

TESTIMONY TO CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE FY 2025 BUDGET HEARING

Thursday, June 13, 2024

Testimony to Cultural Affairs Committee FY 2025 Budget Hearing

By Dance/NYC

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Presented orally to the Cultural Affairs Committee FY 2025 Budget Hearing on May 21, 2024

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The dance community in NYC is a mean and mighty group representing \$300 million in economic activity that includes dance performers, choreographers, directors, educators, administrators, musicians for dance, and the list goes on. Our dance leaders play such a critical role in our communities—working with our young people to develop social and emotional skills, embedding cultural awareness and appreciation, and building confidence in their physical bodies. In our arts and cultural sector dance workers are the innovators, building strong artistic practices and genre-bending dance work that has ripple effects on local, indie, large and commercial stages. Today's dance graduate is tomorrow's Camille A. Brown or Lin-Manuel Miranda. Dance workers are doing things such as working with elders, creating room for their wisdom in dance, keeping them agile and socially connected. They are working across sectors as nurses, fitness trainers, massage therapists, or waiters and hosts, upholding the very fabric of our service industries as they bring beauty to this world.

And yet this city is becoming increasingly hostile to the pursuit of a life in the arts—the anchor that keeps most of our dance workers here and that keeps dance alive as an artform. They could choose to be anywhere, but they come here for the chance to be part of a legendary arts ecosystem. Now, between the inflationary costs, continued changes in the funding landscape, an affordable housing crisis, and the existing shortfalls of the social safety net as most of our workers are independent, we are at a tipping point. We said in the pandemic that "culture stays", but even culture has its breaking point.

Earned revenue in dance is down across the country. Our workers are working upwards of four jobs to make ends meet and our small organizations—the majority of whom's budgets are under \$500k—are taking out loans, going into debt, or closing shop altogether because they cannot afford to make it work any longer. The city's investment is critical to provide stability to these organizations and moreover to give the acknowledgement that yes, dance does matter to New York City; that yes, despite the hardship, I can count on my city government to be an exemplary investor in the arts; and that finally, yes, 'I matter to New York City'.

Dance/NYC and A.R.T./New York conducted a survey of about 149 CDF grantees. 69% of responding organizations had experienced funding cuts, while 12% did not receive any funding at all. Additionally:

- 75% of dance organizations reported decreased or eliminated funding compared to 69% of the total pool,
- 53% of dance organizations experienced funding decreases for two consecutive years compared to 36% of all organizations.
- 91% of organizations with budgets between \$100K and \$249K received decreased funding

I am here to ask you to ensure arts and culture funding by:

- Supporting the \$76 million dollar addition to the budget underscoring the need for restoration of both FY24 and FY25 cuts to the Cultural Development Fund and Cultural Institution Group.
- Championing a robust investment in arts and dance education
 - requiring DOE arts funding be spent on the arts (\$15M);
 - boosting the per student arts allocation from \$80.47 to \$100;
 - ensuring that all schools have at least one certified arts teacher (\$38M);
 - and restoring and enhancing "Support for Arts Instruction" from \$4M to \$6M.

Please consider this as you fight for our sector. Thank you.

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