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Gavin Newsom, **Governor**
Danielle Brazell, **Executive Director**
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**Minutes of Public Meeting
CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL
Friday, December 12, 2025
10 A.M. – 3:50 P.M.
On Location/Hybrid Meeting
The Sofia, Home of the B Street Theatre
2700 Capitol Avenue
Sacramento, CA**

The members of the California Arts Council convened in Sacramento and via web conference to discuss and vote on various items as listed in the minutes below.

Council Members Present In-Person:

Council Chair Roxanne Messina Captor
Council Vice Chair Leah Goodwin
Council Member Gerald Clarke
Council Member Caleb Duarte
Council Member Vicki Estrada
Council Member Roy Hirabayashi
Council Member Phil Mercado
Council Member Nicola Miner
Council Member Rick Stein

Council Members Present Remotely:

Council Member Alex Israel
Council Member Dorka Keehn

*Gerald Clarke left the meeting at 12:08PM

Arts Council Staff Present:

Danielle Brazell, Executive Director
Michelle Radmand, Chief Deputy Director
Julie Estrella, Council Liaison
Carissa Gutierrez, Director of Public Affairs
Josy Miller, Arts Program Manager
Megan Morgan, Race & Equity Manager



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Zachary Hill, IT Specialist
Kim Brown, Public Affairs Specialist
Qiana Moore, Outreach & Events Coordinator
Steve Mok, Graphic Designer (Public Affairs)

1. Call to Order

Chair Messina Captor called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

2. Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum

Public Affairs Director called the roll and quorum was established. 9 Council Members were present in person with 2 members present virtually.

3. Land and People's Acknowledgement

Council Member Mercado delivered the California Arts Council Land Acknowledgement.

4. Community Agreements

Chair Messina Captor and Vice Chair Goodwin lead the Council through the community agreements.

The community agreements read aloud were as follows:

- Practice listening to understand, not just hearing.
- Wait until you are acknowledged to speak.
- When it's your time to speak, state your name and intention clearly.
- Listen to others with an open mind. Try not to project your truth onto others.
- Practice both/and thinking rather than either/or thinking.
- Have a beginner's mind. Take 100% responsibility for one's own learning.
- It's okay to disagree—disagree with ideas, not with the person.

5. Opening Remarks

Chair Messina Captor opened with welcoming attendees and thanking staff and the public.

6. Welcome by Jason Jong, Arts, Culture & Creative Economy Manager, City of Sacramento (State-Local Partner of the California Arts Council); Lyndsay Burch,



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Executive Artistic Director, The Sofia, Home of the B Street Theatre

Jason Jong opened the session by thanking the California Arts Council for their service and highlighting Sacramento's vibrant cultural identity and local arts landmarks. He introduced Lindsey Burch, CEO of The Sofia, detailed the B Street Theater's 40-year evolution. Burch emphasized how foundational CAC investment enabled their expansion into a state-of-the-art facility that now serves 50,000 students annually and supports a core company of local artists. She described The Sofia as a collaborative hub for other regional grantees, strengthening the broader arts ecosystem through shared resources. Finally, she addressed modern industry challenges like rising costs, stressing that ongoing state partnership remains vital for maintaining such cultural anchors.

7. Chair's Report

The Chair's Report can be [read in its entirety here](#).

As part of her report, Chair Messina Captor also acknowledged Council Member Clarke's term coming to an end on the Council. She presented him with a certificate signed by Senator Ben Allen. CAC Director Brazell also thanked Council Member Clarke for his service and presented him with a gift on behalf of agency staff. Council Member Clarke shared a few words of gratitude to his fellow council members and agency staff encouraging all to "fight the good fight and remember those that don't have a voice".

8. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Danielle Brazell reported that nearly all 679 recent grantees met contractual deadlines and celebrated the successful launch of the Teen Poet Laureate program which received nominations from 27 counties throughout the state. She outlined the upcoming vote on the FY 26-27 grant framework and the designation of new cultural districts, utilizing visual swim lanes to clarify the collaborative, year-long grant-making process. The report concluded with a commitment to transparency and an acknowledgment of the staff's hard work in managing high demand with minimal resources.

Read Executive Director Danielle Brazell's [full report](#).



