

*Testimony provided by:*

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## INTRODUCTION

Chairs Krueger and Weinstein, and members of the committees: thank you for the invitation to address you today. I am Erika Mallin, the Executive Director of the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA). My first day at NYSCA was January 18 – exactly 12 days ago – and I am honored by the opportunity to champion the greatest and most innovative arts and culture sector in the world.

It has been my experience - and I know this to be true of other organizations and artists - that NYSCA's support has always been *the* stamp of approval. It spurs growth, leverages additional support, and has always embraced the creation of new work and programs that have influenced artists and audiences worldwide.

On behalf of our Chair, Katherine Nicholls, our council members, staff, and the vast cultural industries of New York, we are immensely grateful to Governor Hochul and the State Legislature for your vital investments in the arts in FY2024.

The state of our sector is that of active and on-going recovery, and this is true for our state and the nation. But it is the funding provided by the Governor and Legislature that has been instrumental to sustaining the work of artists and organizations and supporting new ways of working in this pivotal time.

## NYSCA VALUES AND PRIORITIES

NYSCA's grantmaking wholly supports the diversity of our state both culturally and geographically. We serve rural areas, small towns, and a major global city. We seed and grow organizations and support individual artists to cultivate their highest creative powers. We partner with others to increase our impact and provide much needed capital investment in all 10 regions.

We overwhelmingly support small and medium-sized organizations. These tend to have less access to consistent funding. For FY2024, 50% of grantees have budgets under \$500,000, versus 7% having budgets over \$10 million.

And relevant to this time of recovery, we have seen a significant expansion in the number of artist applications and first-time grantees. This is truly inspiring at this moment as many of these grantees make up the next generation of creative thinkers, art makers, and global influencers.

This investment returns real and significant dollars: contributing over \$144 billion back to our state and communities, employing over 450,000 workers, constituting almost 8% of our state economy, driving tourism, boosting revenue for local businesses and services.<sup>1</sup>

## NYSKA GRANTMAKING

Annually, NYSKA supports over 3,000 artists and organizations across all 10 regions through its various programs, regrants, and partnerships. For FY2024, to-date, NYSKA has awarded over 2,400 grants totaling \$81 million.

What does NYSKA's funding look like?

One of the most important ways NYSKA supports the field is through General Operating Support, funding the everyday: turning the lights on, opening the doors, and creating world-class art. NYSKA is often the only source for this kind of support.

Secondly, NYSKA supports our NYS artists – more of them than ever before – who are leaders in their crafts and catalysts for their communities. Grantees include:

- **Buffalo String Works**, which provides music instruction and a creative home for marginalized youth.
- Or the **Bronx Documentary Center** in New York City, whose mission is to share documentary media to thousands of South Bronx residents.
- Or **filmmakers Michele Stephenson and Joe Brewster's**, documentary "Going to Mars, the Nikki Giovanni Project", which was just shortlisted for an Academy Award.
- Or it's Catskill-based visual artist **Jordan Casteel**; who recently was selected as a MacArthur Fellow – one of the highest achievements one can receive.

Over our history, NYSKA has helped grow iconic organizations like Alvin Ailey in New York, The Everson Museum in Syracuse, The AKG Museum in Buffalo, The Eastman Museum in Rochester, and the Saratoga Performing Arts to name a few.

Our strategic partnerships and regrants also expand our reach – like **Arts in Corrections** partnership with the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), **Arts on Canals** partnership with NY Power Authority (NYPA), and the **A.R.T. NY's Creative Opportunity Fund**, which funds small theaters.

## CAPITAL PROJECTS

Our Capital Projects support new construction and facility improvements ranging from new HVAC systems to new ground-up buildings. NYSKA is immensely grateful for the significant investments in capital funding the Governor and Legislature have made for arts facilities. Since 2018, NYSKA has awarded \$182 million in capital funding supporting 283 projects across all 10

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<sup>1</sup> National Association of State Arts Agencies. March 2023. *Creative Economy State Profiles*. [https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa\\_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/](https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/)

regions of the state, with 67% of these grants going to organizations with budgets under \$5 million.

