

**Joint Meeting of the Committees  
Commentary on Arts and Living Museums  
Hosted by Senator José M. Serrano and Assemblyman Steve  
Englebright  
February 3, 2009  
Albany, New York**

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**Lois Carswell, Coalition of Living Museums**  
**Senator José M. Serrano, Chairman, Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and**  
**Recreation**  
**Assemblyman Steve Englebright, Chairman, Tourism, Arts and Sports**  
**Development**  
**SAVE ZBGA:     Preserve New York State’s Core Environmental Literacy**  
**and               Eco-Tourism Program**

Good Morning, my name is Lois Carswell and I am proud to serve as the Chairman of the Coalition of Living Museums. I would first like to thank Senator Serrano and Assemblyman Englebright for their statewide leadership on behalf of cultural affairs, arts, tourism and the living museums in particular – and I appreciate this opportunity to address the joint committees here this morning.

From the Niagara Aquarium to the Sweetbriar Nature Center in Suffolk County, funding from the ZBGA line of the Environmental Protection Fund directly maintains the fragile living collections of 76 zoos, botanical gardens, nature centers and aquariums. Thanks to the modest allocation of \$9 million dollars in the current fiscal year, living museums employ staff that breed endangered species, address the impacts of global climate change, educate and inspire thousands of teachers and millions of children, and grow new generations of conservation stewards. Our educators are serious about “leaving no child inside.” But without ZBGA funds, they may be left without a job. Living museums count on ZBGA grants to partially fund operations and programs while leveraging private contributions – which are increasingly difficult to obtain in the current financial climate.

Everyone recognizes that the state faces some challenging fiscal realities. However, it is important that protecting New York’s environment and ensuring the viability of the Empire State’s eco-tourism industry, remains at the forefront of your budgetary decision-making. The Coalition of Living Museums respectfully requests that you to highlight four points with your colleagues and leadership:

- Oppose year end retroactive cuts to ZBGA organizations awaiting reimbursement

ZBGA has been a reimbursement program for 30 years and always spends the full amount. The Governor's proposed 55% cut to current year contracts would be painful to absorb at anytime; however this proposed cut being levied on a reimbursable program more than 90% of the way through the current fiscal year is catastrophic. To put it simply, the money has largely been spent and this disinvestment, should it be enacted into law, would force immediate and substantive layoffs.

- Oppose proposed elimination of ZBGA in SFY09/10 - use a scalpel, not an ax.

A thoughtful retrenchment plan does not eliminate a program with 30 years of proven economic and environmental benefits to the entire state. Living museums generate millions of dollars each year for the state in tourism and economic development. Institutions like the Niagara Aquarium, Syracuse Zoo, and the Theodore Roosevelt Bird Sanctuary on Long Island are core to stabilizing local economies by providing good paying jobs and supporting local businesses. During this current fiscal downturn, nearly 12 million visitors sought refuge in our environmental sanctuaries – and these numbers are only growing as people stay closer to home.

- Preserve ZBGA as the “Core” EPF program for environmental literacy and eco-tourism

As the primary providers of ecological literacy in New York State, living museums deliver award-winning programming and interactive educational experiences to millions of school children each year. Critical to the goals of the EPF, living museums educate the next generation of conservation stewards and create an informed electorate that values clean water, clean air, and land preservation. Assemblyman Steven Englebright said it best in a recent New York Times article, “It is through these institutions – the excitement of a trip to the zoo, or the ability to touch an exotic plant at the botanical gardens- that stirs the imagination and leads to a lifetime commitment to caring about the natural world.”

Living museums provide more than quality environmental education and uniquely beautiful tourist destinations. Ecotourism is an \$8 billion industry in the US and the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry. Living museums are strong

economic engines during difficult times. With 2.8 million visitors annually, the Wildlife Conservation Society's Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium generated more than \$289.6 million in economic activity in FY'08, more than half of which is spent in New York City. The Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium combined employ 595 full time and 566 part time staff.

According to a 2008 national public opinion survey, 79 percent of Americans believe that zoos and aquariums are good for their local economy, and an impressive 80 percent believe that zoos and aquariums are important enough to local communities to be supported by government funding.

- Maintain Real Estate Transfer Tax (RETT) Revenue Dedicated to the EPF:  
It's not broke, so don't fix it!

The New York State Real Estate Transfer Tax (RETT) has been the funding source for the EPF since its creation in 1993, and has generated up to \$1 billion annually in recent years. The EPF Enhancement Act reaffirmed the connection between the RETT and the EPF. Even in the current economic climate, the RETT is generating more than enough revenue to support a fully funded, \$300 million EPF.

The Governor's budget proposal for FY2009-10 would reduce the EPF by 31% from \$300 million as scheduled in the Enhancement Act to just \$205 million. In addition the Governor has proposed a significant change to the funding source for the EPF. The proposal reduces RETT revenue dedicated to the EPF to \$80 million and funds the remainder of the proposed \$205 million EPF with an expanded Bottle Bill. This change could cause a significant EPF reduction (approximately 70%) should the Bottle Bill not be included as currently drafted in the final budget.

I welcome the opportunity to answer any questions the committee may have, and thank you again to Assemblyman Englebright and Senator Serrano for your incredible support. Please feel free to contact me at (718) 623-7225 or email at [loiscarswell@bbg.org](mailto:loiscarswell@bbg.org).

**Voza Rivers, Harlem Arts Alliance**  
**Arts Day - February 3, 2009**  
**Albany, New York - Advocacy for the Arts**  
**Voza Rivers - Remarks**  
**February 1, 2009**

Good Morning, Chairman Englebright and Chairman Serrano, and members of the Assembly and Senate committees. My name is Voza Rivers and I'm here today as Chairman of the Harlem Arts Alliance, representing more than 400 plus members of the Alliance – an arts service organization rooted in a creative community with a mythic reputation that is globally recognized as the cultural capital of Black America.

As a service organization we feel an added responsibility to underscore that our artists, our arts & cultural organizations do not exist in a vacuum - that they are an integral part of our communities. We listen to the syncopated voices of our member organizations demanding that we address the fragility of our smaller cultural institutions who after thirty plus years are struggling to keep their doors open.

We understand the pressure City and State budgets are faced with and the proposed economic stimulus package proposed by the House of Representatives. However, if and when the stimulus package is passed and implemented it may be too late for our organizations. We need assistance now.

We are listening to the rhythm section of individual members: Performers and visual artists, directors, playwrights, choreographers, technicians, graphic artists, folk artists, and stagehands who are all vulnerable during this time of tremendous economic tension caused by severe gaps in State and City funding for the Arts.

The diversity, talent, and energy that can be found within communities of color are unrivaled, but maintaining our health as a community that respects and benefits from the arts remains a challenge and a struggle even in sunnier economic times. All of my colleagues here today will continue our work within an environment that gives low priority to arts and culture.