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9. VOTING ITEM: Minutes from Previous Meetings

Chair Messina Captor then presented the [minutes from October 24, 2025](#).

As there were no objections from the rest of the Council, the minutes were approved by acclamation.

10. VOTING ITEM: 2026 Council Meeting Dates

Chair Messina Captor proposed the following slate of dates for council approval. January 23 was deleted and February 6 was added by the Chair. Dates with an asterisk coincide with potential 50th Anniversary activities.

- ~~January 23, 2026, Los Angeles Region~~
- February 6, 2026, Los Angeles Region
- April 20, 2026*, Capitol Region
- May 15, 2026, Northern California Region
- June 24, 2026*, Capitol Region
- August 14, 2026, Bay Area Region
- September 2, 2026*, Capitol Region
- October 23, 2026, San Diego Region
- December 11, 2026, Central Valley

As there were no objections from the rest of the Council, the dates were approved and adopted via unanimous consent.

11. VOTING ITEM: Council Elections

The Council proceeded to [Agenda Item 11, Council Elections](#). The Nomination Committee, comprised of Council Members Miner and Clarke, read the memo and reminded the Council of the election process. There was only one nomination provided for the role as Chair, Roxanne Messina Captor. No other nominations were put forth by the Council.

Motion made by Nomination Committee (Council Members Miner and Clarke)



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Vote to elect Council Member Roxanne Messina Captor as Chair of the California Arts Council.

No Council Member contested the nomination Council Member Messina Captor was re-elected to serve as Chair for a third term via unanimous consent.

The Council then proceeded with the Vice Chair nomination. As no names were provided before the meeting, nominations were taken from the floor. Chair Messina Captor nominated Council Member Nicola Miner and she accepted the nomination.

Vote to elect Council Member Nicola Miner as Vice Chair of the California Arts Council.

No Council Member contested the nomination Council Member Miner and she was elected via unanimous consent.

Public Comment

No member of the public submitted a request to provide public comment.

Discussion

Council Members Messina Captor and Miner will serve as Chair and Vice Chair of the California Arts Council for 2026.

12. PRESENTATION: Creative Economy Report

Executive Director Brazell and Data Equity Measures and Evaluation Manager Ratzkin in collaboration with Institute for the Future (ITFF), who lead the research and development of the Creative Economy Strategic Plan, [provided an overview](#) of the process.

Discussion

The strategic plan focused on six core recommendations for workforce and business stabilization. Director Brazell emphasized the necessity to road test these high-level goals through nearly 30 statewide town halls to gather authentic, on-the-ground feedback from local creatives, business leaders and elected officials. Council expressed



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concerns over the report for lacking specific benchmarks and actionable policy direction, IFTF noted that the report served as a strategic vision supported by extensive supplemental research. Brazell noted that the agency is currently operationalizing the plan to move from a general vision to a time-based implementation strategy. The Council intends to file a legislative addendum and launch the formal evaluation phase by the 2026-2027 fiscal year.

13. VOTING ITEM: Programs Policy Committee (2026 Grant Guidelines Framework)

The Programs Policy Committee recommended the [2026 grant guidelines framework](#), prioritizing small organizations, first-time grantees, and communities in low Healthy Places Index quartiles. A new weighting system favors high-ranking applications meeting these criteria, while applications ranked 6 or higher remain automatically funded. General Operating Support now includes a two-year consecutive funding limit, with revenue caps set at \$5 million for service organizations and \$1.5 million for arts-producers. This model aims to double funding for priority applicants through a transparent decision support tool that centers place-based work in under-resourced neighborhoods. Funding levels were established at \$30,000 for operations and \$25,000 for project-based grants, supported by simplified application forms.

Council Member Clarke motioned, seconded by Council Member Duarte.

MOTION:



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The Programs Policy Committee recommends that Council vote to approve the following program guidelines framework for 2026.

