



New York City Arts in Education Roundtable
Live Testimony - Budget Hearing Arts Education

Thank you Chair Van Bramer, Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations, and Commissioner Casals and staff at DCLA for your leadership and commitment to arts education. My name is Kimberly Olsen. It's a pleasure to hear from our colleagues in the public library system, as I began my career as a teaching artist teaching devised theater to middle schoolers at the Steinway branch of the Queens Public Library. I am now the Executive Director of the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable.

The Roundtable is a service organization who builds its efforts around the values that arts are essential and that arts education is a right for all NYC students. Our 120+ member organizations have worked in long-standing partnership with the DOE to ensure that every child has access to quality arts learning.

As our city begins to rebuild and envision a post-pandemic era, I am here to highlight the importance of investing in arts education as part of the city's recovery process. The long term effects of COVID-19 on students and schools will take years to understand. However, the trauma, systemic racism, and learning loss related to COVID-19 are stark realities that students are currently facing every day as they enter the classroom. The need for investment and equity in arts education access comes when the need for arts in our schools has never been more clear.

New York City is missing the opportunity to invest in authentic ways to build social emotional competencies of youth living through these traumatic times. The city is missing the chance to instill in our youth the power of imagination and creativity, which are needed in not only art-based professions but in a myriad of careers including engineers, educators, health care professionals, and computer software designers. And the NYC DOE is failing to engage a workforce of thousands of artists primed to expand student opportunity and advance equitable access to arts learning (through cultural partnerships). This school year, and every subsequent year, the arts will be key to re-igniting students' learning in the post-COVID-19 era and preparing them for success and joy in a complicated 21st century world.

To rebuild the cultural workforce and sustain arts education programs, we believe the city must restore 70% cuts to arts education services at the NYC DOE and restore cuts CASA programs in the FY22 budget.

Thank you for your time and consideration.