TESTIMONY TO THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS: DCA FY13 PRELIMINARY BUDGET

Tuesday, March 13, 2012

Testimony to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations: DCA FY13 Preliminary Budget

By Lane Harwell, Director of Dance/NYC; Steering Committee, NYC Arts Coalition

I submit testimony today on behalf of the service entity Dance/NYC, the New York City Arts Coalition and all of New York City's dance makers –1,200 entities and 5,000 dancers—to call attention to the importance of the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) investment in our industry and highlight contributions of our industry to the City.

With the Coalition, Dance/NYC requests a full restoration of DCA's budget for FY 2013 and asks that the Council hold open the possibility of an increase.

I bring findings from Dance/NYC's State of NYC Dance (2011), which uses the first-ever New York State Cultural Data Project (CDP) data for a sample of 127 nonprofit dance organizations and establishes key benchmarks for measuring their activity, economics and workforce. The report and the CDP data it animates were made possible with DCA support, in partnership with the City Council, and in themselves demonstrate the City's strong commitment to gauging the health and opportunity of the arts—to making the most informed and strategic investments possible.

State of NYC Dance highlights underscore the importance of nonprofit dance as a contributor to and an ambassador for our City:
• Total aggregate expenditures of groups analyzed: $231 million—healthy contributions to our economy and powerful returns on investment
• Performances in NYC: 1,600; On tour: 1,300—representing the City to the world
• Paid attendance: 2+ million

The CDP data also reveal the City's leadership in supporting nonprofit dance—and the wider community of artists and audiences the sector engages—with the largest share of public support attributable to DCA in every organizational budget category, from groups with budgets less than $100,000 to groups with budgets more than $5 million.

In requesting a full restoration of the DCA budget, I want to acknowledge and thank the Council for its commitment to advancing the City's role as a global dance capital and long history of restoring proposed cuts to DCA. At the same time, I want acknowledge that the historical pattern of cuts and subsequent restoration has a destabilizing effect—making planning for the future of the art form unnecessarily difficult. Only with a secure and vibrant DCA can New York City dance continue to play its role in supporting the City's social health and economy, contributing to a brighter future for every resident.