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## DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

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*City Council Budget Hearing – October 18, 2022*

*Remarks – Commissioner Erin Harkey*

Thank you, Chairman Dowell and Council members for the opportunity to discuss the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE).

In 2022, DCASE saw a transformational influx of resources to help support Chicago's creative economy. With these additional funds, and the restoration of our budget to 90% of pre-pandemic levels, DCASE was able to address the needs of the cultural community and support its ongoing recovery. However, the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic still looms large; organizations across all artistic disciplines have reported a 30-50% decrease in earned revenue from 2019, highlighting ongoing changes in audience behavior that will have a lasting impact on the health of the cultural sector.

Guided by the leadership of Mayor Lightfoot, my team and I began the hard and necessary work of evaluating DCASE programs and operations to create a more efficient, effective and equitable agency. We embarked on a new direction for cultural policy in Chicago, bridging partnerships with fellow city agencies to embed the arts in key initiatives across the city. We expanded support for artists, creative worker and businesses, and significantly improved arts equity citywide through our grants, public art and other cultural programs.

In 2022, the unprecedented investment in DCASE increased direct support for the arts sector from \$2.7 million to \$12.7 million. General operating support to nonprofit arts organizations through our CityArts Program increased 223%, with average awards increasing to just over \$22,000, compared to just \$6,798 in 2021. The Individual Artists Program, which provides direct support to artists, increased its average grant size by 60%. Overall, DCASE granted more than 564 grants across seven programs, a 25% increase in the total number of grants awarded in 2021.

2022 was also the Year of Chicago Dance. We supported the recovery of the dance sector, with 20 grants to dance and movement artists, and 60 grants to dance organizations and presenters including 14 CityArts Program grants focused on addressing critical issues facing dancers and the field of dance. Direct investment to dance organizations and artists through grants, marketing, programs, and performance fees was over \$2.2 million.

DCASE grantees are now, proudly, more reflective of the city of Chicago – 60% of Individual Artists Program grantees are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) as compared to 38% in 2016; grants to BIPOC-led organizations and organizations on the South and West sides increased by 5%; and grants were awarded to artists and arts organizations in all 50 wards in 2022, compared to only 35 wards in 2016. In addition, 75% of our grant review panelists across all programs were BIPOC. Our

community outreach and awareness efforts also paid off with over 690 new applicants, which made up 40% of the total applicant pool.

Additionally, DCASE received American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding to support the city's recovery. DCASE is deploying these funds to support new grant and relief programs, tourism and industry support, and citywide marketing efforts. The first grant program was designed in partnership with the Office of Equity & Racial Justice. The Together We Heal Creative Place Program recognizes the importance of the arts in promoting health, healing and safety for communities and recently awarded \$5.5 million to 48 grantees whose projects will support artists in designing and implementing art projects that promote healing and transformation in Chicago's neighborhoods.

DCASE expanded partnerships with other City agencies to embed the arts in initiatives and strategies across City government. In collaboration with DPD, we've embedded artists in the We Will Chicago citywide plan planning processes. We commissioned a mural and supported Artist-in-Residence program with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. We also created a artist-in-residence program at Chicago Public Library's Legler Library and supported the Chicago Park District to increase cultural offerings in neighborhood locations, including increased support for Night Out in the Parks. Last, but not least, we continued our partnership with CDOT around the return of Open Boulevards with street activations that transform Chicago's historic boulevards into community spaces.

Our public art department continued to see record growth this year. We've committed over \$12 million for public art in all INVEST South/West neighborhoods. In partnership with the Department of Aviation, DCASE will deliver \$3.5 million for public art projects at O'Hare International Airport. There were also a record number of aldermanic menu-supported public art projects in 2022. We have worked collaboratively with your offices to facilitate public art installations that will enhance the exterior of libraries, schools, parks, community spaces and other neighborhood assets. And the Chicago Monuments Project final report was recently released, announcing grants to support the creation of new works that celebrate our city's diverse history.

We also saw the return of our beloved summer festivals and events, such as Taste of Chicago, the Air & Water Show, Gospel, Blues, Jazz, House and World Music Festivals, and the return of Chicago SummerDance, the Chicago Presents program and the Chicago Band Roster. This year, all DCASE festivals and events incorporated neighborhood components, which resulted in over 130 events and programs providing \$2 million in direct support to artists and organizations participating in cultural events in communities throughout the city.

Film production revenue hit a record high of \$630 million in 2021, shattering pre-pandemic levels by \$70 million. This signals a strong recovery and positive economic impact for communities. Revenue is projected to hit \$700 million in 2022, with 48 wards hosting film productions and 1,231 permits issued as of October 1st. DCASE continues to work in close partnership with film productions and local elected officials to mitigate negative effects and maximize positive benefits to communities impacted by filming. Beyond permitting, and as part of Chicago's COVID-19 Task Force report, the Film Office spearheaded "Chicago Made," a new workforce development program that seeks to reimagine the region's workforce infrastructure and create a plan to invest in displaced young workers.

Special Event Permitting reached pre-pandemic levels in 2022, with the team reviewing close to 800 applications. This is an incredible number of events, and we recognize and acknowledge that the system for processing these applications can be improved. DCASE is working to evaluate the city's permit process, including working with the Chicago Park District, to create efficiencies. We will also

update permit guidelines and procedures to address some of the concerns we are hearing from Aldermen and our event organizers. New processes will be in place in time for the 2023 event season.

I am immensely proud of DCASE's 2022 accomplishments, and more essential work lies ahead as Chicago's arts and culture sector continues to bounce back from the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2023 budget includes an additional \$1.3 million increase that will help us cover contractual increases and three new staff positions to support growth in our operations and programming divisions. In 2023, DCASE will continue to position Chicago's cultural vitality as a driving and defining part of our city. Priorities include:

- Distribute ARPA recovery funds to address the current and emergent needs of the cultural and tourism sectors as they continue to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Build collaboration with cultural partners and city agencies to promote new models and programs which will expand audiences and increase access and participation in the arts
- Bring more public art and cultural programs to neighborhoods while identifying priorities for public art investments and increasing employment of artists and creative skilled workers
- Continue to expand our cultural grants program providing support to cultural organizations and artists with a focus on underserved neighborhoods
- Connect with stakeholders and communities not currently participating in our programs to increase awareness of opportunities and understand and address barriers to access
- Commit to convening and evaluating the needs of the cultural sector to inform strategic decision making, and the equitable growth of the cultural sector.

Thank you. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.