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Testimony for NYS Legislature hearing on Economic Development, and Arts Feb. 9, 2023

Good Afternoon,

I'm Fran Garber-Cohen, President of Regina Opera, which offers ticketed and free fully-staged operas and operatic concerts in Sunset Park - an underserved and low income immigrant community of Asian and Latinx residents; and Bay Ridge, a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community. Regina Opera also offers an extensive collection of archived, online performances for those people who are unable to attend a live performance.

We provide affordable, professional-level entertainment in accessible venues for people, especially immigrants who are recent arrivals to the US, who may not otherwise attend live performances. Some of our audience members lack the funds to spend on entertainment; some of our Asian Community members are afraid to travel to Manhattan by subway; some may not feel welcome at the major opera houses. Others cannot spare the time to travel to Manhattan as they are working extensive hours to earn enough to pay their bills; or cannot plan ahead and buy tickets in advance. Our performances address these issues of the Sunset Park and Bay Ridge community members. The need for this cultural enrichment is reflected in the fact that a total of over 4000 people usually attend our live performances or watch an online opera each season.

We at Regina Opera hear from our audience members that they wish that there were additional money for arts organizations in NYC that take into account their needs. Speaking on behalf of the music organizations in New York City, we are dedicated to bringing happiness to our community members, and are frustrated by the fact that NYC is not doing enough to fund us for our work.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francine Garber-Cohen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Francine Garber-Cohen, President, The Regina Opera Company, Inc.