As today's funding continues to erode, our organizations are particularly vulnerable – for them there has never been any fat to trim there is only bone. Reductions in support necessarily means reductions in staff, reductions or elimination of services to the community, limited programming and the very real threat of closed facilities in our organizations. Simply put, *our community's health and vitality are at stake.*

So today, my colleagues and I from the Association of Hispanic Arts, the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance, the Franklin Williams Caribbean Cultural Center, the Asian American Arts Center, the Chinese American Arts Council, the Cultural Equity Group, the Coalition of Theatres of Color, the Dance Theatre of Harlem, and the Museum of Contemporary African Diaspora Arts came in busloads, by train and car to defend and protect our cultural organizations and artists. We are here to tell you that our culture counts, our artists, organizations, and cultural institutions count.

Many of our organizations have been caught in the state's budget crisis as grantees of the NY State Council on the Arts. Because their requests were scheduled later in NYSCA's funding cycle, they have not received NYSCA's support during the 2008-2009 year. We request restoration of that funding.

And going forward, we ask that true recognition of the value and critical resources that these organizations bring to their communities be reflected in stronger levels of support and in a process that would not treat our crucial arts constituencies in our state differently or unfairly.

To our elected state representatives, please work together and restore level funding to NYSCA. During these difficult times, we recognize that arts and culture remain at the lower end of State priorities and we must change that.

All of us know that arts and culture nourish our spirits and are critical to a community's health and survival and are as important and necessary as the air we breathe.

Thank you.



P.O. Box 2217 • Albany, NY 12220 • (800) ARTS.N.ED • WWW.NYSAAE.ORG

Testimony to the Joint Meeting of the:  
Senate Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation Committee and  
Assembly Tourism, Arts and Sports Development Committee  
February 3, 2009

Good Morning.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you about the proposed 2009-2010 Executive Budget and its impact on the Arts, and in particular, Arts Education in New York State. With me today are NYSAAE Board of Directors members, Brett Bossard, Executive Director of the Community Arts Partnership of Tompkins County, and Jack Langerak, Director of the Wolf Trap Program at Nazareth College.

Since 1973, the New York State Alliance for Arts Education has worked to ensure that the arts become an integral part of every person's education in New York State. By linking and supporting such varied constituencies as art, music, dance and drama teachers, parents and PTOs, school administrators, and political and civic leaders in communities across the state, NYSAAE has earned a reputation for innovative programming and effective advocacy in an effort to foster the creativity and spark the imaginations of New York's youngsters.

I come to you today to address Governor Paterson's troubling proposed \$7 million dollar budget cut to the 2008-2009 New York State Council on the Arts budget. This third mid-year cut to NYSCA will have a tremendous negative impact on nearly 600 organizations across New York State facing the possibility of receiving no funding at all.

Additionally, the 2009-2010 Executive Budget proposes to reduce the budget of NYSCA by another \$7 million dollars. All told this will reduce the funding to NYSCA by nearly 20 percent from the start of the 2008-09 budget.

As you have heard, these cuts will have extreme and wide-reaching negative effects on New York's arts community. With so much attention at the Federal level being concentrated on economic stimulus packages, I would like to encourage you all to think of funding to the Arts in our state as an economic stimulus package. The tiny, 1/32<sup>nd</sup> of 1%, of the State's budget that is spent on the Arts yields billions of dollars in returned revenue.\*

*The New York State Alliance for Arts Education (NYSAAE) is a non-profit organization funded in part by its membership, The New York State Council on the Arts and VSA arts. NYSAAE is a member of the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network.*

**Richard Kessler, Center for Arts Education**  
**Testimony to the**  
**Joint Meeting of the Committees**  
**Senate Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation**  
**Assembly Committee on Tourism, Arts and Sports Development**  
**Delivered by Richard Kessler, Executive Director**  
**Re: The impact of potential budget cuts to the**

Good morning Chairman Serrano and Englebright and committee members. My name is Richard Kessler, I am the Executive Director of The Center for Arts Education, a not-for-profit arts organization committed to restoring, stimulating, and sustaining quality arts education as an essential part of every child's education. I am here today to share our organization's concerns with the Governor's proposed budget and the impact it would have on arts and arts education in New York State. While we applaud the Governor for proactively addressing the state's fiscal challenges, we urge the State Legislature to balance any cuts that might be necessary across sectors and not disproportionately distress New York's arts and education sector. The impact of the proposed cuts, especially those slated for the current fiscal year, would be felt not only by the myriad arts organizations across the state, the general public and the state economy, but perhaps, most significantly to public school children – many of whom are provided with little in the way of a state mandated arts education. For many, the only exposure to the arts, and “arts powered” learning, is provided by cultural partners to New York public schools.

The Governor proposed a \$7 million cut to the current state arts budget and a \$7 million cut to next year's budget. This, on top of the 6% already cut from the Council's budget a short time ago. As proposed, the cut to the current NYSCA budget could mean that almost 600 grantees in the October and December cycle would receive almost no funding. As we understand, a large portion of the grants for review in those two cycles were specifically for arts education initiatives. In essence, the cuts to the NYSCA budget by the Governor would lead to a “zeroing out” of arts education for many of the city and state's school children in schools underserved in the arts. From years of experience in New York City schools we know that good schools have the arts. From school trips to museums and concert performances, to visual arts and music and dance classes in the school – the benefits are incredibly rich and profound. Unfortunately, there are too many schools that do not have any arts programs –no arts teachers, no performances or field trips, no arts learning taking place.



Most schools probably fall somewhere in the low to the middle of the spectrum, but for those on the bottom end of the spectrum, the partnerships between cultural arts organizations, and the schools, many made possible through NYSCA funding, are vital. Schools are being forced to make difficult choices, and in many cases without outside revenue or partnerships— the arts provider simply disappears – and who suffers, surely the artists who work in the schools – but even more so – the children. Consider that in New York City 30% of schools do not have a single arts specialist. Last year, principals allocated a smaller percentage of their budgets to arts education than the previous year—shrinking to less than 2.9% on average. Principals also spent more than half a million dollars less on services by art and cultural partners—leading to additional cuts in matching private sector dollars. There was also a 63 percent decline in spending on arts supplies and equipment last year—a reduction of nearly \$7 million. And this is just in New York City. It’s safe to assume that the arts have not fared much better around the state. A cut to grant money to arts service providers, as proposed by the Governor, would truly be a “double whammy” for our city’s school children.

At The Center for Arts Education we use NYSCA funds, as do many arts and cultural organizations, to bring arts directly to these underserved schools and school children. The funds support our middle school initiative, helping to create exciting and sustainable arts programming in schools that have little or no arts education, and they support our work at PS37R in Staten Island, a special education school – where the arts are making a real impact for children on the Autism Spectrum, and our Principals Institute, where we are helping principals to help their students, creating an arts rich environment in their schools - all of these programs rely on funding provided through NYSCA.

The Center for Arts Education recognizes that the arts and education community will not be immune to budget cuts; however, we believe the current proposal disproportionately affects both of these critical sectors. We urge you to:

- 1) Significantly reduce the cuts proposed to arts/arts education grants;
- 2) Ensure that those arts grants slated for review by NYSCA in the final quarter of 2008 not be disproportionally subjected to any cut that takes place.

I thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these suggestions and the opportunity to testify today.

**Celeste Lawson, Arts Council of Buffalo**

**716.856.7520**

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**Greetings Senate and Assembly Members of**

**New York State and Western New York Delegation:**

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to address this honorable body of elected officials. The arts and cultural community of New York State needs your help. The arts and cultural community in Western New York *desperately* needs your help. The voices I represent today include those in Erie, Niagara, Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, and Allegany counties.

The proposal put on the table by Governor Patterson to further reduce NYSCA's budget by \$7 million in 2008, we don't believe fully recognizes what that recommendation means to the cultural constituents in New York State, and how far reaching its negative impact will be. This is especially true since the agency has already experienced a \$2.6 million cut earlier this year. In just a few months NYSCA funding dropped from \$48 million down to \$45 million, and another \$7 million would plunge that amount to \$38 million smack in the middle of a contract cycle - and in only six months – this is truly unfair!

The proposed cut of \$7 million at this particular time means those organizations that did not or do not have a contract approved and in process by July 2008, could lose all or most of the NYSCA funding they anticipate receiving or *at least hoped* to receive this year - the number of arts organizations that would be impacted add up to 570 agencies statewide. In the region I represent it's approximately thirty different entities.

In the Greater Buffalo region alone the arts support the equivalent of 4,700 full-time jobs and have a positive economic impact of \$155 million. Arts groups leverage their public funding dollars 9:1 in return on investment. On its best day Wall Street doesn't perform that well.

In terms of quality, for the last five years Buffalo has been ranked among the top 25 US cities to experience the arts by American Style Magazine, a publication with national and international circulation. In fact, in 2008 Buffalo ranked by the No.1 mid-size city in nation for its art and culture, by the American Style reader's poll, and in 2001 ranked No 4 in the country, while New York City ranked number 1, a position that New York City has held for years. In other words, this State and our region are recognized consistently for the quality and diversity its arts and cultural offerings.

Who are some of the cultural citizens that will be affected? In our region they include the Albright Knox Art Gallery – Chautauqua Institution-Ujima Theatre – Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center - Just Buffalo Literary Center - Frank Lloyd Wright's Darwin Martin House – Cayuga Museum of History & Art - Shea's Performing Arts Center – The Quick Center at St. Bonaventure - El Museo Oller Y Diego Rivera Gallery - Explore and More Children's Museum – the new Burchfield Penney Art Center – Lockport City Ballet - Buffalo's Olmsted Parks - Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site - this is just the tip of the ice berg. I have a copy of the organizations that will be affected for your information.

A quick survey of 21 of the organizations on the list scheduled to lose their NYSCA funding shows that they directly employ 167 people on a full time basis, 127 on a part-time basis and contract with 1303 individuals for services representing 1695 employment opportunities. They also make available more than 150 intern placements for students seeking to fulfill graduation requirements.

As you can see this is no small matter. We in the field all know that adjustments must be made to try and resolve the extraordinary financial distress the State is experiencing. However, there must be a better way to bring about solutions than the one proposed for the New York State Council on the Arts.

I am sure you share in my belief that Western New York deserves a fighting chance to improve its local economy and overall quality of life and to feel the promise of a brighter tomorrow headed our way. The arts and cultural community

is a leading contributor to tourism initiatives as well as education and social enrichment.

We in Western New York are working as hard as we can to ensure that this region remains a source of pride for the Empire State.

Please find a way to modify this proposal; in its current configuration the inequities are staggering. I know you all are facing incredibly difficult choices, but we believe in you, we are counting on you, and we have faith that you will find a way to make this situation far less damaging and much more equitable than it is today.

Thank you for all you have done to support us over the years – we are deeply grateful and want to continue contributing to the excellent, international reputation of New York State as a world-class center for the arts.

**Anne Ackerson, Museum Association of New York**  
**The Impact of State Funding**  
**on Museums and Heritage Organizations**  
**Testimony Delivered to the Joint Meeting of the Senate Committee on**  
**Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation and the Assembly**  
**Committee on Tourism, Arts and Sports Development**  
  
**February 3, 2009**

The Museum Association of New York (MANY) is a member-based professional organization that fosters healthy museums based on good governance and leadership. MANY brings the collective contributions and issues of the state's 1900 museums and heritage organizations to the attention of New York State residents and policy makers and it works on behalf of all museums in the state to strengthen organizational capacity and give voice to the field's needs.

The state's diverse and vibrant museum community is central to the economic vitality of New York State and the education of its youth. They annually employ more than 17,000 people, generate more than \$1 billion into the state's economy each year, and serve more than 60 million visitors, including 6 million school children with standards-based programs.

Museums and heritage organizations help create community identity, function as economic engines, and provide educational opportunities for schoolchildren and their families that are not otherwise, in many areas, available. And they are a key reason why tourism is the second largest industry in our state.

Unlike schools, libraries and public broadcasting, which together will receive in excess of \$1 billion in funding next year, chartered museums and heritage organizations are incorporated and regulated by the State Education Department, but receive no aid from it.

Instead, museums and heritage organizations rely on a loose network of state funding that provides support for bricks and mortar projects, programming initiatives and general operating support. Of the small handful of state agencies that fund museums and heritage organizations, the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) is the largest funder and the *only* funder of general operating support, apart from the Zoo, Botanical Garden and Aquarium Program in the

Environmental Protection Fund. In 2006-07, the NYSCA Museum Program's entire local assistance budget for the state's 1900 museums and heritage organizations was only \$5.5 million dollars.

The Deficit Reduction Plan and the FY2009-10 budget call for a \$7 million reduction to NYSCA this current fiscal year and again next year and a \$5 million cut to the Zoo, Botanical Garden and Aquarium Program this current fiscal year and zeroed out in 2009-10.

The impact of these cuts is already beginning and has the potential to be devastating. Our own polling indicates that anywhere from a third to a half of our member institutions are decreasing the number of their employees, reducing the number of exhibitions and programs, spending less advertising dollars, and shouldering increased operating deficits.

The state's museums and heritage organizations hold millions of items in the public trust for the benefit of the people of New York. Yet stewardship of these materials can be compromised without the people to care for them and make them available to citizens, without safe environments to protect them.

The Museum Association of New York is here today to ask you to restore the budgets of the New York State Council on the Arts, the Environmental Protection Fund, the Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquariums Program, and tourism marketing to their FY2008 levels. These programs are a continuing source of critical capacity-building, programmatic, and capital support that *have no equal in the private sector*.

Here's why we believe we deserve your support:

- Because the state's 1900 museums and heritage organizations are educational institutions, they are labor intensive – almost 50% of their total spending goes to the wages and salaries of their employees.
- As a result, they routinely pump more than \$1 billion into the state's economy every year primarily in the form of wages, taxes and purchases of goods and services.

