

# TESTIMONY TO CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING

Friday, March 15, 2024

## Testimony to City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations Preliminary Budget Hearing

By Dance/NYC

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*Submitted to the City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations on March 15, 2024*

*Prepared by Candace Thompson-Zachery, Co-Executive Director of Dance/NYC*

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony, submitted on behalf of Dance/NYC ([Dance.NYC](https://www.dance-nyc.org)), a service organization that reaches over 6,000 individual dance artists, 1,700 dance entities, and the many for-profit dance businesses based in the metropolitan New York City area. Its areas of service are of special benefit to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Color), immigrant, disabled, low-income, and small-budget dance workers. Through its action-oriented research and advocacy, Dance/NYC seeks to represent and advance the interests of the dance field. It embeds the values of justice, equity, and inclusion into all aspects of its operations and frames the following requests through the lens of those values.

Dance/NYC joins colleague advocates working across creative disciplines in thanking you for your leadership and calling on you to:

1. Reverse the November and Preliminary Budget Cuts to Culture –
  - That's \$20 million in FY24 and \$15.5M in FY25.
2. At minimum restore and baseline last year's one-time addition of \$45 million. However, our goal is to increase the Arts and Culture allotment to match 1% of the city's budget by 2030. Currently, that is equivalent to \$1.1 billion.
3. Fully fund City Council initiatives including CASA for school children, Su Casa for seniors, Cultural Immigrant Initiative, and the Coalition of Theaters of Color.
4. Ensure the implementation of transparency law 1184 to ensure accessibility and usable data from DCLA so our sector can continue to partner with the agency to support equitable distribution of the CDF Fund.

### Why the Dance Sector Matters

The dance industry alone contributes an estimated \$300 million<sup>1</sup> annually to the city's economy. This does not include fiscally sponsored organizations, for profit enterprises, sole proprietorships, and individual dance workers. Dance is a key component of our entertainment industry, a major contributor to the vibrancy and diversity of our culture, and an important factor in both individual and community well-being. When we have cultural assets, we can expect improved outcomes in health, schooling, and personal security.<sup>2</sup> However, the dance sector continues to grapple with systemic inequities and insufficient access to resources, funding, and advancement.

Besides dance, 28% of our workers work in education, 23% in healthcare + wellness, and 19% in hospitality, increasing the essential nature of their work and the contributions they are making to our communities. About 64% of producing dance workers are shouldering the cost of producing programs to their detriment with funds out of their own pockets. The individuals and organizations in the dance community are keeping our sector alive on their own backs and we need the city's continued investment.

The arts and culture industry more broadly are at the core of New York City's economic development and are essential to its overall economic health. In addition to being the number one driver of tourism to the city, the arts and cultural sector generates \$143.8B in economic activity and accounts for nearly 13% of New York City's total economic output.<sup>3</sup> In 2019, New York City's arts, entertainment, and recreation sector employed 93,500 people in 6,250 establishments amounting to \$7.4 billion in wages.<sup>4</sup>

The dynamic economic activities of the creative industry have generated an estimated \$1.6 billion in additional revenues<sup>5</sup> and have a multiplier effect that benefits adjacent industries such as: real estate, business and professional services, wholesale and retail trade, eating and drinking establishments, hotels and personal services, utilities, transportation, medical and educational services, finance and insurance.

### What the Dance Sector Experiences

Dance organizations and workers in NYC are still navigating the effects of the pandemic with fragility. Based on Dance/NYC's most recent 2023 report, 40% of dance organizations are classifying their financial health as weak or very weak, an increased number of organizations are relying on contributed income and more than half of organizations don't have access to reserves.<sup>6</sup> On average, dance workers earn about 15% below NYC's living wage, while dancers and choreographers earn about \$23K. We need strong support at the city level to ensure our workers and organizations can survive this economic climate.

Dance/NYC's COVID-19 Covid Brief<sup>7</sup> also reveals the disproportionate impact that the pandemic has had on small-budget groups and individual dance makers, which make up the majority of the dance-making sector but have historically lacked access to resources and support. Additionally, these impacts are felt most acutely by arts workers who identify as BIPOC, immigrants, and disabled among communities with less access to capital reserves. As of October 2023, total employment in the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector remains 13.1% below pre-pandemic levels.<sup>8</sup>

Dance organizations and individual dance workers are earning less money. Our research indicates that dance organizations are increasingly

relying on donated income, up by 22% nationwide and by at least 8% in NYC.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, earned revenue in the dance sector has notably decreased across the nation, standing at 69%.<sup>10</sup> In NYC, 40% of dance organizations rate their financial health as weak. Individual dance workers face significant challenges, with nearly half holding up to four jobs to make ends meet. Many of them lack access to sufficient care or social safety nets.

