



January 26, 2024

Re: 2024 New York State Executive Budget

I am happy to provide this testimonial to the legislature on behalf of Dia Art Foundation about the potential of the arts and cultural resources have to enact powerful economic and community change.

Dia was founded in 1974 to help artists achieve visionary projects that might not otherwise be realized because of scale or scope. Today, Dia operates sites in New York City, Long Island, and in the Western United States. We brought our internationally-significant program to the Hudson Valley with the opening of Dia Beacon in 2003. Dia Beacon is one of the largest contemporary art exhibition spaces in the country. When we opened, the City of Beacon was a small community struggling to overcome the loss of local manufacturing jobs. Today it is a vibrant Hudson Valley destination with a busy Main Street, a thriving arts scene, parks and outdoor spaces, and access to many hiking trails.

Dia and the museum have played a vital role not just in this transformation, but in the area's ongoing pandemic recovery over the past three years. Not only have we seen our visitorship grow year to year leading up to the pandemic, we were fortunate to be able to reopen our spacious, naturally lit galleries before many of our downstate peers. We saw our audiences change in this timeframe, initially serving the influx of new Hudson Valley residents leaving the city and now enjoying the steadily growing return of international visitors. The demographics of Dia Beacon's visitorship also reflect the role the museum plays in our community – 75% of our visitors are under the age of 45, including many young families.

It has been estimated that the Dutchess County cultural sector has an economic impact of \$28.5M annually and creates more than 1,000 jobs. Dia Beacon alone brings in an estimated \$8M in regional tourism per year and invests around \$6M in the operation of the museum and its payroll of around 100 employees and 25 teaching artists. Beyond this revenue, Dia – like the majority of arts organizations – provides a range of critical services to our community. The museum offers school group tours, professional development for local educators, a summer intensive for English Language Learners, workshops for people living with dementia, workforce development opportunities for teens and young people, and a range of partnerships with local organizations.

Our work would not be possible without the support of New York State. A relationship with Empire State Development helped us complete the renovation and opening of Dia Beacon twenty years ago and annual funding from the New York State Council on the Arts supports our general operations. Recent gifts have funded projects like a façade restoration, an HVAC replacement, restroom renovations, and the expansion of a daily free admission program which now serves residents of both Beacon and Newburgh. Beginning this summer, state funding will also help realize a major landscaping project.

This kind of work is both expensive and often not visible to our visitors or our donors. The HVAC project, for example, required raising \$6M to replace equipment hidden on the rooftop that is essential to the safety and comfort of the people and artwork in our galleries. We rely on our regional electeds to understand these needs and funding distributed through state agencies is critical in helping us maintain our sites and core operations without compromising our programming or community services. Your support fuels the creative economy and allows us to continue expanding our impact beyond our museum walls. The success of Dia Beacon over the past twenty years is itself a testimonial to what can be achieved with these investments. Thank you for the additional funds you have committed to arts and culture organizations in the state budget over the past year, and we urge you to do so again and continue growing with the field which is vital to communities across New York state.

Jessica Morgan  
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Dia Art Foundation