- In fact, the New York State Bureau of Labor Statistics projects museum employment to grow by 3.1% until 2016.
- As part of a vibrant arts industry, museums and heritage organizations along with other nonprofit art organizations created a \$26 billion impact on the state's economy in 2005, according to an Americans for the Arts report published in 2006.
- Both the US Conference of Mayors and the National Governors Association agree that cultural assets such as museums are essential to attracting businesses, a skilled workforce, and local, regional and international tourism.

Thank you.

Anne W. Ackerson, Director  
Museum Association of New York

**Bill Dennison, Associated Musicians of Greater New York**

**Testimony Before the Joint Meeting of the New York State Senate Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation, and the New York State Assembly Committee on Tourism, Arts and Sports Development**

I would like to thank Chairman Serrano, Chairman Englebright, and the members of the Committees.

My name is Bill Dennison. I am Recording Vice President of Local 802 of the American Federation of Musicians and I am here representing more than 9000 professional musicians in New York who play a critically important role in the cultural life of our city and state.

Like you we are concerned about the economic health of our state, particularly the health of the Entertainment, Arts and Cultural industries that we work in. We believe that the Executive budget as proposed would have a devastating impact on these industries, which have been one of New York's most important sources of economic growth over the last few decades.

There are three specific areas I would like to address:

First, proposals to cut the NYS Council on the Arts (NYSCA) budget by a total of 20 percent is exactly the wrong recipe in a time of economic trouble. Arts funding is seed money that generates economic activity, jobs and tax revenues many times greater than the small investment it represents. NYSCA supported organizations extend to every corner of the state, 46 % outside of NY City and range from museums, theatres and performing arts venues from Buffalo to Cooperstown and Montauk to Chautauqua. NYSCA issues grants to 2600 non-profit cultural organizations that generated over \$8 billion in economic value last year, over 50,000 jobs, \$3 billion in wages and over \$250 million in tax revenue to Albany. And all this came from an arts budget that is 1/32 of 1% of the State budget. Let me repeat that - the states' arts council budget is 1/32 of 1% of the State budget. In our view, cutting that budget is shortsighted, counter-productive, and in terms of closing a budget gap – meaningless.



Second, the Executive budget contains a proposal to re-impose a tax on NYC's Theatre industry. This tax was eliminated in 1961, and a subsequent arbitration award in 1963 provided that this former tax on theatre ticket revenue would be utilized as a major funding source to provide pension and health benefits for more than 4,000 theatre employees – from musicians, actors and stagehands, to ushers, box office staff, hair make-up and wardrobe. This funding source has been in place for the last 45 years and has helped make possible decent benefits for those who work in this business. It has also played a role in the long-term revival of the Theatre industry in New York City. What had been a decaying industry with empty buildings in an increasingly seedy and dangerous area of Manhattan was resuscitated. Live theatrical performance is now a vibrant industry attracting millions ~~if of~~ people from around the globe fueling the travel, hotel, and restaurant industries in NYC.

Re-imposition of this tax would immediately threaten the well being of Broadway Theatre. It would threaten the benefits of thousands of theatre employees, many of who could lose access to health benefits. The burden of the health care cost for many of these members and their families, due to the precarious nature of working in the entertainment industry, would very likely fall on the State.

Re-imposition of the tax and the resulting increase in industry costs and ticket prices will further discourage attendance with a negative and multiplying impact on the travel, hotel and restaurant industries which rely on the theater industry as the magnet for tourist. As has been shown in the past, 9/11 being the best example, even a brief disruption of the Theatre industry has a huge impact the travel, hotel and restaurant industries, and ultimately on city and state tax receipts.

In this current economic downturn, the Theatre industry is already facing significant challenges. Funding for new productions has slowed, openings have been pushed back and projects in their early stages have been cancelled. During January of this year, more than a dozen Broadway shows closed. More theatres are going to remain dark for longer periods of time, threatening the economic vitality of mid-town Manhattan and this important part of our city's economy. The last thing needed is re-imposition of a tax that will only accelerate this trend and end up costing the State far more than whatever might be gained.

Thirdly, we would like to express strong support for continued funding of the Empire State Film Production Tax Credit. A recent study by Ernst & Young revealed that the 30% tax credit coupled with New York City's 5 % credit has kept or created 19,500 jobs and yielded \$404 million in tax revenues. It further noted

that the New York State film office received 100 applications for film and television shoots from April 23, 2008 through the end of the year generating \$1.8 billion in spending, doubling the rate of spending on film and television projects from the previous year. Implementation of this successful program has been an economic boon to the State. Keeping that funding in place is a common sense measure that will continue to attract new business, create jobs and provide much needed revenue to the state.

The three issues I have raised are about maintaining or increasing state tax revenues. Funding the arts, supporting keys industries like Theatre, movie and television production are smart economic measures. They are all steps that help close budget gaps. To do otherwise will only make out state's economic situation more precarious.

Lastly, I would be like to share our concern about tax fairness. Our state needs a progressive tax system. The wealthy have not paid their fair share. The members of my union, the vast majority of whom live on very modest incomes, end up paying a far larger portion of their income in sales, real estate and income taxes than the wealthy. According to the well-respected Fiscal Policy Institute, "All of the income growth in New York State from 2002 to 2009 has gone to the wealthiest 5 percent... When you factor in inflation, the combined income of the bottom 95 percent of New Yorkers actually shrunk." Any serious effort to close budget gaps has to start with tax fairness,

Thank you.

**Jeffrey Rosenstock, Queens Theatre in the Park**  
**Impact of Governor's Proposed Mid-Year (FY 09) Cut to the New York State**  
**Council on the Arts**

I urge you and your colleagues to vote against Governor Paterson's proposal to institute a \$7 million mid-year cut to the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), which could result in a loss of 100% of Queens Theatre in the Park's funds (\$75,000) towards providing a culturally diverse roster of artists to our multi-cultural community of adults and students at affordable ticket prices.

If the mid-year (FY 09) cut is implemented, the Theatre's NYSCA funding for bringing programs to general audiences and school time audiences will be cut 100% - a loss of \$75,000 to support shows which have already taken place last fall and/or are scheduled for this spring.

The \$75,000 allocation is used to support 125 events/178 performances. These funds make programs affordable or free to the 110,000 adults and students who attend programs at the Theatre each year.

As artists have already been contracted, and tickets sold or distributed to the community, a mid-year cut of 100% of our NYSCA Presenting Funding would force us to:

- cancel already contracted artists and programs
- pay cancellation fees to artists
- turn away adults and students who purchased or received tickets to spring programs
- return private sector funding which was leveraged by the NYSCA grant

The Governor's proposed mid-year cut results in a 100% cut to SELECT institutions mid-year, not an "across the boards" cut to ALL organizations being funding by NYSCA. Our Theatre, along with organizations such as Dance Theater of Harlem and the Paul Taylor Dance Company, who were reviewed in the October and December NYSCA meetings will bear the full brunt of the cuts since awards were already distributed to the majority of groups reviewed in May and July and cannot be rescinded.

