

Testimony on behalf of Broadway Stages, Ltd.
Presented by Gina Argento

TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE,
THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
SMALL BUSINESS, AND THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS AND
GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

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Good morning Chairs Krueger, Kaplan, and Skoufis and distinguished committee members.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify how effective the Empire State Film Production tax credit has been. This tax credit has established the film and television industry as a major economic driver for New York.

My name is Gina Argento, and I am President and CEO of Broadway Stages. Our company is one of the largest growing full-service film and television studio production facilities in New York City.

My brother, Tony Argento, first founded Broadway Stages in 1983 when he turned a dilapidated movie theatre in Astoria, Queens into our first soundstage - then a one-room recording facility for music videos. By 2004, after two decades of modest development, Broadway Stages expanded into nine soundstages and hosted Rescue Me and Third Watch.

One key contributor to this 900% growth was the legislation of the production tax credit. It is undeniable that the creation of this incentive planted seeds that continue to bear economic fruit today, and the subsequent growth of Broadway Stages is proof.

Since 2004, we have expanded from 9 to 60 soundstages, and we now host 19 active film and television productions. Because over 90% of current productions at Broadway Stages are long-term, episodic television, our business provides consistency and stability to this industry. It is clear that the tax incentive directly correlates with the significantly increased demand that has necessitated expanding our capacity.

Across the City and state, new soundstages are opening to meet the demand – from Buffalo to Syracuse, from the mid-Hudson Valley to Westchester and Long Island, and of course throughout New York City. While many businesses remain remote or are struggling to “return to normalcy” due to the ongoing pandemic, the film and television production offers a vivid contrast. We are continuing to work at full capacity.

In addition, each soundstage facility creates a micro-economic cluster whereby the benefits flow not only to the productions and their crew, but to the host neighborhood. We have multiple examples to demonstrate that our business generates business. In Greenpoint, Brooklyn our soundstages have infused significant capital into the local economy.

In 2021, we spent over \$1,000,000 in Greenpoint for local services. Between RK Window, our local glass and aluminum window vendor, Tri-State Lumber, our local lumberyard, Greenpoint Electrical Supply, and Eddie’s Plumbing Supply, our facilities play a vital role in Greenpoint’s commercial activity. Our facilities depend heavily on local skill, resource and craft.

Last year, at the state level, we purchased over \$3,000,000 in steel from Nucor Vulcraft, located near Binghamton, NY for Broadway Stages’ expansion at Arthur Kill Correctional Facility.

These are just a few vendors that illustrate how the tax incentive program creates an economic domino effect, beyond the expansion of sound stages, and beyond the film industry.

My brother and I take tremendous pride in the facilities that we’ve created. It is humbling to know that thousands of people make their livelihood in or because of our facilities. But we also recognize that we are simply creating the platform to fulfill the demand, seeded by the production tax incentive. New York and New Yorkers are the beneficiaries of this growth, and we recognize that this public/private partnership between the state and our industry is the critical factor that has created so much success.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to answering any questions the panel may have.