Applying the following priorities:

1. Prioritizing the following in the General Operating Support (GEN), Impact Projects, and Arts & Youth Programs:
 - a. Applicants in the lower quartiles of the Healthy Places Index (HPI), to reach historically and systemically underserved communities and work towards greater geographic equity;
 - i. GEN, applicants whose business address falls in the lower two HPI quartiles will meet this priority criteria.
 - ii. Project-based programs (Impact Projects and Arts & Youth), applicants with 50% or more of zip codes served falling in the lower two quartiles will meet this priority criteria.
 - b. First time grantees; and
 - c. Small organizations with annual Total Revenues (TRs) of \$250,000 or under.
 - i. Matching funds will continue to be required only from General Operating Support and State-Local Partners applicants with annual TRs of over \$250,000.
2. Priorities will be weighted as follows:
 - a. Applications ranked 6 should be funded regardless of priority status.
 - b. General Operating Support applications:
 - i. TRs of \$250,000 or under will be weighted 1
 - ii. First-time grantees will be weighted 0.5
 - iii. Business address falling in the lower two HPI quartiles will be weighted 0.5
 - c. Project-based programs (Impact Projects and Arts & Youth) applications:
 - i. At least 50% of zip codes served falling in the lower two HPI quartiles will be weighted 1
 - ii. TRs of \$250,000 or under will be weighted 1
 - iii. First-time grantees will be weighted 0.5



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The Following Limits Apply:

1. GEN (same as 2025):
 - a. Grantees may be funded for only two consecutive years, with 2025 counting as Year One. Once grantees have been funded for two consecutive years through GEN, they will not be eligible to apply to GEN in Year Three but may apply again in Year Four.
 - i. This does not impact their eligibility for other CAC programs.
 - b. The maximum TR for arts service and network organizations will be \$5 million.
 - c. The maximum TR for primarily arts producing organizations will be \$1.5 million; and
 - d. Network and arts producing organizations will be funded at levels determined through the allocations process.
2. Arts & Youth:
 - a. The maximum applicant TR will be \$5 million.
3. Organizations may apply for either Arts & Youth or Impact Projects in 2026.
4. TR calculations will not include pass-through or regranting funds.
5. Instructional language will be added to guidelines to facilitate applicants providing better data on zip codes served.
6. Application forms will continue to be streamlined and simplified to the extent possible.

2026-27 Program Purposes, Durations, and Maximum Request Amounts:

Operating Support (1 year, \$30,000) - Direct funding to arts and cultural organizations in support of ongoing operations, prioritizing small organizations.

Arts & Youth (1 year, \$25,000) - Supporting arts education and Creative Youth Development projects serving historically and systemically under-resourced youth in school and community-based settings.

Impact Projects (1 year, \$25,000) - Supporting collaborative projects that center artists and artistic practice in responding to needs identified by California's historically and systemically under-resourced communities.

State-Local Partners (2 year, \$75,000) - Support and technical assistance for county-designated local arts agencies, including support for Poetry Out Loud and travel to an annual statewide convening.

State-Local Partners Mentorship (1 year, \$50,000) - Support for the establishment by an existing State-Local Partner of a county-designated local arts agency in counties in which



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Public Comment

All public comment is listed at the end of these minutes

Discussion

Members of the Council questioned the reliance on zip codes within the Healthy Places Index, perceiving that they mask neighborhood poverty and fail to accurately represent Tribal lands where casinos skew economic data. To mitigate these data limitations, the committee had proposed a weighting system that applies scoring "bumps" post-panel review to ensure funding reaches the high-priority applicants identified by these tools. Members further debated General Operating "sabbaticals" and revenue caps, which the committee noted as strategies intended to prioritize small organizations and prevent long-term funding reliance. Staff supported this weighting model by highlighting that "perfect" scores are achieved by only 1.4% to 3% of applicants, making priority-based adjustments essential for equitable distribution. While some members feared the framework was too prescriptive for the Allocations Committee, proponents viewed it as a tool to gather data on historically excluded communities. This one-year framework serves as a strategic, data-driven bridge to stabilize the arts sector under current fiscal constraints.

The Council engaged in an extensive deliberation regarding the language and fiscal structure of the General Operating Support (GenOPS) guidelines. Vice Chair Goodwin proposed amendments to ensure clarity for constituents, specifically targeting how "Arts, Cultural, and Network" organizations are categorized to prevent them from being overshadowed by larger art-producing entities.

