



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JEAN-DANIEL NOLAND
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

June 1, 2009

The Honorable David A. Paterson
State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

Mayor Michael Bloomberg
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Governor Paterson and Mayor Bloomberg:

Manhattan Community Board 4 objects to the debilitating 100% cuts to the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) in 2009. As Manhattan District 4 is home to 40% of the small to mid-sized theatres in New York City¹, we ask that you restore funding to those theatres whose 2009 applications were being considered in the second round of NYSCA funding. This NYSCA cut blindsided scores of theatres in our area that were placed in financial peril due solely to their arbitrary position in the application cycle.

We further object to the proposed \$7 million cut to NYSCA's 2009/2010 budget; this amount represents a very small 'savings' for the State, but a substantial loss for the performing arts. Given theatre's proven ability to leverage government contributions by a 5 to 1 ratio, this \$7 million savings could mean as much as a \$35 million loss to the State in arts economic activity².

With New York State's budget currently slated to be \$131.8 billion, the restoration of NYSCA's share represents a negligible addition to it. What in the big picture would be considered a "rounding error" could literally mean survival for a crucial component of the City's arts infrastructure.

Theaters provide jobs, support neighborhood economies, and enhance New York's competitive edge. New York's status as a culture center attracts both the most ambitious and accomplished artists & professionals, and as a result, the tourist and other revenue streams that follow. In addition, small to mid-size theatres provide valuable research and development for the entertainment industry; acting as entry points for actors, choreographers, musicians, designers, et al. Nowhere is that more evident than in Community District 4, which has had a major role in the development of theatre in New York City for generations.

¹ New York Innovative Theater Foundation Study 2008

² Alliance for the Arts

At an unprecedented public forum for theatre professionals (hosted by Community Boards 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), the displacement of small to mid sized theatres was of crucial concern. Restoring the NYSCA funding will have an immediate and positive impact on the stability and survival of many of our small to mid-sized theaters and the economic resilience of our neighborhoods. We urge you, please, to restore the NYSCA funds.

And we ask that our elected officials acknowledge small to mid sized theaters and other arts organizations to be crucial to the cultural and economic resilience and diversity of our neighborhoods, to recognize the arts as economic drivers and integral to local small neighborhood businesses;

We ask that the State and the City pursue innovative policies (land use, tax, and public buildings) to secure and retain theaters and other performance venue.

We need our elected officials to act in order to restore the 100 percent funding cut from remaining funds of the New York State Council of the Arts (NYSCA) for Fiscal Year 2009, to restore NYSCA funding to sustainable levels in Fiscal Year 2010, and not to discriminate against small to mid-sized theaters and arts organizations.

We also need our elected representatives of Congress to include small to mid-sized theaters and other arts organizations in job retention and economic stimulus funding, and not to discriminate against the arts and non-profits in urban stabilization, job retention, and other funding and policies assisting other small businesses.

Sincerely,



Jean-Daniel Noland
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4

cc.: U.S. Senator Charles Schumer
U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Congressman Jerrold Nadler
New York State Senate Majority Leader Malcolm Smith
New York State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver
New York State Senator Tom Duane
New York State Senator Liz Krueger
New York State Senator Daniel Squadron
New York Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell
New York Assembly Member Richard Gottfried
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer
Speaker of the New York City Council Christine Quinn
New York City Council Member Gale Brewer