



**SEATTLE ARTS  
COMMISSION**

**Kayla DeMonte**  
Co-Chair  
Citizen University

**Holly Jacobson**  
Co-Chair  
Path with Art

**Leslie Anderson**  
National Nordic Museum

**Avery Barnes**  
Taswira Gallery

**Linda Chavez-Lowry**  
Seattle Magazine

**Dhyana Garcia**  
Artist, DAIPANbutoh Collective

**Ricky Graboski**  
The Vera Project

**Vee Hua**  
Filmmaker & Arts Journalist

**Yoon Kang-O'Higgins**  
Friends of Waterfront Seattle

**Rodney King**  
Artist, Kingspen

**Megan Kiskaddon**  
On the Boards

**Carmen Pan**  
YMCA Get-Engaged Member

**Yolanda Spencer**  
Chief Seattle Club

**Joël B. Tan**  
Arts advocate

**Vanessa Villalobos**  
Artist, Balorico Dance

October 15, 2024

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

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

Dear Councilmembers,

Thank you for your ongoing support of our city's creative community. We know that the strength of a city's reputation, quality of life, and economic opportunity are driven by investment in the arts. We write today to share our recommendations, in response to the Mayor's budget proposal.

We are grateful that the Mayor understands the value and has maintained funding for the arts sector for grant programs stewarded by the Office of Arts and Culture (ARTS). We appreciate and thank the Mayor's Office for recognizing the importance of supporting artists and arts organizations.

However, we would like to direct your attention to a deeply concerning proposed amendment to the long-standing ordinance (#120183), regarding the city's Admissions Tax.

Changing this ordinance is at odds with the best interest of Seattle's arts sector for two primary reasons. First, it effectively removes the agency and independence of the ARTS office to drive our city's arts programming, funding and policy; and second, by removing clarity and process for the distribution of Admissions Tax revenue— and providing no guarantee for where or how it is to be allocated— it opens the door for chaos and confusion in future budget cycles. The ramifications of such a change could create significant unintended consequences, including limiting Council oversight of how these funds are distributed. **We strongly recommend to Council that the original Ordinance language is kept intact.**



It is in the city's best interest for the ARTS Office to remain stewards of Admissions Tax revenue because:

- **Artist employment opportunities and awards distributed from the ARTS Office include oversight and accountability** through community-based panels, expertly-developed grant processes, and guidance from the Seattle Arts Commission. As the primary agency tasked with providing direct grant funds to artists, cultural producers, and arts organizations in the city, these processes ensure city leadership and the public have detailed visibility into the distribution of these funds.
- **ARTS has the sectoral expertise.** ARTS is staffed by reputable experts in the field; professionals with decades of experience in developing arts programs, creating accessible grants, and driving equitable arts policy. They are, by design, the office that is best equipped to lead this work and support a strong sector. Other city agencies often rely on the ARTS office to help them navigate their own arts related projects or acquisitions. The ARTS office is the one agency exclusively focused on ensuring a healthy arts ecosystem, and can support other agencies' arts-related work. Changing the ordinance could create redundancies for arts spending. Arts curation in other city departments could also undermine a strong and unified sector in our city.
- **The ARTS office has honed and maintains robust and equitable processes for the allocation of its funding.** Their dedication to equitable practice means that their funding provides significant support to small and mid-sized BIPOC-led organizations and community-based cultural organizations, alongside our major and larger arts institutions. Other departments and entities are not similarly equipped to administer processes that would assure a wide spectrum of community members receive arts opportunities in a transparent manner.

**Additionally, changing the long-standing Admissions Tax ordinance would create long-term harm to the creative sector as a whole in order to solve a temporary budget issue.** This decision would have significant far-reaching implications, miring future administrations, councils, city departments in a chaotic process, pitting city agencies against each other, and diminishing the arts sector at a critical time.

We recognize and appreciate the need for a balanced budget. We are confident that the best partner for doing so is the ARTS Office, who could effectively support the distribution of arts funding to programs in other departments as allocated in this budget cycle. **We encourage Council to reject changes to the Ordinance, and adopt a proviso that allows ARTS to allocate admission tax revenue to support their fellow city departments and help balance this year's budget.** The city's current budget goals can be accomplished without making a change that would set ARTS up for years of uncertainty. This tactic will also help to strengthen collaboration between initiatives and support interdepartmental communication.



The creative sector is often called upon to uplift our communities, spark tourism and help create business revenue for our city. It is critical that the arts sector stays strong when we need it most. Maintaining this long-standing ordinance will help Seattle build a flourishing city that stands out with its unique creative vigor. In 2026, when all eyes will be upon Seattle, we want to be able to stand with you as leaders saying we did not fall behind, that we are a leading arts city.

**We respectfully ask: please do not change this long-standing, effective ordinance.**

With appreciation,

Handwritten signatures of Kayla DeMonte and Holly Jacobson in black ink.

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