



November 20, 2020

Priya Frank, Co-Chair
Seattle Art Museum

Dr. Quinton Morris, Co-Chair
Seattle University

Cassie Chinn
Wing Luke Museum

Dawn Chirwa
Philanthropy Northwest

Kayla DeMonte
Citizen University

Steve Galatro
Pratt Fine Arts Center

Holly Jacobson
Path with Art

Jescelle Major
Berk Consulting

Yeggy Michael
Artist

James Miles
Arts Corps

Chieko Phillips
4Culture

Tracy Rector
Nia Tero

Racquel West
Bill Holm Center

Sarah Wilke
Meany Center for the
Performing Arts

Mikhael Mei Williams
Entercom

Attn: Council President Lorena González, Council Member Tammy Morales, Council Member Teresa Mosqueda

Seattle City Council
City of Seattle
600 Fourth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Council Members,

While we have seen some unimaginable challenges in our city and country, the Seattle Arts Commission wishes to express our gratitude for your commitment to supporting creative communities and workers during this extraordinarily difficult time. The polarizing tone of the election, amid a pandemic, economic hardship and the ongoing struggle for racial justice has created extraordinary uncertainty and angst. We believe that now is the time to focus on addressing the issues that have paralyzed our city with wisdom, compassion, and a deep understanding through a racial equity lens. We can accomplish this feat by supporting our arts and cultural workers and organizations, who need us more now than ever.

As outlined in our budget letter addressed to Mayor Durkan and the Seattle City Council on August 3, 2020, the Seattle Arts Commission's goal through the continuation of 2021 is to ensure that as little harm come to the arts and cultural communities and economy, especially those that are highly represented by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color).

We are pleased to see that the Mayor's budget draft for funding the Office of Arts and Culture has been maintained. These steps are vital in the Office of Arts and Culture continuing its steadfast work towards the artistic and civic recovery of both individuals and artistic and cultural organizations in our city. Because of such, we ask that you continue to provide these funds as outlined in the draft budget.

The Seattle Arts Commission is committed to supporting the Office of Arts & Culture in both the short and long term challenges they have identified that will help both individual artists and artistic and cultural organizations pivot towards a sustainable model that will help keep people employed, organizations sustained, and our culture protected. We know that the Office of Arts and Culture is committed to the economic



recovery and social/mental well-being by integrating plans and strategies across city departments that will support the greater community of the city of Seattle. These initiatives include:

Civic Recovery

Our city's civic recovery is dependent on the health of the individuals within the community itself. Science¹ has documented how both social isolation and economic stress are major contributors to physical and mental health risks. To address the risk factors of trauma, isolation and loneliness, health professionals are increasingly turning towards a more holistic, human-centered response in the arts. By employing the humanity of arts engagement to restore and reknit our community together, we can reduce the need for costly emergency services and increase economic opportunities locally. We recommend that the City of Seattle considers incorporating arts and culture into its processes as in its civic recovery.

Below are a couple of examples of how to execute this recommendation:

- Opportunities exist to partner with other city departments to integrate the arts and provide new solutions to existing and compounded problems. The Office of Arts & Culture has developed a framework for a WPA-style program that places creatives to work in support of public and mental health outcomes. We recommend partnerships with Human Services and the Office of Economic Development that would research and develop this proposal.
- The Office of Arts and Culture also has staff integrated into the Department of Transportation, the Office of the Waterfront and the Office for Civil Rights to ensure that arts strategies are integrated into the thinking and implementation of those departments. This has resulted in opportunities for cultural programming that would not have been otherwise identified and has potential to support the City's Recovery vision.

Inclusive Creative Economy

The arts are a major contributor to the local economy and are a hallmark of our city. Nearly 18% of Seattle's gross regional product comes from the creative industries. In 2019, an estimated annual \$34.1 million was invested in local economic activity as the result of \$26.3 million in wages and salaries from local arts organizations. As our country adapts to massive challenges and shifts in technology and digital access, education, mental and physical wellness and livability of our environments, we believe that supporting holistic creative skills and creative workers will be necessary to assist the future economy of Seattle. We envision a City in which arts, design, entertainment, and media-related occupations are on equal footing with computer related occupations.

¹Holt-Lunstad, Julianne: The Double Pandemic of Social Isolation and COVID-19: Cross-Sector Policy Must Change Both, 22 June 2020, <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20200609.53823>



- In 2019, working in collaboration with the Office of Economic Development, the Office of Arts and Culture has identified strategies and opportunities to support economic health, affordability, and racial equity within the region's creative communities, which will be extremely important in the future. A hint of evidence that supports this is that despite Seattle's apparent strong creative sector, not all workers are reaping the benefits. Disparities related to race and gender become clear when you view the disaggregated data.
- There is potential for expanded collaboration with the Office of Economic Development and Office of Film and Music on creative economy and workforce development projects, such as the WPA-style Hope Corps project noted above that is gaining city-wide traction.

Cultural Space and equitable access

The Cultural Space Agency is a program built over the last five years with significant community engagement and involvement, and one that is perfectly positioned to respond to the need to build community wealth, especially within BIPOC communities and historically disinvested neighborhoods. As the agency grows, we look forward to the first projects that place decision-making authority directly in the hands of our community members in significant and meaningful ways.

In closing, in times of trial and hardship, your support is vital towards our art and cultural communities. We invite you to unite with the Seattle Arts Commission as we work to create a community of support and solitude for those who are experiencing incredible difficult challenges. This is our moment to declare unequivocally that we value the arts and cultural workers, institutions, and organizations who have helped make Seattle a culturally rich city. We appreciate our shared interest and values in creating a vibrant arts and cultural sector that addresses historical inequality and places the care of the person first. This is absolutely vital to artistic and cultural sustainability. We appreciate your ongoing commitment to this work and hope to follow up with you soon.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Q Morris".

Dr. Quinton Morris, DMA, Co-Chair
Seattle Arts Commission



Cc: Randy Engstrom, Director, ARTS (email only)
Calandra Childers, Deputy Director, ARTS (email only)
Allie Lee, Seattle Arts Commission Liaison, ARTS (email only)
Seattle Arts Commission (email only)