

I TESTIFY FOR INCREASING OUR CITY'S CULTURAL AFFAIRS BUDGET. JOIN ME. (HUFFINGTON POST)

Monday, March 17, 2014

I Testify for Increasing Our City's Cultural Affairs Budget. Join Me. (Huffington Post)

By Lane Harwell

► [Share](#) | [Print](#) | [Download](#)

It is fiscal year 2015 budget season for the City of New York and time for all of us to make the case for arts and culture funding. The year began with the release of a [Financial Plan, Fiscal Years 2014–2018](#), which includes a \$149 million preliminary fiscal year 2015 expense budget for the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA), consistent with a financial plan released in November. The season continues with hearings by the New York City Council and the work of advocates, like you, to educate our legislative representatives on the importance of DCLA support and of arts and culture to all New Yorkers before a budget is adopted.

I, for one, advocate increasing the DLCA budget over prior years so the agency might include new groups in its funding portfolio and help currently funded groups scale up their delivery of public value. An increased allocation to DCLA could help arts and culture to better serve more New Yorkers in more of our geographies and contribute to a more equitable New York.

I offer the new Administration and City Council data in support of this request. Take, for instance, a [State of NYC Dance](#) report commissioned by the organization I run, [Dance/NYC](#), based on the Cultural Data Project (CDP), and prepared with Fractured Atlas. Its findings show us the importance of City funding to eligible 501(c)(3) dance organizations. The City is the most substantial source of government funding for organizations in nearly every budget range, accounting for 46% of the total allocation of government funds, and helping to generate thousands of performances locally, millions of paying attendees, and \$251 million in aggregate expenditures.

CDP trend data over a two-year period also indicate increased City investment (of 23%) in the smallest dance groups—those with budgets of less than \$100,000—contributing to a strong start-up culture and the future of the art form.

I invite City leadership not only to study the hard data that demonstrate healthy returns but also to reflect on the multiple and alternative personal stories of why arts and culture matter to New Yorkers—from families lifted up in the wake of superstorm Sandy to small business owners whose livelihoods are supported by our audiences.

As part of a new visibility campaign, NEW YORKERS FOR DANCE, Dance/NYC has issued an open call for the filming of personal video statements on the role of dance in legislative districts in all five boroughs. I invite you to consider having Dance/NYC film your statement for release this budget season. (To learn more, visit [DanceNYC.org](#) and read *The New York Times*' "[Bringing New York City Dance Into the Limelight](#).")

While my day job is to advocate for dance and New York's unique role as a dance capital, I recognize that the arts and culture work better as one, and I join my fellow advocates in advancing their agendas and a DCLA budget that will better serve all New Yorkers. Some of the recent efforts to which I have committed and encourage you to explore include: [Arts and Culture for a Just and Equitable City](#), Center for Arts Education's [Candidate Engagement Project](#), and [One Percent for Culture](#). (Full disclosure: I am a member of the steering committee for the New York City Arts Coalition and of the advisory group for One Percent for Culture.)

I also recognize that as City leadership works toward adopting a fiscal year 2015 budget, they must weigh multiple funding priorities. I offer a vision for the City where the arts and culture are not viewed in isolation but as being reciprocally linked with society, and where they can be included as solutions for other priority issues: for instance, jobs and economic development, equality for all, safety, sustainability, and resilience. In addition to requesting an increase to the DCLA budget, I encourage our leadership to identify alternative sources of funding and resource provision for the arts and culture.

I thank the City leadership for the preliminary budget and its commitment to ending the "budget dance," referencing sizable movement from proposed cuts to subsequent restorations during recent budget cycles. With the preliminary budget as it stands, those of us working in arts and culture are already better prepared to plan for the future than we have been at this point in recent years.

Advocacy for the DCLA budget and other causes requires our individual and collective action. Please join me in acting on opportunities to speak up and be heard. Consider connecting with your legislative representatives, telling your friends and colleagues, and driving the conversation online @DanceNYC #newyorkersfordance.

With your help, I know we will succeed in keeping DCLA vibrant.

This blog appears on the [Huffington Post](#). A version of this blog was also presented as testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations on March 11, 2014.

[< back](#)

[previous listing](#) • [next listing](#)