address and fight systemic racism.

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5/12/2023  
RHP