



**New York City Council
Committee on Finance and
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations
Fiscal Year 2016 Executive Budget Hearing**

Monday, June 8, 11:30 AM – Council Chambers, City Hall
Testimony Presented by New York City Department of Cultural Affairs
Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl

Good morning Chair Ferreras-Copeland, Chair Van Bramer and members of the Committees on Finance and Cultural Affairs. I am Tom Finkelpearl, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. I am pleased to present testimony regarding the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2016 Executive Budget. I am joined today by a number of my colleagues from the agency.

When the Mayor hired me, the mandate was clear: to ensure that arts and culture are for everyone in New York. Today I'd like to start by telling you about some of our new initiatives and provide updates on programs we're working on to fulfill this mandate. As you know, in addition to sustaining the largest local arts funding agency in America, we continue to work to increase the opportunities for all New Yorkers have to participate in the transformative power of art and culture. For instance:

- Across the city, there are small, community-based arts and culture groups that have amazing programming ideas, but that often struggle with the challenges of institutional stability and growth. These groups serve as anchors in our lower income communities, so helping them to thrive is a top priority. In the past, I have mentioned our capacity building initiative, the Community Arts Development Program, which has been funded by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development since 2009. In this budget process, my staff highlighted the good work this part of the agency has been doing, and worked hard to get additional funding into our budget. We are excited to now be able to extend the program's reach into more neighborhoods across the city. With new funding in the Executive Budget, compared to the existing program we will roughly triple the resources available to provide capacity building to community-based cultural organizations.
- IDNYC is a hit. I'm happy to report that as of April 30, over 8,000 memberships at CIG members had been redeemed by cardholders, and indications are that the rate of uptake is increasing as more people receive their cards and the weather improves. Just last week, under the headline "ID Cards Lift Immigrants and the Arts," the Wall Street Journal ran a report on the ways that the card is helping institutions reach new members and encouraging New Yorkers to engage with our city's cultural assets. We've heard stories of immigrant families taking their kids to the zoo for the first time, and of young New Yorkers getting multiple memberships so they can visit a museum or see a play while keeping their costs low.

- In January, the agency announced a major initiative to promote diversity among the staffs, boards, and audiences of the city's cultural organizations. The first step, a comprehensive survey of our grant recipients, will be undertaken this summer with results expected later in the year. Last month this initiative was the talk of Florence, Italy, as it was a centerpiece in first lady Chirlane McCray's keynote remarks at a conference there. Later this week, I will have the honor of delivering a keynote on the topic of diversity along with NEA Chairman Jane Chu in Chicago at Americans for the Arts' national convention. This has been discussed for years and now is the time for action. The response from our partners has been overwhelmingly positive, with groups from Carnegie Hall to the Ford Foundation and Mellon Foundation pledging their support and placing New York at the forefront of this national debate.
- I was delighted to join many of you on two separate occasions for bill signings that will help the agency to build on its work of expanding access to the arts and culture. The Mayor signed legislation sponsored by Council Members Van Bramer and Levin that requires the agency to create a comprehensive cultural plan for the city. The plan will help us to "unify our initiatives aimed at lifting up all New Yorkers through arts and culture," as the Mayor put it. We will seek robust feedback from residents. We see this as a major opportunity to engage a broad constituency on the work my agency does, and we look forward to working with you on its development.

The second bill signing was for legislation sponsored by Council Members Van Bramer and Cumbo that mandates greater public input in the review process for Percent for Art commissions. The bill requires DCLA to post notices on its website and hold meetings on the proposed project in the affected district early in the process. As you may know, I was the director of this program in the early 1990s, and I saw firsthand how early and substantial engagement with the public can transform a commission into something more meaningful and powerful both for the artist and for the community.

Thank you for helping bring these two important pieces of legislation to fruition.

- Turnaround Arts is a program initiated by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, chaired by Michelle Obama. The idea is that intensive immersion in the arts can turn around low-performing schools. We announced last week that the program is coming to New York, in particular 4 schools in Flatbush, Crown Heights, and Brownsville, Brooklyn. Aside from professional development and new arts programming, each school is partnered with a well-known artist. Our list: Paula Abdul, Marc Anthony, Misty Copeland, and Edward Norton, each of whom will work with students, schools, and communities to promote the program's goals and highlight their school's success. If you follow

Paula Abdul on Twitter – I know I do – you may have seen her surrounded by excited students and staff from PS165 in Brownsville on her first visit last week. We are very proud to start working with Turnaround Arts to support the Administration’s commitment to providing a quality arts education for all public school students.

