



TESTIMONY FOR HEARING ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Dear NY State Legislators,

There is a critical need for support for the arts and culture sector of NY State in the FY25 budget. Investing in culture in every community in every locality will lift our whole state and lead to a robust and equitable economy.. The Executive Budget reflects a major cut compared to the funding of last year. This will be devastating to the sector and must be addressed. We are asking for a **\$100M investment in NYS culture via the NYS Council on the Arts**.

Culture is the core of NY State's economy. The Rochester Family Foundation working with Center for Urban Future did a [study recently which showed that the state's investment in culture](#) was proving to be an undeniable boon to local economies upstate! Employment in the cultural sector grew by 35%, outpacing every other industry and the state's 4% growth in jobs overall. Tourism is up by 33% in the Finger Lakes to a whopping 61% in Central NY. Finally, it's leading to a boom in population, with a 34% population increase of arts and design workers everywhere from Buffalo (up 45%) to smaller municipalities in the North Country (up 54%). The state has finally found a way to catalyze economic and community growth upstate—now is NOT the time to retreat!

New York's tourism industry depends on a thriving creative sector.** Culture taken as a whole is one of the top drivers of tourism in New York State. The NYS Comptroller's report found that of the \$74B tourists spend statewide in 2019, 12% went to "arts, culture, and entertainment", and the other 88% went to: hotels, restaurants, retail shops, and local transport.***** If we want to get dollars to the local businesses listed, we need to support the arts sector that attracts the visitors!

Cultural centers anchor communities, improve mental health, and keep residents in NYS.

Cultural activity drives street traffic to local businesses, strengthens communities, provides programs for children and youth, and safer streets for everyone. Data also shows arts provide measurable improvements in mental health for children, elders, and all residents. With a more mobile remote workforce nationwide, it is more important than ever to invest in reasons to live in NYS. Arts and culture are what NY excels in and what makes us a great place to raise children.

Arts Education is underfunded and inequitably delivered. With only one associate in the arts at the state education department to serve 2.5M students, arts deserts abound in urban and rural school districts. We are failing to grow our own talent for NY's creative industries.

We ask that the legislature

- **Fund the NY State Council on the Arts at a baseline of \$100M** in order to fully support the thousands of arts organizations doing critical work across the state. The NYSCA baseline hasn't been increased for 15 years, and for decades it has been far below levels of funding in the 1970s in real dollars! This increase is long overdue and much needed if we are to build a stable cultural economy in every community in this state.
- **Ensure that there is an equitable funding stream for local decision making in communities and localities** It is a fact that cultural organizations in rural communities AND in low wealth urban neighborhoods are both more dependent on public funding, and less receiving of stable state support. With robust funding, NYSCA can fully fund local regranters who know best how to invest their cultural dollars to create thriving arts ecosystems in every community.
- **Support Arts in Education** Arts Education is woefully short-changed at NYSED. We support the Regents request to restore one Associate position.
- **Support [Senate Bill S5714A](#) and [Assembly bill A4912A](#)** aimed at increasing access to resources for culturally diverse arts and culture organizations that advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion, racial and social justice, and cultural preservation

Sincerely,

[New Yorkers for Culture & Arts](#)

Sources

[UPSTATE'S CREATIVE SPARK: HOW THE ARTS IS CATALYZING ECONOMIC VITALITY ACROSS UPSTATE NEW YORK](#)

*[New York State Comptroller DiNapoli's 2023 Creative Economy Report](#)

** [National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, Creative Economy State Profiles](#)

*** Brookings, Lost Art: Measuring Covid-19's Devastating Impact on America's Creative Economy, August 2020

****Source: Americans for the Arts, Arts & Economic Prosperity 5, 2017

***** [New York State Comptroller, New York City's Tourism Industry - Igniting the Return, April 2021](#)