

February 9, 2023

Dear Committee,

On behalf of the hundreds of cultural organizations and artists represented by ArtsWestchester, we are so grateful to you and to the entire New York State delegation for your help in securing landmark regrant funding for Westchester and Rockland Counties during the pandemic, first as a line item through the ReStart the Arts funding of \$1 million in 2021 and then the total \$10 million allocated in 2022 for ArtsWestchester and many other upstate arts councils around the state. Each of seven upstate organizations received \$1 million, we believe strongly that the results of these programs were a game-changer for the arts in New York State and hope that you can continue this funding and expand it to include other of our colleagues who are working at the grassroots level in their communities.

Through those regrant opportunities, ArtsWestchester has supported work opportunities for some 300-500 creative professionals in Westchester and Rockland Counties, and supported community projects throughout the lower Hudson Valley. At the heart of this initiative is decentralized decision-making. These organizations which you have funded, know their communities, know their artists, know the arts and cultural field, and they are best equipped to be game changers in building an equitable and inclusive arts and culture industry in their own areas. The most significant outcome of this \$10 million allocation has been the funding of many small and diverse artists and organizations that have been left out of the system because they operate at the community level through schools, libraries, parks, and other not-for-profit entities which are not cultural organizations but nevertheless provide cultural opportunities.

This year, in Westchester and Rockland alone, we will be funding more than 100 organizations and artists. While we still have not received the funding that was due in July, we have completed the selection process and are ready to get these funds out to those in our community who are struggling as soon as the contract is executed. Included within the programs to be funded in Westchester and Rockland are:

- 16 projects within libraries

- 13 projects targeted specifically for youth/kids
- 30 projects that offer workshops/classes as part of the program
- 27 Projects that are music-based
- 27 Projects that are visual arts focused
- 20 that will celebrate/feature a BIPOC culture or tradition (including Juneteenth events)
- Nine large-scale Festivals
- Seven that are Literary/Poetry based
- Four Projects/Programs for People with Special Needs
- Two specifically geared towards LGBTQ+ community
- Two projects involving Historic Sites

Within the 100+ awards, 37 are new, first-time applicants, which demonstrates growth within the sector when there is funding to support it. We urge you to continue to fund this groundbreaking EDIA initiative and expand it to include other arts councils who are working in their communities to award decentralized funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.

Thank you for your commitment and for your longtime support of ArtsWestchester, NYSCA, and Westchester and Rockland's cultural organizations. We understand that the COVID pandemic has continued to have a tremendous impact on the entire nonprofit community, however, our request is a societal need and an economic development opportunity. The arts community needs your continued support for this specific investment in Westchester and Rockland Counties and for other communities throughout the state.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janet T. Langsam', written in a cursive style.

Janet T. Langsam
CEO, ArtsWestchester