We understand the need to “share the pain.” I ask that cuts to NYSCA be made in the FY 10 Budget so NYSCA can plan across the board cuts to all grantees, thus allowing for more time for Queens Theatre in the Park to reorganize our programs and be treated equitably.

**Richard Masur, Actors' Equity  
TESTIMONY**

**JOINT HEARING OF THE STATE  
SENATE AND ASSEMBLY  
ARTS COMMITTEES**

**Tuesday, February 3, 2009**

**Actors' Equity Association**

Good morning Senator Serrano, Assemblyman Englebright and hearing on the importance of the Arts to our great state of New York. My name is Richard Masur, and I am a proud member of Actors' Equity Association, which represents more than 48,000 professional stage actors and stage managers nationwide. I am one of the 18,000 of those members who live and work in New York.

I'm here to talk about NYSCA and why it is necessary to support the NYSCA budget, especially in these tough economic times.

Theatres contribute heavily to not only the cultural but also the economic well-being of villages, towns and cities throughout the state. There are more than 90 professional not-for-profit theaters across the state, in addition to the 130 in New York City. These theaters depend on NYSCA grants not only for the direct financial contribution they supply, but also because every other philanthropic resource – whether it's an individual, a corporation or a foundation – looks to a NYSCA grant as the sign that a theater is worthy of their support.

Theatres create employment and revenues throughout the state – for themselves as well as for vendors and local businesses. Studies have shown that for every dollar directly spent on a theatre, \$1.20 goes back into the community. That's called the multiplier effect. Restaurants, parking garages, and small shops benefit from the commerce generated by theater patrons. Vendors provide needed supplies to operate and produce on these stages.

Let me tell you about some theatres that are proud recipients of NYSCA grants and how they generate income for businesses in their communities. Here in Albany, Capital Rep is a staple of the downtown area. In addition to the actors and administrative staff, the theatre employs 30 local residents full time, and another 22 part timers, to build sets and costumes. Capital Rep purchases materials for its sets from Curtis Lumber and Albany Steel, and the costumes are built from material bought at Alfred's Fabric. The theater leases 11 apartments annually to house its actors, and those actors buy their groceries at Hanford's Groceries.

In Westport, New York, The Depot Theater is, according to a local Judge, "one of the cornerstone businesses" in the community. All of the theatre's printing is done at the Adirondack Pennysaver, a locally owned small business while 95% of the company's set materials are purchased at Bessboro Builders, a local business owned by Dick Sherman -- a descendent of one of the original settlers of Westport.

Most people equate New York City with the bright lights of Broadway, but there are scores of small not-for profit theatres that rely on neighborhood businesses. One such theatre is Waterwell, a small company that features diversity and non-traditional casting in its productions. All of its costumes are cleaned at two family owned businesses -- Grace Cleaner and Clothespin Laundry -- while many building supplies come from Village Hardware.

All of these theatres put money back into the communities of which they are a part. Consequently, if NYSCA's budget is cut again, as it was last year, the effect on theaters and local businesses in New York State will be devastating. Jobs will be lost, and this much needed economic revenue stream for communities across the state will be dramatically reduced.

Theater is the cornerstone of American culture. It examines the human condition and is often the catalyst for change and advancement in our society -- and that's important. But in these tough economic times it's even more important that theater is a key economic driver that provides employment opportunities on stage, backstage and for ancillary businesses in communities throughout our state. That is why it is critical that the NYSCA budget receives your support and remains intact. NYSCA grants are vital to these theatres being able continue to keep their

doors open and in turn continue to generate much needed income for other businesses during this tough economic time.

## **Tim Sweeney, Parks & Trails New York**

**February 3, 2009**

Good morning, Chairman Serrano, Chairman Englebright and members of the committees. My name is Tim Sweeney; I am the Director of the Campaign for Parks at Parks & Trails New York. Parks and Trails New York is a statewide not-for-profit organization with more than 5,000 members and supporters working to expand protect and promote a network of parks, trails and open spaces throughout our state.

At a time when everyone is searching for ways to stimulate the economy, to bring more money and jobs into the state, the importance of tourism dollars and generated by our parks, zoos, botanical gardens, and aquariums (ZBGA) should not be overlooked. The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) reports that the state park system attracts more than 55 million visitors annually, visitors who spend money not only within the confines of state parks, but also in the communities near those parks. The Coalition of Living Museums boasts over 12 million visitors a year and they too are an important part of their local economies and the state's economic engine.

Parks & Trails New York is not oblivious to the state's current fiscal crisis and we understand that some degree of shared sacrifice will be required throughout the state. What we don't understand is Governor Paterson's proposal to reduce the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) from \$255 million to \$205 million in a year when the fund was statutorily set to increase to \$300 million. The EPF is the source of funding for myriad programs that range from municipal parks to ZBGA and everything in between. The demand for EPF funding easily exceeds \$1 billion annually. And, importantly, the programs and projects funded through the EPF are economic drivers for the state and local economies.

The Governor's proposed reduction is particularly troubling given the sweeps that have occurred in recent years of more than \$440 million in EPF funds and the disproportionate cuts to critical EPF programs that are being proposed this year. All of this is occurring when the Real Estate Transfer Tax (RETT) account, the



dedicated primary source of funding for the EPF, is currently will over half a billion dollars.

As I stated in my testimony before the joint legislative budget hearing a few weeks ago, Parks & Trails New York accepts Governor Paterson's proposal to provide \$65 million in capital funding for OPRHP to continue its efforts to overcome a more than \$650 million backlog in capital projects that exists throughout the state park system.

Parks & Trails New York, however, does not advocate solely on behalf of state parks, and we oppose the Governor's proposal to reduce EPF funding for municipal parks from \$21.2 million to \$8.4 million, including a reduction in funding from \$6 million to \$2 million for municipal parks in inner city and underserved communities. Parks & Trails New York believes these cuts, and the total elimination of the funding for zoos, botanical gardens and aquariums, are simply wrong-headed.

Moreover, we oppose Governor Paterson's proposal to change the primary source of funding for the EPF from the dedicated RETT, to the proceeds from the unclaimed bottle deposits that would escheat to the state as part of an expanded returnable beverage container act, the Bigger Better Bottle Bill as it's known. When the EPF was created 1993, the RETT was established as a designated source of EPF monies. The rationale was logical; there is a nexus between the development of land and the impacts of sprawl on our state's environment. Since 1993 the RETT has remained a reliable source of funding in good times and bad, as was the legislature's intention when the EPF was enacted.

To be clear, Parks & Trails New York wholeheartedly supports the Bigger Better Bottle Bill, however, we believe that the proceeds from the unclaimed deposits should be used to supplement, not supplant, the RETT as the primary source of funding for the EPF. Nonetheless, given the state's current economic challenges, Parks & Trails New York supports initially using any proceeds from an expanded bottle bill as a source of General Fund budget relief, with the money to be phased into the EPF over a period not to exceed three years.