Staff expressed concern that broad language changes might inadvertently raise revenue caps to \$5 million for all groups, potentially increasing competition and erasing previous distinctions between service networks and producing organizations. After consultation with the parliamentarian, the Council decided to split the proposed changes into two separate amendment votes to ensure procedural clarity.

Voting Record



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Recusals: Council Member Stein and Council Member Hirabayashi recused themselves from all votes related to these amendments due to potential conflicts of interest.

Amendment 1: "Up To" Funding Language

Council Member Goodwin offered amended language in grants to add 'up to' dollar amounts

Motion: To add the phrase "up to" before every dollar amount in the grant award sections to clarify that stated amounts are maximums.

Mover: Council Member Goodwin | **Second:** Chair Messina Captor

Vote Tally	Count	Names
Yes	9	Goodwin, Clarke, Duarte, Estrada, Israel, Keehn, Mercado, Minor, Messina Captor
No	0	
Recused	2	Stein, Hirabayashi
Result	Passed	Simple Majority Achieved

Amendment 2: Standardized Organizational Terminology

Motion: To use the language "Arts, Cultural Organizations, and Regional Networks" within the GenOPS section (specifically Section IA and other appropriate headings) to ensure regional networks are clearly identified as eligible applicants, excluding Section IB (Arts-Producing Organizations).

Mover: Council Member Goodwin | **Second:** Chair Messina Captor

Vote Tally	Count	Names
Yes	5	Goodwin, Israel, Keehn, Miner, Messina Captor
No	4	Clarke, Duarte, Estrada, Mercado
Recused	2	Stein, Hirabayashi



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Vote Tally	Count	Names
Result	Passed	Simple Majority (5 of 9 voting members) Achieved

CONSOLIDATED VOTE- Motion: The Framework with the Amendments A and B incorporated.

Motion: Original motion with the two amendments incorporated included To add the phrase "up to" before every dollar amount in the grant award sections to clarify that stated amounts are maximums, not guarantees. To use the language "Arts, Cultural Organizations, and Regional Networks" within the GenOPS section (specifically Section IA and other appropriate headings) to ensure regional networks are clearly identified as eligible applicants, excluding Section IB (Arts-Producing Organizations).

Mover: Council Member Goodwin | **Seconded:** Chair Messina Captor

Vote Tally	Count	Names
Yes	4	Goodwin, Israel, Miner, Messina Captor
No	5	Clarke, Duarte, Estrada, Keehn, Mercado
Recused	2	Stein, Hirabayashi
Result	Failed	Simple Majority not Achieved (4 of 9 voting members)

MOTION FAILED

As the motion did not pass, the Parliamentarian advised the Council to move for reconsideration. This allowed the Council to reset the floor and vote on a version of the guidelines that was proposed in the memo by the Programs Policy Committee.

Recusals: Council Member Stein and Council Member Hirabayashi recused themselves from all votes in this section.

1. Motion to Reconsider the Original Recommendation

Goal: To reopen the original Programs Policy Committee recommendation for a new vote.



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Mover: Council Member Clarke | **Seconded:** Council Member Mercado

Vote Tally	Count	Names
Yes	7	Clarke, Duarte, Estrada, Israel, Mercado, Minor, Messina-Kaptur
No	2	Goodwin, Keehn
Recused	2	Stein, Hirabayashi
Result	Passed	Simple Majority Achieved

2. Amendment: Add "Up To" Language Only

Goal: To re-insert the "up-to" terminology into the request amounts without the disputed terminology changes.

Mover: Council Member Clarke | **Seconded:** Chair Messina Captor

Vote Tally	Count	Names
Yes	9	Goodwin, Clarke, Duarte, Estrada, Israel, Keehn, Mercado, Minor, Messina Captor
No	0	
Recused	2	Stein, Hirabayashi
Result	Passed	Unanimous (among voting members)

3. Final Vote: 2026-27 Program Guidelines (As Amended)

Final Motion: To approve the 2026-27 Program Guidelines Framework, including the weighting systems for HPI and small organizations, revenue caps, and the "up-to" request amounts.