- Earlier this year, the Mayor announced our plan to build 1,500 affordable housing units and 500 affordable workspaces for artists. We need to keep New York City as a place that artists live and work. The arts are at the center of so many things that make our city such an extraordinary place, and this is a critical part of our wider efforts to help New Yorkers of all backgrounds make a home here. HPD is on track to issue an RFP for an affordable housing project with an arts component by the end of this calendar year, and we have started to identify a number of sites for affordable workspace.
- As I’ve said before, increasing the transparency and public engagement of the agency is one of my top priorities. One of the ways we are doing this is to offer insight into our programs on our relatively new social media channels. You can follow us on Twitter (@NYCulture), Instagram (@NYCulturalAffairs), Facebook, where you can search for “New York City Department of Cultural Affairs,” and our Percent for Art Tumblr blog that showcases permanent public art around the city. Please like, share, follow, and whatever else you can do to help us connect your constituents to everything our arts and cultural community has to offer.

Taken together, these programs represent our new efforts to work with our constituents to provide access to cultural resources across the five boroughs. Whether it’s the IDNYC cultural benefits, expanding our support for community-based cultural organizations, or promoting diversity among cultural organizations, we are committed to investing in all of our communities. Whether you’re at Lincoln Center or P.S.284 in Brownsville, art and culture are for everyone.

By now, you are probably familiar with the programs my agency manages. My staff makes it a high priority to keep you up to date on information important to your constituents. Here are updates on a few of these programs include:

- the Cultural Development Fund provides grants to around 900 nonprofits each year for publicly accessible arts programming that reflects the incredible diversity of our city. The last of 19 panels convened for Fiscal 2016 grants will conclude later this week, and we appreciate the Council’s contribution to this process;

- The public programs for this year's SPARC - Seniors Partnering with Artists Citywide – are underway. If you'd like to know of any events happening in your district, my staff would be happy to follow up with you.

I'd be happy to provide more information on the other wonderful programs we manage – including MFTA, Percent for Art, the Community Arts Development Program, affordable artist housing and workspace, and the Social Impact of the Arts project – during my question and answer.

Now I'll review the Mayor's Executive Budget proposal for the Department of Cultural Affairs. For Fiscal 2016, Mayor de Blasio's Executive Budget allocates \$150 million for Cultural Affairs. This includes \$109.6 million for the Cultural Institutions Group, \$28.5 million for the Cultural Development Fund, \$5.1 million for the Cultural Afterschool Adventures Program, and funding for agency operations and other programs. As I said at the Preliminary Budget hearing, these figures are consistent with the Fiscal 2015 adopted budget, excluding any one time initiatives or discretionary funding that may have been added at adoption. The revised Fiscal 2015 budget with one-time adds currently stands at \$158.3 million.

We continue to work with you and your colleagues in the City Council and the borough presidents to provide and manage capital allocations for cultural organizations across the city. DCLA's current four year capital plan includes \$735 million for 418 projects at 218 different cultural organizations. This substantial investment allows us to help nonprofits improve accessibility, reduce energy consumption, expand programming space, purchase equipment, and provide New Yorkers from every neighborhood with world-class cultural facilities. I am always pleased to join you and your colleagues for these ground breaking and ribbon cutting ceremonies, such as when I joined Chair van Bramer and Council Member Chin for the unique ceremony that saw the South Street Seaport Museum's Wavertree ship towed away by tug boats for repairs at a Staten Island drydock; or when we saw First Lady Michelle Obama at the Whitney opening speak so movingly about our obligation to open the doors of cultural institutions to groups who have felt excluded. Other upcoming highlights include the Brooklyn Cultural District South Site, where we have selected four organizations – including MoCADA, as was recently announced – to create a vibrant new cultural facility in the base of a residential development; the reconstruction of the Bronx River Art Center; creating administrative space for the Louis Armstrong House in Queens; and renovations to the Snug Harbor Music Hall on Staten Island.

In closing, I would like to thank Chairs Ferreras-Copeland and Van Bramer for their leadership, Committee members, and all your colleagues on the City Council for your continued support.

I'd be happy to answer any questions that you have.