Parks & Trails New York urges the Senate and Assembly to work with the Governor to ensure a fully funded EPF in fiscal year 2009-2010. Whether we're talking about parks, ZBGA, recycling programs or land preservation, a fully funded EPF is essential to New York's environment and economic health.

**Philip Morris**  
**Proctors Theatre**  
**Schenectady, New York**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak and participate in our State's budget and policy process. Clearly what gets decided in difficult times about our finances will reflect for years to come our priorities and hopes.

My name is Philip Morris. For the past 32 years I have run and advised cultural businesses. I have restored or built 4 theaters, 2 museums and thousands of square feet of cultural and arts spaces. All of these projects have worked to meet many community based agendas from educating school aged children to deeply participating in community development agendas, while, simultaneously caring for and nurturing the creative community. Currently, I am the CEO of Proctors, the capital region's performing arts center and the engine for the revitalization of downtown Schenectady.

Proctors, like most theaters, survives financially not only from the sale of tickets and concessions, but also on the good will of individuals, businesses and government each supporting in their own ways part of our many agendas. We get support to work with the region's schools, to keep ticket prices affordable, to be a conferencing center and to be the community's "people magnet."

While we are prepared to participate in the solutions needed to keep our State healthy, there are, in particular, two items somewhat hidden in the proposed budget that go far beyond "sharing in the pain" of our current economic realities.

First is a proposed revision in sales tax rules that would make all theater tickets taxable. In essence, if passed, when someone buys a ten dollar movie ticket or a 40 dollar show ticket at Proctors, they would have an automatic added charge of 4% for the State of New York plus whatever local shares of sales tax that may apply (potentially bringing the total up to about 8%).

Now on the one hand, this does not seem so wildly out of line: if you buy shoes or a hot dog from a restaurant, you will have such a sales tax charge. From a purely technical point of view, it seems to be a question of whether entertainment is a

good or a service. We don't pay sales tax on doctor's appointments or haircuts. This budget is proposing moving tickets from a service into the goods category.

I think, though, there is way more to this issue. With the possible exception of mall based movie operators, theaters across this state and across most the country are like Proctors: supporting community agendas with the help of public and private altruism. This is true in Buffalo, in Elmira, in Jamestown, in Poughkeepsie, in Glens Falls, in Long Island, in Brooklyn and even in Manhattan.

Suddenly a sales tax? For many communities the theaters and culturalists that sell tickets are engines of tourism, downtown redevelopment and artist employment. A new tax on the activities of those providers will, unquestionably reduce participation. Entertainment is extremely price and economy sensitive. Just ask any of us how we have been faring since this recession started over a year ago!

Think about it: we raise money privately to keep prices affordable!

All of us.

Which leads to the real conundrum. While it LOOKS like such a tax is paid for by the consumer, as monthly or quarterly tax payments get made to the state, the dollars will come from the theater's bank account.

One could argue that, as ticket sales decline based on the cost increase added with a sales tax, in essence local philanthropy that would have been raised to support a community facility will be going to subsidize the state's general fund.

Does it seem sensible to charge sales tax on a college tuition? Of course not as public funds are used in all sorts of ways to make that tuition affordable. What's different about most theaters?

There are better ways. We have economic problems, but we have not died. Slash and burn attitudes in tough times make times tougher by accentuating the notion of disaster rather than accentuating shared responsibility and shared burden.

Please do not create crisis. Fairness and an understanding of those very businesses that help our communities thrive is to stay focused on policies that work. Our budget needs to show that too.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to participate.

**Jan Marie Chesterton, Vice President, New York State Hospitality & Tourism Association**

**At the Joint Committee Meeting**

**To discuss potential budget cuts to the arts industry, tourism, zoos, botanical gardens, aquariums, and nature preserves.**

**February 3, 2009**

**10:00 – 12:00**

I am Jan Marie Chesterton, Vice President of the New York State Hospitality & Tourism Association and a representative of the Tourism Industry Coalition of New York State. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Economic Development Budget Items included in the 2009-2010 Executive Budget proposal, specifically the I <3 NY Tourism Marketing Fund and the Tourism Matching Funds Programs.

I would first like to thank Senator Jose Serrano and Assemblyman Steve Englebright for hosting this meeting on this important topic. Assemblyman Englebright has been a great resource in the past and we look forward to working with him and Senator Serrano in the future.

The economic impact that the tourism industry provides and its potential to grow with additional investment and resources is something few other industries in New York can offer. With that statement, in the face of making the tough choices in these hard economic times, and working toward closing budget deficits, we are here to urge the Legislature to at the very least maintain the Governor's allocation for the "I <3 NY" Tourism Marketing Fund in this year's Executive State Budget Proposal of \$11 million and the \$4.1 million for the matching grants program.

Governor Paterson has stated that New York State needs to invest wisely to help get out of this current economic climate. We offer that tourism is not only a wise

investment, but a critical one that yields well sustained returns for the state's economy.

The appropriation cuts reduce the funding for the tourism industry that has shown year in and year out that it produces significant revenues for the state and imparts a robust return on investment. Especially in a down economy in which people are spending their traveling dollars closer to home we can ill-afford any budgetary cuts-Pennsylvania spends \$34.4 million on tourism marketing-that will slow down this economic generator called tourism which returns \$7 to New York State for every \$1 spent in marketing and promotion.

## **RETURN ON INVESTMENT**

In August 2008, a study on tourism done by Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economic company, confirmed what the industry has known all along, tourism significantly brings in dollars, spurs economic activity and creates jobs in New York State. The results of the study showed that in 2007:

- Visitors spent \$51 billion in the local economy, expanding 9% since 2005
- 672,000 jobs were sustained by visitors to New York State with total associated income of \$26 billion
- 6.1% of all jobs in NYS are sustained by tourism

Tourism in New York State generated \$6.8 billion in state and local taxes and \$7 billion in federal taxes.

The Leisure Travel Advertising Information Conversion Study, recently conducted for the New York State Tourism Promotion Agencies Council by the Technical Assistance Center/SUNY Plattsburgh measured the effectiveness of Matching Funds advertising and its influence on attracting travelers to New York State. The study, conducted in survey form, showed that:

- 80% of respondents stated the travel information they received helped influence their decision to travel to New York State.
- 75% of those who had never visited New York State said they were planning a future trip.

The findings show that **investing in Tourism leads to an immediate increase in economic activity in all regions of the state.**

## **SPENDING TODAY MEANS REVENUES TODAY**

The studies have shown, few industries benefit faster from consumer marketing than tourism; create more jobs per million dollars of economic activity than tourism; produce tax revenue at a higher rate. Therefore, tourism marketing is truly a revenue generator for our great state. At a time when revenue is needed more than ever, what makes more sense to you, our Legislature, then to continue to invest, not reduced funding, in an industry that no doubt helps our State recover from its current condition.

However, tourism is ultimately a consumer product. Increased awareness of our rich and varied destinations, will entice people to come here. **Advertising and marketing however, are the critical means to create the awareness and demand for our destinations.**

The funding level provided in the Executive Budget Proposal is the bare necessity to compete with neighboring states that have been outperforming us when it comes to attracting the all important leisure traveler. As safe an investment as tourism is, an increase in funding should not be an unfair request.

