

TESTIMONY TO CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING

Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Testimony to City Council Committee on Finance Executive Budget Hearing

By Dance/NYC

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Thank you for your consideration of this testimony, submitted on behalf of Dance/NYC (dance.nyc), a service organization that reaches over 5,000 individual dance artists, 1,200 dance-making entities, 500 non-profit dance companies, 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. Dance/NYC is the only service organization for the dance sector in the metropolitan NYC area, and its action-oriented research and advocacy seek 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 requesting:

1. A total \$100 million investment in the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) for FY23 to augment NYC's economic recovery and ensure equitable sector growth inclusive of the Arts and Culture industry. This request will bring annual investment in culture to 0.24% of the City's total budget as a baseline, with a commitment toward the ultimate goal of reaching 1% spending for culture. The \$100 million request includes:
 - \$50 million in baseline funding for key DCLA programs, split evenly between the Cultural Institutions Group and Cultural Development Fund;
 - \$45 million in grants for five strategic initiatives to advance equity in the field, including:
 - \$15 million for a Cultural Equity Fund
 - \$10 million for tourism and marketing for culture across all five boroughs
 - \$10 million for workforce development and support programs
 - \$5 million for accessibility and inclusion of D/deaf and disabled communities
 - \$5 million for individual artists, including the City Artist Corps program;
 - \$5 million to increase staffing at DCLA to provide efficient and comprehensive support to the field.
2. A robust investment in arts education through the Department of Education, including:
 - Boosting the per student arts allocation to \$100 from \$79.62;
 - Continued 20% allocation of the Fiscal 2023 American Rescue Plan Act Academic (ARPA) recovery funding—amounting to a ~\$44,000 allocation per school—to expand standards-based arts instruction for all students and roll unused Fiscal 2022 ARPA arts funding into Fiscal 2023 for summer and school year programs;
 - \$5.6 million in funding for arts and cultural partnerships and opportunities through Summer Rising, CASA, and Su-CASA initiatives; and
 - Restoring baseline funding of \$24 million for Arts Services cut at the onset of the pandemic.

The growth and resilience of the cultural sector has long been impeded by historic underinvestment and underrepresentation in policymaking by the city government and agencies of BIPOC, disabled people, and immigrant arts workers and community-based cultural organizations who face persistent systemic barriers that have long perpetuated patterns of inequity in the field. This includes lack of access to funding at the governmental and philanthropic levels. Independent arts workers and small-budget arts and cultural organizations, led by and primarily serving BIPOC, immigrants, disabled, and other underserved communities are deeply rooted in their communities and more representative of the rich and unique cultural diversity of our great city. They are vital cultural assets critical to promoting healthy, thriving communities in New York City, and we need to do everything we can to ensure their recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and that they continue to flourish.

Dance is consistently the least funded of all the performing arts and dance workers face additional barriers to economic viability due to low levels of unionization in the field and a corresponding lack of wage standards and labor protections. Low wages within the sector can also be a deterrent for historically marginalized workers to remain employed sustainably in the field, particularly in small budget organizations that operate within their communities. Dance workers are a necessary and vital part of the City's social and economic fabric: dance workers are neighbors, parents, educators, service providers, and community leaders whose work deserves increased visibility and sustained, long-term investments.

The Arts and Culture industry is a major economic engine for the city:

- \$110 billion in economic activity generated by the creative sector, comprising nearly 13% of the city's total economic output¹
- \$300 million contributed annually by the dance industry, not including fiscally sponsored organizations, for profit enterprises, sole proprietorships, and individual dance workers;
- \$1.6 billion generated by the expenditures of cultural tourists and the proceeds of touring companies as the number one driver of tourism to the City;²
- 293,000 people employed and \$30.4 billion in wages paid, of which over 62,000 workers are self-employed;³
- Over 1,000 theaters, venues, dance companies, and musical groups employing over 16,000 workers and paying over \$1 billion in total compensation; and

- Interconnection with other industries and local economies: The average arts attendee spends approximately \$31.47 per person per event beyond the cost of admission on meals, retail, parking, lodging, local transportation, childcare, and souvenirs.⁴

