DANCE WORKER DIGEST | JANUARY 2023

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By Dance/NYC

Dance Worker Digest

Welcome to the Dance Worker Digest

Dance/NYC is excited to launch this new monthly newsletter that will offer background on important news facing our community, share resources, and direct dance workers to where they can learn more. Topics include legislation in progress, opportunities available to our sector, and issues that impact and/or advance justice, equity, and inclusion in the arts and culture.

SSDI income threshold increase and 2023 COLA

Starting in January 2023, people collecting Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI)—the two types of payments Social Security administers for people unable to work due to a serious health condition—will get an 8.7% increase in their monthly benefits due to the cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA).

Additionally, the income threshold for people receiving SSDI has increased which has long disincentivized those who qualify from being able to work. This cap is adjusted annually, and in 2023, you can earn up to $1,470 per month (or $2,460 if you are blind) without risk to your benefits. Raising the cap allows more people to qualify for benefits and financial assistance, helping reduce poverty rates amongst people with disabilities. Even more so, it provides some opportunity for disabled dance artists to accept paid work without jeopardizing their access to benefits.

- Learn more about how the 2023 COLA Affects Social Security Disability Benefits
- Learn more about Income Limits for SSI and SSDI

H.R. 7627: Advancing Equity Through the Arts and Humanities Act

On April 28, 2022, Congresswoman Barbara Lee of California introduced the Advancing Equity Through the Arts and Humanities Act (H.R. 7627). Developed with a working group of artists, creatives, and advocates, this legislation would create a program under the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities to provide grants to public and nonprofit entities that serve and are led by people of color, and to support arts and humanities projects that directly combat systemic racism.

This landmark bill acknowledges the role the arts and humanities have in addressing and dismantling systemic racism in the United States, and has been endorsed by over 130 organizations, artists and creatives; however, it was not passed before the close of Congress' session last year, thus will need to be reintroduced again for consideration and passage. It is critical for continued advocacy to secure its passage.

- Endorse this legislation on behalf of your organization or group
- Read full text of the bill.
- Read press release.

Photo credit Amir Hamja, courtesy of SLMDances

Gender Dysphoria Recognized as a Disability Under Federal Law

In August 2022, a federal court ruled that gender dysphoria is covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This inclusion allows people experiencing gender dysphoria, including transgender people, access to services and gives broader legal protections from discrimination under the ADA—i.e. medical care, employment, government benefits and services and public accommodations, etc. This could become a tool to challenge anti-trans legislation in the future; however, by classing gender dysphoria as a disability, it continues the problematic pathologization of trans identities.

- Learn more about the ruling.
- Learn more about the implications of the ruling.

New York State relief grants for artists and small cultural organizations

Applications are still being accepted for the New York State Seed Funding Grant Program, which provides assistance to early-stage small businesses, micro-businesses and for-profit independent arts and cultural organizations.

Grants range from $5,000 to up to $25,000. The grants are for business entities, inclusive of artists working as independent contractors or sole proprietors based in New York State. To be eligible, the business must have started after September 2018 and before January 2021, and

been operational for at least six months before applying.

As independent contractors are now eligible for these grants, they can serve as an important funding resource for individual dance artists to cover business expenses such as payroll, insurance, utilities or supplies necessary for compliance with COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

- Review full list of eligibility requirements and apply.

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