Furthermore, the return is not simply felt in New York City, all regions benefit from I <3 NY efforts. In fact, 2.1% of all visitor spending in New York State was driven by the I <3 NY Promotion. The greatest impact of I <3 NY marketing is

seen in the upstate regions of the Adirondacks and the Thousand Islands. Nearly 12% of their tourism market is driven by I <3 NY.

The following will briefly summarize what increased tourism funding means for the economic well being for all New Yorkers.



**Diana Cherryholmes, Huntington Arts Council**

**Written Commentary Submitted to Senator Jose M. Serrano and  
Assemblyman Steve Englebright**

Good Morning,

My name is Diana Cherryholmes and I am the Executive Director of the Huntington Arts Council, the regranting organization for the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) Decentralization Grant in Suffolk County, New York. At the Arts Council, I have personally seen the benefits that the arts bring to the lives of the citizens of New York State. Our Arts-in-Education program has offered opportunities to disadvantaged youths that they would not normally have. Take Julio, 14, from Huntington Station. He comes from an immigrant family that cannot afford to spend hard-earned wages on many luxuries – music lessons among them. Yet that shouldn't invalidate the teenager's interest or motivation. And so he got those lessons through the Arts Council's Guitar Program. He shines every time he picks up his guitar. There's a connection there that touches his creative core like nothing else can, giving him all the validation he needs to grow his musical abilities and enjoy every moment of the life he envisions for himself. This program gives Julio support to create an unshakeable notion that he and others like him can reach whatever they wish to be or have in life regardless of their financial status or demographic label. But because of the current financial climate, our corporate sponsors are unable to fund that program this year.

What arts councils do with these and other programs cannot simply be put into a nice sexy sound bite. Arts Councils often play matchmaker... linking organizations to artists, linking the arts to human services, local governments, schools, and more. Simply put, our mission at the Huntington Arts Council is to nurture the professional and amateur development of artists throughout the area and provide many diverse programs and services to over 600 member cultural organizations and individual members.

Recently the Huntington Arts Council was the Long Island host of the New York State Council on the Arts "Cultural Blueprints". We were honored to be the first site of a total of 10 sites around the state. Over 120 people attended a day-long discussion about the arts on Long Island. Cultural Blueprints is creating a foundation of greater communication around the state and the Huntington Arts Council, with partners such as the Long Island Community Foundation, will move the agenda forward, improving the quality of life for millions of New Yorkers.

Arts Councils represent the musicians, painters, writers, poets, craftspeople and our community in New York State and we have a responsibility to insure their survival for their sake and for their communities. The community economically and culturally benefits from quality art and arts-in-education programs--whether in the schools, in a gallery or at a multi-arts teaching facility--with returns in tax revenues, employment, community cohesion, and on so many other levels. The artists benefit as they grow their skill-set by meeting other artists, professional development, convening networking events and opportunities to showcase their work. This collaboration benefits New York State: there are over 50,000 arts-related businesses and 341,215 people employed in the arts in 2007, according to the Alliance for the Arts.

There are over 750,000 Long Islanders each year who attend or participate in Huntington Arts Council programs and I'm honored to be in contact with so many creative and devoted people. Huntington Township and the greater Long Island area truly benefit from the influence we have in bringing art to life day in and day out and the gratitude can't be underestimated.

We respectfully request that you return the \$7 million to the New York State Council on the Arts' 2008 budget. If NYSCA loses the \$7 million from the 2008 budget, the arts community will be looking at not just a 20% reduction in 2009, but a 40% reduction. When we lose money, the state then loses vital economic revenue and New York State citizens' quality of life lessens because there are fewer opportunities for people to culturally grow with the help of their artistic neighbors or escape from everyday pressures for a few hours. Where would New York State be without theater, our myriad galleries and museums, musicians from all genres, filmmakers and writers? And when we lay off employees and cut back our expenditures, the downturn continues to spiral. People's access to diversion from these trying times through arts, culture, and other entertainments diminishes.

I know that you are facing difficult decisions in the state of New York. By investing in the New York State Council on the Arts and in local arts, you will have a phenomenal return from the economic benefit to the entire state. New York is the cultural capital of America. As Governor David Paterson has been quoted in *The Putnam County News and Recorder*, "A celebration of the arts is a celebration of our culture as Americans and New Yorkers." With your continued support and assistance, we will retain the title of being America's cultural capital and continue to grow our local economies.

**Hilary Oak, Executive Director of the St. Lawrence County Arts Council  
Speaker's Notes for Joint Arts Committee Meeting - February 3, 2009**

Good Morning!

My name is Hilary Oak. I am the Executive Director of the St. Lawrence County Arts Council, in Potsdam, New York.

Our organization was re-activated from a completely dormant state in early 2002. We started with about \$400 dollars and a couple boxes of files. In just seven years we have developed the organization to operate with an annual budget of more than \$200,000 dollars in 2008.

We were an all-volunteer organization until we hired our first part-time employee in 2004. We now pay 1 full-time and 4 part-time employees. So we have created jobs, and now we pay employment taxes. We also pay for professional services in our local area - such as accounting services, tech support, and graphic design. So that creates more jobs.

In addition, we pay artists for performing, for teaching classes, and for sales of their artwork, books, and CD's. In 2008 alone we paid over \$34,000 dollars to artists, authors and musicians for their products and services. So that creates even more jobs, because every artist is a "cottage industry". Whether they are teaching piano lessons out of their homes or making pottery for sale - each artist is a part of our statewide economy. In our little gift shop and gallery in Potsdam NY, sales of locally produced work brought in more than \$40,000 in 2008, and generated sales tax revenue of \$2,346 dollars in the 07/08 year.

My story highlights the financial impact of just one small organization. Now multiply that by hundreds of arts organizations across New York State - many of which are much larger than my organization. I did a quick survey of just 3 of the long-standing arts organizations in the North Country. Together they employ 4 full-time and 12 part-time people, and in 2008 they paid almost \$198,000 dollars to artists for their work.

The ripple effect of our economic activity is strengthened by the fact that the artists we pay live in our region, so their dollars stay in our North Country communities. That's the other important benefit of arts businesses and organizations: we are rooted in our towns and villages. When the winds of hard times blow other industries to foreign shores, our local culture always stays local!

As you consider severe cuts to the New York State Council on the Arts, please remember that this is not a cut to one organization located in New York City. NYSCA provides grants for hundreds of organizations all across the state. For most of us, that funding is essential to our stability and growth, and a key part of developing effective programs and services for our communities. The proposed cut to NYSCA in the Deficit Reduction Plan will eliminate the remainder of the 08/09 grant funding. As a result, there will be inequitable funding cuts to the 573 organizations who were awaiting grant decisions at the end of the year, including the St. Lawrence County Arts Council. For our organization this will mean a significant shortfall in our operating budget for 2009.