Our FY2024 Capital Project opportunity just closed this month with over 260 applications. Those awards will be announced in the spring.

Some of our recent projects include:

- **Artspace Utica Lofts**, to support a newly constructed, 40,000-plus square foot building with space for low-income artists and their families to live, work, exhibit, and perform in downtown Utica.
- And **Lake Placid Arts Center** in North Country, which will build a new modern LEED-certified arts complex, greatly expanding access to top-tier arts programming as the only year-round arts facility in a 45-mile radius.

Many of these accomplishments are due to our increased outreach. We simplified our applications, assisted over 4,000 people, and maximized our social media. We will continue these efforts to ensure access to our funding.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE ARTS

As NYSCA's reach expands, so do the measurable benefits of the arts. As I said before, our arts and culture sector delivers an astonishing return on our investment. It returns \$144 billion back to our state and communities and employs over 450,000 people.<sup>2</sup>

To zoom in on a local level, recent studies reported that:

- The non-profit sector in **Western New York** generated \$381 Million in economic activity, including \$189 million in audience spending, and supporting over 8,000 jobs.<sup>3</sup>
- And in **Westchester County**, the non-profit arts sector generated \$182 million, supporting over 1,500 jobs, with attendees spending an additional \$36 dollars per person in local communities.<sup>4</sup>
- And in **Long Island**, where the non-profit arts sector generated \$330 Million, supporting 5,000 jobs, with attendees spending an additional \$37 dollars in local communities.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> National Association of State Arts Agencies. March 2023. *Creative Economy State Profiles*. [https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa\\_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/](https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/)

<sup>3</sup> Americans for the Arts. February 2024. *Arts and Economic Prosperity 6: Western New York*. Arts Services Initiative of Western NY. [Report will be published February 2024.]

<sup>4</sup> Americans for the Arts. October 2023. *Arts and Economic Prosperity 6: Westchester County*. Arts Westchester. [https://artswestchester.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/NY\\_WestchesterCounty\\_AEP6\\_CustomizedFinalReport.pdf](https://artswestchester.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/NY_WestchesterCounty_AEP6_CustomizedFinalReport.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Americans for the Arts. October 2023. *Arts and Economic Prosperity 6: Long Island*. Long Island Arts Alliance. <https://longislandartsalliance.org/aep6/>

And in a recent study on the most vibrant cities and counties in the nation, measuring public state and federal funding, tourism bureaus, private investment, and number of arts workers, both Oneonta and Ithaca (in addition to New York City) made the top 40 list.<sup>6</sup>

## CONCLUSION

I am grateful for Governor Hochul's continued investment in our artists and cultural organizations and her forward-thinking initiatives that champion access to the arts for all, the work of artists, and the critical role the arts play in our society.

These initiatives include a focus on public art, which is always the first point of access for everyone, and artist fellowships in State agencies to bring creative and humanist approaches to how we serve our communities and the state.

We know that NYSCA can lead the charge to innovate this field, develop best practices, and become a Bank of Ideas to best serve New York and beyond.

We want to look at ways we can support new leaders and our vast workforce; create high-profile convenings that showcase our grantees' artistic excellence; and cultivate new partnerships across our field and in our communities.

I believe artists and cultural leaders are some of our greatest influencers and futurists. And I believe that NYSCA is uniquely poised to influence the field and, with our core programming and new initiatives, inspire the next generation of art makers and cultural leaders.

I am extremely excited to have this opportunity to champion arts and culture in our state. I thank you for your unwavering support and look forward to working with you in the coming months.

I now welcome your questions.

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<sup>6</sup> SMU Data Arts. October 2023. *2023 Arts Vibrancy Index*. SMU DataArts. <https://culturaldata.org/arts-vibrancy-2023/executive-summary/>