## The Impact of Current Funding

Sudden budget cuts to arts and culture hurt all New Yorkers. In the fall, Mayor Adams announced a 15% budget cut to all agencies without informing nonprofits until November and January of this year. Furthermore, the current CDF reforms and the extreme delays in FY24 awards further compounded the harm and precarity that organizations face, especially groups with budgets under \$250K and those from BIPOC, disabled, and immigrant communities. The city must reverse the November and other preliminary budget cuts including \$20M in FY24 and \$15.5M in FY25.

As New York City's primary agency dedicated to supporting arts and culture, the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) plays a critical role in ensuring the sector not only survives but thrives. We are requesting \$45 million in baseline funding with the goal of increasing the Arts and Culture allotment to match 1% of the city's budget. That is the equivalent of \$1.1 billion, and would allow DCLA to provide longer-term and more consistent support for cultural organizations.

In addition, DCLA programs, such as the Cultural Development Fund, Coalition of Theatres of Color Initiative, Cultural Immigrant Initiative, CASA, and SU-CASA, have helped arts and cultural organizations and creative workers sustain their work and deepen their engagement with communities. It is crucial that these City Council initiatives are fully funded.

Lastly, our sector requires transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. The arts and culture community wants to be a part of the solutions to our City's fiscal challenges, but this is not possible when decisions are made without us. Implementing transparency law 1184 is crucial for our sector to effectively collaborate with DCLA and ensure the equitable distribution of CDF grants. While the CDF program has provided increased funding opportunities for some, including many smaller organizations receiving their first grants, it has also precipitated detrimental cuts for many others.

We insist on meaningful partnership with the nonprofit sector, greater transparency in the budgeting process, and the resolution of long-standing contract delays.

Dance/NYC thanks you again for your leadership and as stated above urges you to:

1. Reverse the November and Preliminary Budget Cuts to Culture –
  - That's \$20 million in FY24 and \$15.5M in FY25.
2. At minimum restore and baseline last year's one-time addition of \$45 million. However, our goal is to increase the Arts and Culture allotment to match 1% of the city's budget by 2030. Currently, that is equivalent to \$1.1 billion.
3. Fully fund City Council initiatives including CASA for school children, Su Casa for seniors, Cultural Immigrant Initiative, and the Coalition of Theaters of Color.
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Dance/NYC calls on the city government to ensure that dance workers can thrive in NYC, maintain a competitive edge in arts and entertainment, boost tourism dollars and keep our communities safe. Please consider this as you champion our sector.

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<sup>1</sup> State of NYC Dance 2016 & Workforce Demographics 2016.

<https://www.dance.nyc/uploads/State%20of%20NYC%20Dance%20and%20Workforce%20Demographics%20Online%20Version.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The Social Wellbeing of New York City's Neighborhoods: The Contribution of Culture and The Arts.

<https://repository.upenn.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/d7531a8f-f046-497f-aa37-494486d98cf4/content>

<sup>3</sup> Office of the New York City Comptroller (2019). The Creative Economy: Art, Culture and Creativity in New York City.

<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-creative-economy/>

<sup>4</sup> Office of the New York State Comptroller (2021). Arts, Entertainment and Recreation in New York City Recent Trends and Impact of COVID-19.

<https://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/osdc/arts-entertainment-and-recreation-new-york-city-recent-trends-and-impact-covid-19>

<sup>5</sup> Americans for the Arts. The Arts As an Industry: Their Economic Importance to the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan Region.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/naappd/the-arts-as-an-industry-their-economic-importance-to-the-new-york-new-jersey-metropolitan-region-0>

<sup>6</sup> State of NYC Dance 2023: Findings from the Dance Industry Census. [https://hub.dance.nyc/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/State-of-NYC-Dance-2023-Report-FINAL-23\\_12\\_11\\_ACC.pdf](https://hub.dance.nyc/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/State-of-NYC-Dance-2023-Report-FINAL-23_12_11_ACC.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Coronavirus Dance Impact Information Brief 2021. <https://www.dance.nyc/programs/research/2021/03/Coronavirus-Dance-Impact-Information-Brief-A-Dance-Sector-in-Peril-/>

<sup>8</sup> Office of the New York City Comptroller. New York by the Numbers: Monthly Economic and Fiscal Outlook no. 64, January 30, 2024. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/newsletter/new-york-by-the-numbers-monthly-economic-and-fiscal-outlook-no-85-january-17th-2024/>

<sup>9</sup> Dance/USA's 2023 Impact Report [https://issuu.com/danceusa/docs/danceusa\\_2023\\_impactreport\\_issuu\\_booklet](https://issuu.com/danceusa/docs/danceusa_2023_impactreport_issuu_booklet)

<sup>10</sup> Dance/USA's 2023 Impact Report [https://issuu.com/danceusa/docs/danceusa\\_2023\\_impactreport\\_issuu\\_booklet](https://issuu.com/danceusa/docs/danceusa_2023_impactreport_issuu_booklet)