Arts organizations have the economic power to create jobs and generate revenue. They are often important anchors in their cities and towns. Now is a time when we need to maintain that strength, not diminish it. Please, invest in the Arts. I can assure you that the return on that investment will be real and long-lasting.

Thank You.

**LaRue Allen**  
**Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance**

The Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance is the home of the Martha Graham Dance Company, the oldest dance company in America, and the oldest and most celebrated contemporary dance company in the world. Modern dance is one of the great American contributions to art, and Martha Graham's work stands as the foremost example of the form.

Along with our School, the Company reaches over 35,000 audience members and 47,000 New York school children annually, and more than 700,000 persons through our web-based programs. We employ over 70 artists and teachers and have a positive impact on the economy of New York through our performances, which attract visitors from across the United States and around the world. We carry the banner of the great American cultural tradition not only to the capitals of Western Europe but also to such cities as Tel Aviv, Cairo, Thessaloniki, Taipei, and Beijing. We have had the honor of serving as the cultural face of New York in every state in the Union.

Like all New York arts groups, we function in a very fragile ecology and rely on the critical support we receive from our State. We recognize the extreme nature of the current financial emergency and are willing to do our part. But the proposed cuts to the NYSCA budget are inequitable. We believe that this Assembly would be in error if it funded some groups generously, as it did in the first half of this year, and others not at all. For the Martha Graham Center, the loss of NYSCA funding, an unforeseen drop from \$156,000 last year to zero this year, would be a severe blow that we may not be able to survive. And we would be in good company. Across our State, educational projects would be eliminated, programs would be canceled, and artists and staff would be laid-off.

We're not asking for a free ride, only that you help us survive in the near-term so that we can work with you to plan for a reasoned approach to arts funding in a stressed economy. We know that every dollar spent on the arts comes back to us with interest when students improve in school, audience members enjoy a night out on the town, and visitors come to New York to take part in the State's rich cultural offerings. Help us keep these benefits coming our way. Help us survive so that we can be a part of New York's financial recovery.

**Tom van Buren, Ph.D., Director, Folk Arts Program**  
**To the Joint Meeting of the Committees on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks**  
**and Recreation,**  
**Senator José M. Serrano, Chairman, and**  
**Tourism, Arts and Sports Development, Assemblyman Steve Englebright,**  
**Chairman**

Dear Sirs:

On behalf of the folk arts program of ArtsWestchester (formerly the Westchester Arts Council) I am writing to attest to the importance of New York State government funding for arts and culture in my region, and all over the state. I manage a program that brings often marginalized communities and artists into mainstream venues before wider audiences than they could attract without our support. Working with artists in newer communities as well as established ones, we seek to foster cultural equity among all members of our society. In addition to our own programs, we partner with - and collaborate with other cultural, community and social service organizations to help bring the arts to venues and audiences with minimal access to quality programming. We also counsel community arts organizations in grant writing and promotion and advocate for them at all levels of government and to the media. Every dollar of State funding leverages at least equal matching support from other sources. Smaller organizations that have received New York State Council on the Arts Folk Arts grants in recent years are even more frugal and have worked with extreme diligence to achieve the best programming possible with limited support. These include Youth Theater Interactions of Yonkers, the Pelham Arts Center, the Hammond Museum and Hudson River Health Care's Comite Latino of Peekskill and Comite Mi Gente of Beacon, all of whom have done substantial programming for children as well. This year, many of these organizations received no funding whatsoever. The freezing of the budget this fall and the proposed cuts will have a devastating effect on these programs and have been exceedingly unfair in their application as they have arbitrarily fallen entirely on applicants in the late 2008 cycle. More jobs are created through arts funding than most other budget areas, and more are lost through cuts to Arts funding. I urge the legislature and senate to keep arts alive in New York State, and if cuts must be made, I urge that budget reductions be phased in so that the burden is shared fairly over all New York State Arts Council funding recipients.

Sincerely,

Tom van Buren, Ph.D.  
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**Ellen McHale, Executive Director of the New York Folklore Society  
Assemblyman Englebright and members of the Committee  
Senator Serrano and members of his committee**

My name is Ellen McHale and I am the Executive Director of the New York Folklore Society, a statewide arts service organization based in Schenectady. The Society was founded in 1944 by a group of folklorists, historians, and arts enthusiasts who were dreamers and visionaries emerging from the Great Depression and after a long world war. They shared the hopes of a democratic nation and felt that it was essential to collect, save, and share the folk arts and cultural traditions of the many cultures that made up the urban and rural areas of the state, its historic regions, and the American literary traditions it inspired. Their goal was to “plow back,” or “give back” the traditional arts to the people who created and maintained them. Today we are a service organization which publishes a journal and provides assistance annually to over 100 community based cultural organizations, professional folklorists, and folk and traditional artists of all artistic genres.

65 years later, the organization that they founded is in dire financial straits as we are one of the over 570 organizations who has lost funding due to the \$7 million cut to the New York State Council on the Arts in the 08/09 budget. This loss represents a loss of 2 full time and at least 3 part-time positions. In addition, our services to folk and traditional artists has ceased for 2009, including such projects as helping Haudenosaunee Mohawk basketmakers and Tuscarora beadworkers develop educational materials; assisting community based cultural organizations with capacity building activities; and training artists and musicians in the “business” of their art so that they can make their skills sustainable in today’s economy.

Our flagship publication, *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore*, is sent throughout the world and can be found on the library shelves of such venerable institutions as Russian State Library, Bulgaria’s Academy of Science, and Italy’s Ministry of Culture. This showcase of New York’s communities and their arts helps to provide international understanding. Journal articles on topics such as September 11<sup>th</sup> Street Memorials, cobblestone architecture in Ontario County, and



the stories of Vietnam Vets provide a means for citizens of other countries to gain greater insight about the people of our state and our nation.

A cultural “Bill of Rights,” according to Bill Ivey, Former Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, begins with a right to our heritage – the right to explore music, literature, drama, painting, and dance that defines our collective experiences as well as our individual and community traditions. This is a right to an “expressive life,” a place where community heritage intersects with individual creativity. As Bill Ivey asserts, “Participation is the hallmark of a vibrant cultural scene, not just participation for the trained and well-heeled but participation that’s available to just about everybody.”

I come today to ask you, the representatives of the citizens of New York State, for a right to that widespread participation through continued and sustained funding for the New York State Council on the Arts. The operation of arts organizations, like the New York Folklore Society, is critical to maintaining the existing arts infrastructure of the state. It is this sustainability which is now threatened. The arts are not a feel-good activity, but are integral to the lives of all New Yorkers. The arts contribute to the economic vitality of the state by providing destinations for its downtowns, support for its schools, and direct service to its small business owners. 62% of arts budgets are used directly for employment. As a lifelong rural New Yorker, I can attest that arts organizations are anchors in every community which supports a cultural agency. To support New York’s arts organizations is to support Main Streets and Downtowns in every county. Please keep funding the arts. **Your support will impact not only this particular moment in time and place but will impact the vitality of New York’s expressive life for years to come. Thank you.**