TESTIMONY TO CITY PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING ON ZONING FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Wednesday, January 24, 2024

Testimony to City Planning Commission Public Hearing on Zoning for Economic Opportunity

By Dance/NYC

Dear Chair Garodnick,

I am reaching out on behalf of Dance/NYC to convey our wholehearted endorsement of Mayor Eric Adams' proposed citywide zoning text amendment, *City of Yes Economic Opportunity.* Dance/NYC serves over 5,000 individual dance artists, 1,200 dance-making entities, and 500 nonprofit dance companies in the metropolitan NYC area, and advocates for the rights of individual dance makers and groups.

Our strong support extends to the elimination of dance-related restrictions from zoning regulations, a crucial step in rectifying a historical injustice that remained in effect in the aftermath of the repeal of the controversial cabaret law. It is imperative to recognize that the implementation and enforcement of this law were tainted by racial bias and selectivity. Now, more than ever, it is time to correct these injustices and allow the vibrant dance culture of NYC to flourish freely!

The impact of stringent dancing regulations in New York extends beyond individual dancers and communities, casting a burden on businesses. These establishments grapple with unyielding bureaucracy, legal expenses, erratic and unjust enforcement, as well as disproportionate fines and penalties.

The concept of social dancing being accessible to everyone in any venue across the City of New York is foundational to our advocacy. We firmly believe that no neighborhood should be labeled as "No Dancing Allowed." Granting local communities and small businesses the liberty to participate in dance activities is not only a matter of cultural significance but also crucial for fostering a thriving and inclusive environment.

The historical roots of social dancing underscore its importance. Hip-hop, for instance, emerged predominantly as a social form at parties in basements and on street corners. Similarly, dance forms like salsa originated in social dance spaces. These hubs, including bars, restaurants, and event spaces, play a pivotal role in giving rise to new cultural forms and phenomena.

Our endorsement of the *City of Yes Economic Opportunity* proposal reflects our belief in its positive impact on New York City. By supporting this proposal, the city can demonstrate its dedication to fostering creativity, promoting economic growth, and enhancing the overall well-being of its residents.

We extend our commendation to the city and the Department of City Planning (DCP) for their efforts in this matter. We eagerly anticipate witnessing the far-reaching and positive impact that this initiative will have on our dance constituents and the broader New York City community.