

TESTIMONY ON THE CITY'S PRELIMINARY CULTURAL AFFAIRS BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2015

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Testimony on the City's Preliminary Cultural Affairs Budget for Fiscal Year 2015

By Lane Harwell

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I submit this testimony on behalf of the service entity, Dance/NYC, and all of New York City's 1,200 dance makers and companies to call attention to the significance of the Department of Cultural Affairs' (DCLA) investment in our industry and highlight contributions of our industry to the City.

Dance/NYC requests consideration of an increase to the DCLA budget for fiscal year 2015 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 dance and culture to better serve more New Yorkers in more of our geographies and contribute to a more equitable New York.

Dance/NYC offers data-driven foundations in support of this request. Findings from our [State of NYC Dance 2013](#), based on the Cultural Data Project and prepared with Fractured Atlas, 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. 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.

Dance/NYC invites you not only to study the hard data that demonstrate healthy returns but also to listen and reflect on the multiple and alternative stories of why dance matters to New Yorkers in every City Council district—from families lifted up in the wake of superstorm Sandy to small business owners whose livelihoods depend on our audiences. As part of a new visibility campaign, NEW YORKERS FOR DANCE, Dance/NYC has issued an open call for the filming of video statements on the role of dance in your districts, which we look forward to sharing during this budget cycle. (To learn more about this campaign, visit [DanceNYC.org](#) and read The New York Times' "[Bringing New York City Dance Into the Limelight](#).")

While I am testifying today as an advocate for dance and New York's 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. I also recognize that as the new Administration and City Council work toward adopting the City's fiscal year 2015 budget, you must weigh multiple funding priorities. As you do so, I offer a vision for the City where the arts and culture are not viewed in isolation but as 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 increasing the DCLA budget, you may identify alternative sources of funding and resource provision for the arts and culture.

In requesting increased investment through DCLA, I acknowledge and thank the new Administration and City Council for a preliminary budget that includes funding for DCLA in line with the financial plan for the City released in November. By avoiding the "budget dance" of recent years, which involved proposed cuts and subsequent restorations, we are already better able to plan for the future. The Dance/NYC team and I look forward to supporting your activities in any way possible.

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