

RESOURCES

[DWR Hub](#)
[Land Acknowledgment Practice](#)
[Rehearsal Space](#)
[Racial Justice Resources](#)
[Immigrants. Dance. Arts.](#)
[Disability. Dance. Artistry.](#)

Advocacy Resources

[Sexual Harassment Resources](#)

[Fiscal Sponsorship Resources](#)

[Artist Directories](#)

[COVID-19](#)

ADVOCACY RESOURCES

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[Skip to Sections](#)

[Advocacy 101](#) |
 [Where do I start?](#) |
 [Resources](#)

Advocacy 101:

Navigating Public Policy for Dance Workers

What is advocacy?

Advocacy describes how people, organizations, and coalitions work to shape larger systems in order to benefit their communities. This can happen on the level of public policy, budget allocation, legislation, or culture change. Advocacy encompasses a wide range of actions, including: educating the public about the importance of an issue, mobilizing the public in support of a policy, and directly communicating with policymakers.

[See the latest of Dance/NYC's Advocacy in Action](#)

Why get involved?

Arts workers and organizations are often forced to compete against one another for limited resources in an unstable and inequitable system. However, by coming together to create change at the policy level—advocating for causes like increased and equitably distributed arts funding, affordable housing and healthcare, and freelance worker protections—we can move towards a future with better conditions for us all.

While individual acts of advocacy may feel small, persistent, coordinated advocacy efforts have been shown to create tangible changes that improve our everyday lives. For example, [NYC's arts and culture funding for 2025 was fully restored](#) following a combination of letters, rallies, testimonies, and public education from the arts community.

What is lobbying?

Lobbying (a type of advocacy) is an attempt to influence specific legislation either by communicating directly with policymakers with the power to enact, block or shape that legislation (direct lobbying), or by encouraging the general public to communicate with their policymakers (grassroots lobbying). [Learn more about legal lobbying guidelines for NY nonprofit organizations.](#)

Where Do I Start?

1. Find your cause: As dance workers and NYC residents, we often have first hand experiences with a variety of larger issues such as healthcare, housing, labor protections, racial inequities, public education and more. Once you've identified an issue you can speak to, policy-based advocacy is the next step in [turning awareness into action through legislation](#).

Dance/NYC's DWR Resource Library includes a variety of issue- and policy-specific [advocacy resources](#) to help you explore causes relevant to you and your communities.

2. Find and contact your representatives: [Identify your federal, state, and local representatives](#) and familiarize yourself with their policy platform, committee positions, and bill endorsements. Call, email, or tweet your reps to advocate for a specific cause or piece of legislation. Share your message with others to spread the word. You can create, copy, or customize letter templates and call scripts so your advocacy connects with others.

3. Get connected: Identify any organizations or informal groups working toward similar causes, and consider what skill sets you can offer—or, consider if there is a need to form a group with like-minded individuals. If you're advocating as part of an organization, consider partnering or joining coalitions with other organizations working toward similar goals. Advocacy groups and coalitions might create public sign-on letters, run email or phone campaigns, distribute educational materials, or organize activities like marches, protests, or demonstrations. For New York arts organizations, [New Yorkers for Culture and Arts](#) is a forum through which to enter into coalition work.

4. Find your moment: [Find out when your local, state, and federal elections are](#) and if there are candidates or measures on the ballot that connect with your central issues. These pivotal moments are also great opportunities to rally awareness in your base.

Check the schedule of public committee hearings of the [City Council](#) and [Stage Legislature](#) relevant to your cause, and plan to give oral and/or written testimony. City Council Hearings provide the most frequent opportunities for NYC residents to reach lawmakers. Members of the public can sign up to testify at virtual public hearings via Zoom Web, Zoom Phone, or in-person. Written testimony may be submitted up to 72 hours after the hearing has been adjourned. For registration and more information, [visit the city council website](#).

5. Make your case: Combining quantitative data, qualitative data, and storytelling can strengthen your argument as you make your case to legislators. Reviewing research like [Dance/NYC's reports](#) and [research materials on the DWR Resource Library](#) will help you find the data you need to support your position. Quantitative data, expressed through numbers and statistics, and qualitative data, expressed through words and

ideas, can present powerful indicators about the issue you're raising. You can also use storytelling to let legislators know about the specific, real-life impacts of your issue for yourself or members of your community.

[DOWNLOAD THIS TEMPLATE FROM NONPROFIT NEW YORK TO BUILD YOUR TESTIMONY](#)

6. Keep spreading the message: As you make your case to policymakers, consider how you can amplify that message among community members and other stakeholders via press contacts, social media, or email networks—your actions can inspire others to testify and/or contact lawmakers as well, building more collective impact.

Advocacy Resources

From Dance/NYC

[Dance/NYC Advocacy Page](#) - Policy updates most relevant to NYC dance workers
[Hub Resource Library - Advocacy Resources](#) - Explore issue-specific resources relevant to our community
[Our New York City Dance Campaign](#) - Research and actions on the top issues facing NYC dance
[Dance/NYC Symposium 2022: Advocacy 101 Video](#) and [Session Slides](#)

Advocating as a Nonprofit

Lawyers Alliance: [Lobbying Compliance FAQs for NY Nonprofit Organizations](#)
Nonprofit Vote: [Nonprofit Power: Engaging Voters in a More Inclusive Democracy Report](#)
NonprofitVOTE Webinar: [Staying Nonpartisan Guidelines for 501c3 Voter Engagement Activities](#)
Bolder Advocacy: [How to Fund a 501\(c\)\(4\): What Nonprofits and Foundations Need to Know](#)
NASAA: [Advocating vs Lobbying: An Arts Primer](#)
Grantmakers in The Arts: [We Can All Advocate \(and Many of Us Can Support Lobbying\)](#)

Giving Testimony

[City Council Hearing Calendar](#)
[Register for City Council Testimony](#)
[State Assembly Hearing Calendar](#)

[Testimony Template for Arts and Culture Funding](#) (Dance/NYC)
[Testimony Template for Arts Education](#) (Arts in Education Roundtable)
[General Testimony Template](#) (Nonprofit NY)

Find Your Representatives

[Find your representatives](#)
[Interactive database of State and local legislators](#)
[NY City Council members and districts](#)
[City Council committees](#)
[State Assembly members and districts](#)
[State Assembly committees](#)
[State Senate members and committees](#)
[U.S. House of Representatives committees](#)
[U.S. Senate committees](#)

Election Calendars

[NYC Votes Election Dates and Deadlines](#)

Legislative Calendars & Tracking

[U.S. Congress floor calendar](#)
[State Legislative session calendar](#)
[City Council hearing calendar](#)
[Americans for the Arts Federal Legislative Tracker](#)
[Nonprofit New York State Legislative Tracker](#)
[Find and track City Council legislation](#)

Budget Processes

[Citizen's Guide to the State Budget](#)
[NYC Budget Cycle](#)

More Arts Advocacy Tools

Americans for the Arts: [Arts Action Fund](#) + [Advocacy Hub](#)
New Yorkers for Culture & Arts: [Advocacy Page](#) + [Culture Calls](#)
Arts in Education Roundtable: [Advocacy Page](#)
Dance/USA: [Advocacy Basics](#)