Contributions of the Arts and Culture industry are essential to the City's overall economic health, and a number of studies have shown that the sector has sustained and continues to incur some of the worst impact of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Cultural organizations have accrued losses of over \$6.8 billion;⁵
- 95% canceled programming, 88% modified the delivery of their programs, and 11% had to stop providing products or services to their communities; and
- Dance organization, group, and project budgets shrunk by 31%, with the smallest organizations losing an average of 52%⁶ and
- Dance/NYC recognizes at least 26 organizations and facilities that have permanently closed their doors due to the pandemic; the majority of which includes studio facilities which are primarily small businesses and beacons in their communities.
- As of February 2022, total employment in the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector remains 18.8% below pre-pandemic levels.⁷

Dance/NYC's own study⁸ shows 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, and among other communities with less access to capital reserves.

The City government must invest back its fair share in the Arts and Culture sector that more equitably reflects the sector's role in the City's economy and impact on the quality of life of New Yorkers. In addition to being an important economic engine, arts and culture are an integral part of a neighborhood cultural ecosystem that promote social well-being in the community.⁹ Studies have shown that the presence of cultural resources is significantly associated with improved outcomes in mental health, education, youth involvement in the criminal justice system, personal safety, and other dimensions of well-being of a community. The City government must invest in arts and culture in every community and build a city where every New Yorker can benefit from the community-strengthening power of culture:

- A baseline investment of \$100M in DCLA is critical to supporting the Arts and Culture industry's continued recovery and ensuring that organizations, institutions, and individual arts and cultural workers continue to prosper in our great city. \$100M investment in arts and culture, which represents 0.24% of the City's total budget relative to the sector's contribution of 13% in the City's total economic output - \$110B in 2017, alone - is not only a very reasonable request, it's an equitable investment.
- A robust investment in arts education through the Department of Education, including increasing the per student arts allocation to \$100 from \$79.62 will help bolster arts education - a key to strengthening student well-being and overall academic achievement, and creating a pipeline of arts and culture workers and advocates for the city.

The City's budget represents far more than a financial statement; it is a social contract that articulates to the public the values that the Council and administration place on specific constituencies and communities, including industries and workers. Dance/NYC joins the Arts and Culture sector in asking the City to ensure the vitality and sustainability of the creative industry.

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Footnotes

¹ Office of the New York City Comptroller. The Creative Economy: Art, Culture and Creativity in New York City. 2019. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-creative-economy/>

² 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>

³ Office of the New York City Comptroller. The Creative Economy: Art, Culture and Creativity in New York City. 2019. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-creative-economy/>

⁴ Americans for the Arts. Arts and Economic Prosperity 5. https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/aep5/PDF_Files/ARTS_AEPsummary_loRes.pdf

⁵ SMU Data Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs' COVID-19 Impact on Nonprofit Arts and Culture in New York City. <https://culturaldata.org/pages/covid-19-impact-on-nonprofit-arts-and-culture-in-new-york-city/>

⁶ Dance/NYC. Coronavirus Dance Impact Study Informational Brief. 2021. <https://www.dance.nyc/uploads/COVID-Impact-Study-Brief-210316.pdf>

⁷ Office of the New York City Comptroller. New York by the Numbers: Monthly Economic and Fiscal Outlook no. 64, April 4, 2022. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/new-york-by-the-numbers-monthly-economic-and-fiscal-outlook-no-64-april-4th-2022/>

⁸ Dance/NYC (2021). Coronavirus Dance Impact Information Brief - A Dance Sector in Peril. Accessed <https://www.dance.nyc/programs/research/2021/03/Coronavirus-Dance-Impact-Information-Brief-A-Dance-Sector-in-Peril/>

⁹ Stern, M. and Seifert, S. (2017). The Social Wellbeing of New York City's Neighborhoods: The Contribution of Culture and the Arts. Accessed https://repository.upenn.edu/siap_culture_nyc/1/, 27 May 2022