



Priya Frank, Co-Chair
Seattle Art Museum

August 3, 2020

Dr. Quinton Morris, Co-Chair
Seattle University

Mayor Jenny Durkan and Seattle City Council
City of Seattle
600 Fourth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Cassie Chinn
Wing Luke Museum

Dawn Chirwa
Philanthropy Northwest

Re: Written comments required by Seattle Municipal Code 3.14.830G, as amended by Ordinance No. 123460 (2010)

Kayla DeMonte
Citizen University

“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.” – John F. Kennedy

Steve Galatro
Pratt Fine Arts Center

Sheila Ghaibi
T-Mobile

Dear Mayor Durkan and Seattle City Council:

Holly Jacobson
Path with Art

Jescelle Major
Berk Consulting

Yeggy Michael
Artist

James Miles
Arts Corps

Chieko Phillips
4Culture

Tracy Rector
Nia Tero

Sarah Wilke
Meany Center for the
Performing Arts

Mikhael Mei Williams
Entercom

In what has been an unprecedented moment in our city’s history to battle both a global pandemic and enormous racial injustices, which have wreaked havoc on our community’s economic, emotional, mental and physical health, we, the Seattle Arts Commission, acknowledge your continued leadership and support for Seattle’s arts and cultural community. While these most present moments have been challenging for all of us, we appreciate your support for the City’s continued investment in allowing the arts to thrive and nurturing the community with a wealth of tradition in artistic excellence. We applaud the exponential velocity the City moved to provide relief support for arts and cultural organizations and artists, which we recognize was both the first cultural relief package in our country, and was also among the very first actions the Mayor took to address the pandemic. For these actions, we are forever grateful.

While the pandemic has caused a major crisis in the arts and cultural community, our request and our goal through the 2021 budget proposal is to ensure that as little harm comes to those arts and cultural communities that are highly represented by BI-POC (Black, Indigenous – People of Color). The arts and cultural communities have taken a major blow with artistic and cultural spaces being closed (or limiting their public access due to state regulations). Many artists are unemployed and the social and



mental health of these individuals and organizations has significantly diminished, amidst the protests and riots that still continue to occur in our city. While we are hopeful that these times will not last, it is imperative that funding continues for grants, arts education, public art, and cultural space projects; and as well as support of the administration of the Office of Arts and Culture. With this commitment, your leadership will give fuel to the work to which we are committed to and which in turn supports the sustainability of marginalized, BI-POC arts and cultural communities.

We request that you, Mayor Durkan and the Seattle City Council protect and continue funding the Office of Arts and Culture in the following areas:

- Improve City Processes: With the impact of COVID and the racial tensions in our city, we have continued to ask how we can recover to get people back to work in the most healthy and safest way. We humbly request that as the city looks to improve its processes that special attention is placed towards recovery efforts with equitable lenses towards programs relating to arts education, funding structures, cultural space practices and public art. This is vitally important, more now than ever. The Arts Office is committed towards helping the Mayor fulfill her goals of protecting creative works and arts and cultural organizations with the New Executive Order she signed in March that was deeply impacted by COVID. To that end, we ask that as funds are reallocated from the Police Department, the arts receive 33.5% of the funding to be utilized for the following:
 - A WPA-style program that will employ creatives at scale to address Civic needs such as public health messaging and mental health outcomes; media, journalism and storytelling opportunities; and food security through urban gardening and food distribution
 - Address our remote educational needs by employing teaching artists to support at-home learners and educators
 - Invest in Wi-Fi and technology that supports small creative businesses and nonprofits to share their work with audiences virtually and ensure all Seattle residents have access to digital connectivity
 - Expand youth arts programs to support Seattle's young population in engaging in creative pursuits that lead to high levels of engagement and career readiness

The reallocation will allow us to continue to pursue our racial equity commitments, resulting in increasing funding that is needed in supporting BI-POC communities. Additionally, this funding is crucial to support the staff and technical resources needed to demonstrate continued progress towards racial equity, diversity and inclusion.



This reallocation will demonstrate to the community that the city is making aggressive strides towards improving the cultural climate and landscape of our city, even through a global health crisis and racial divide.

- Creative Economy: We will continue to work with the Office of Economic Development (OED), this initiative will allow us to be able to better advocate for artists to be able to work, live and thrive in Seattle. This initiative to support this include moving a position to ARTS, aligning our arts education initiative with OED and the Office of Film + Music's inclusive creative industries program, and increasing support of internships and creative industries learning.

Additionally, we also recognize the urgency we must have towards elevating the work of the Black artists and the Black arts community, which has shaped the vibrancy of our city since the beginning of the 20th century. Now is the time to scale our resources towards real conversations and recommendations that will sustain the Black arts community through economic opportunity, affordability and continued racial equity initiatives within our city's creative industries.

- Cultural Space: Because of the COVID and social issues that have permeated our city, many cultural spaces have suffered significantly, losing revenue and resources. We humbly request that that rent relief be afforded to the approximate 40 arts organizations for whom the City is a landlord city so that these arts organizations can recover, and lend the City's voice to State and Federal legislation that would support rent relief for all cultural organizations and creatives. We also request that financial cuts be paused and support for arts organizations that have cultural spaces be supported during this difficult time. There are many properties and buildings within the city that are currently vacant and we request that these underutilized resources be used as a refuge for arts organizations in Seattle to use during our time of crisis. Furthermore, we request that the city invest in digital equity for artists and arts organizations in our city so they have access to Wi-Fi. There is a major shortage of artists and arts organizations in our city who have limited capabilities due to their loss of income. We humbly request that the city invest immediately in keeping our community digitally connected to the world, which so heavily relies on technology, and is absolutely essential in this moment of virtual presentations.

While we have made these requests for Cultural Space, we will continue to support the development of cultural spaces and community wealth-building led by BI-POC communities through the creation of a Public Development Authority and related Cultural Space Agency program. The upcoming year is pivotal for this program and its goal of sustainable and equitable structural change. With dedicated staff and much needed support we will implement governing structures and determine initial projects based in our RET process, ensuring community-led values, priorities, and ownership are embedded in the Cultural Space Agency from its beginning. This process will be guided by our first three BASE cohorts (Build Art Space Equitably), a program launched by the



Facilities and Equitable Development Committee to provide training and networking opportunities for a cadre of leaders of color in cultural space development.

In closing, we recognize that we are living and experiencing unprecedented times that we've never experienced before. While we applaud the availability of resources provided for our work, we remain cognizant of the growing pressures we feel daily that result in racial injustice and the decrease in affordability and sustainability in our arts and cultural communities. We understand that we must engage in conversations that may be uncomfortable and make unprecedented requests, however, we believe that these activities will empower us to work towards solutions that will create a more racially inclusive and equitable distribution of available support. We acknowledge the work that both Mayor Durkan and the Seattle City Council has done towards the preservation of cultural space and support for BI-POC communities. Our goal is to work with you in implementing these strategies and support the work you are already doing at the policy level.

The Seattle Arts Commission is thankful to engage in partnership with Mayor Durkan and the Seattle City Council. We appreciate that you have taken action towards helping to sustain our arts community and the confidence you have in our Arts Commission in serving as allies in accomplishing the goals and initiatives you have already put in place. We stand with you in solidarity towards supporting the great work of Seattle arts and culture and your continued ongoing support, in advance.

Respectfully submitted,

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is a cursive name that appears to be "Priya Frank". The second signature is a cursive name that appears to be "Quinton Morris".

Priya Frank and Dr. Quinton Morris, co-chairs
Seattle Arts Commission