



October 14, 2025

Kayla DeMonte
Co-Chair
Citizen University

Holly Jacobson
Co-Chair
Path with Art

Avery Barnes
Taswira Gallery

Linda Chavez-Lowry
Seattle Means Business
Magazine

Dhyana Garcia
Artist, DAIPANbutoh Collective

Ricky Graboski
The Vera Project

Yoon Kang-O'Higgins
Friends of Waterfront Park

Ed King
Pottery Northwest

Megan Kiskaddon
On the Boards

Jo Mikesell
Shunpike

Kate Nagle-Caraluzzo
Town Hall Seattle

Jack Nash
YMCA Get-Engaged Member

Yolanda Spencer
Northwest Justice Project

Vanessa Villalobos
Artist, Balorico Dance

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

Dear Councilmembers,

Thank you for your continued support of Seattle's creative community. The Seattle Arts Commission deeply appreciates your recognition of the vital role the arts play in strengthening our city's economy, neighborhoods, and civic life—demonstrated through recent actions such as allocating \$4.7 million from the General Fund to the Office of Arts & Culture (ARTS) for grants supporting cultural preservation in historically marginalized communities (led by Councilmember Hollingsworth), and \$350,000 to fund city mural projects (spearheaded by Councilmembers Hollingsworth and Strauss).

We especially appreciate your willingness in last year's budget to preserve the Admissions Tax Ordinance, which was created to support ARTS in their work of ensuring a vibrant and equitable creative sector for the city. The Admissions Tax remains the lifeline for the Office of Arts & Culture's investments in Seattle's working artists and arts organizations. **Admissions Tax for ARTS is critical, as Seattle's working artists and arts organizations are struggling under the immense weight of these unprecedented times.**

The Admissions Tax Ordinance was created to fund the Office of Arts & Culture—a promise that has supported our city's cultural life for decades. We respectfully ask Council to affirm that the 2026 budget retains full Admissions Tax funding to ARTS and to take any necessary legislative steps to formalize that commitment.

This is a pivotal moment for Seattle to lead nationally in arts recovery—demonstrating what it looks like when a city stands firmly behind its cultural workers and creative communities. Our city's working artists and arts organizations need us now. National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grants are being canceled, impacting both large and small institutions, such as Seattle Theater Group, Town Hall Seattle, NW Folklife, Path with Art, Seattle Symphony Orchestra, On the Boards, and more. At the same time, other federal funding sources for arts and



culture, such as PBS, SBA, and the US Department of Education, are shrinking day by day, and philanthropic dollars are increasingly competitive as funders prioritize basic needs or begin to sunset their giving.

Last year, we worked together to create a proposal for a one-time pass-through of Admissions Tax dollars to other departments as an emergency measure. We supported this as a **temporary solution** to help balance the budget, with the clear commitment that Admissions Tax revenue would remain dedicated to ARTS moving forward. **As the Seattle Arts Commission reviews the 2026 proposed budget, we want to reaffirm that commitment and clarify its importance.**

As many of you noted in the recent ARTS Budget presentation, the work of the Office of Arts & Culture—particularly its support for vibrant placemaking and working artists—is more vital than ever. **To uphold that work, it's essential that 100% of Admissions Tax revenue continue to support ARTS and the work it does to support artists and arts organizations,** with funding for other departments continuing to come through the General Fund, as has traditionally been the case.

To underscore why protecting ARTS revenue matters:

- **ARTS programs and investments provide immense public value.** They create job security, institutional stability and spur neighborhood vibrancy, civic participation, and city pride—outcomes our city will continue to rely on in the coming years of growth.
- **Arts organizations are facing destabilizing and unprecedented funding cuts from federal and state sources.** The environment that artists and organizations are in has radically changed. It is the City's responsibility to ensure that local support keeps pace with these shifting realities by retaining the Admissions Tax. ARTS provides essential, stable funding that keeps artists and organizations stable.
- **Demand is rising.** Applications to ARTS grant programs increased 38% this year. There are already more worthy projects than resources. Protecting Admissions Tax for ARTS ensures these programs can meet as much of that demand as possible.
- **Stability supports growth.** Consistent funding allows ARTS to plan, expand, and collaborate across departments in ways that benefit the whole city. ARTS allocates funds through transparent and equitable public processes, ensuring public dollars reach those doing work on the ground.

Ensuring that Admissions Tax revenues remain fully dedicated to ARTS positions Seattle for success in the years ahead and will help support stability for those in our sector who are working to stay afloat through this extremely challenging time. We ask that you **affirm this commitment in the 2026 budget**



and, if necessary, enact any additional legislation required to ensure that last year's one-time pass-through remains a one-time exception.

We are grateful for your leadership and look forward to working together in the coming year.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kayla DeMonte".

[Kayla DeMonte \(10/14/2025 19:02:49 PDT\)](#)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Holly Jacobson".

[Holly Jacobson \(10/14/2025 19:49:57 PDT\)](#)

Kayla DeMonte and Holly Jacobson,
Co-Chairs, on behalf of Seattle Arts Commission