Mover: Council Member Clarke | **Seconded:** Chair Messina Captor

Vote Tally	Count	Names
Yes	9	Goodwin, Clarke, Duarte, Estrada, Israel, Keehn, Mercado, Minor,



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Vote Tally	Count	Names
		Messina Captor
No	0	
Recused	2	Stein, Hirabayashi
Result	Passed	Guidelines Framework Adopted

Approved Framework Overview



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12:10 P.M. – 12:40 P.M. WORKING LUNCH

**Council Member Clarke departed from the meeting at this time, 10 council members resumed after lunch and quorum was still in place.*

14. DISCUSSION: Equity Committee

In the interest of time, Chair Messina Captor asked that Item 14 be tabled for the next council meeting.

15. VOTING ITEM: Ad Hoc 50th Anniversary Arts Award Committee

Council Member Israel [presented an update](#) on the 50th Anniversary Arts Awards, noting that the adjudication process is underway for the April 2026 ceremony.

The motion to approve a technical amendment to strike "honorable mentions" and the public naming of semi-finalists to protect nominees' privacy and focus exclusively on winners.

Motion:

Made by: Council Member Goodwin

Seconded by: Council Member Israel



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Public Comment

Public comment was opened to both in-person attendees and virtual participants. No in-person or virtual public comments were received for this item. The public was reminded that written comments could still be submitted online for the Council’s review.

Discussion

There was no further discussion, the Chair called for a vote.

Motion: To approve a technical amendment to strike "honorable mentions" and the public naming of semi-finalists to protect nominees' privacy and focus exclusively on winners.

Made by: Council Member Estrada
Seconded by: Council Member Hirabayashi

Vote Tally	Count	Names
Yes	10	Goodwin, Duarte, Estrada, Israel, Keehn, Mercado, Minor, Messina Captor, Stein, Hirabayashi
No	0	
Recused	0	
Result	Passed	Technical amendment to the process passed

17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

Council moved on to the [Cultural District Designation item](#), detailing a three-part adjudication process that resulted in the selection of 10 new statewide districts from 74 applications. The rigorous selection included external panel reviews and 19 site visits to evaluate community vision and geographic equity, specifically addressing regional gaps identified in a 2019 analysis. The Council moved to ratify the slate for a five-year designation period, accompanied by \$10,000 grants to each designee for a two-year



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activity period. Following the presentation, the floor was opened for public comment and a final Council vote.

MOTION:

To adopt the recommended Cultural Districts:

- American Indian Cultural District (San Francisco)
- Arts District Liberty Station (San Diego)
- Black Arts Movement Business District (Oakland)
- Dos Rios Arts and Cultural District (Modesto)
- Downtown Merced Cultural District (Merced)
- Downtown Oxnard Cultural District (Oxnard)
- Historic South Los Angeles Black Cultural District (Los Angeles)
- San Jose Japantown (San Jose)
- Arts and Cultural District (Riverside)
- Watsonville Cultural District (Watsonville)

Made by: Chair Messina Captor

Seconded by: Council Member Estrada

Public Comment

All public comment listed at the end of these minutes.

Discussion

During the discussion on the California Cultural Districts program, the Council reviewed the recommendation to designate 10 new districts. The session focused on the adjudication process, procedural transparency, and the long-term governance of the program. The primary discussion centered on the Council's role in the selection process. Several council members noted that they received the final list of recommended districts concurrently with the public, which limited their ability to conduct independent reviews prior to the vote. A formal request was made for staff to provide applicant lists and supporting documentation earlier in future cycles.

Council members requested more detailed narratives regarding the specific merits of the selected districts to better understand why they were chosen over other eligible applicants.



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In response, staff clarified the rigorous three-step adjudication process. Staff noted that the 2024–2025 cycle followed the three-part adjudication process approved by the Council in April 2025. They highlighted the use of an 8-member external panel of arts and urban planning experts to ensure an objective, professional review. Out of 52 eligible applications, an external panel of international and state experts selected 19 semifinalists for site visits. These visits, conducted by agency staff, focused on centering equity, community impact, and "district typologies" to ensure the final slate was geographically and culturally representative of the entire state.

Leadership also addressed operational constraints, noting that the program is legislatively mandated but does not currently have dedicated funding. While the designation provides statewide recognition, the accompanying \$10,000 grants are funded through local assistance resources. Due to limited staff capacity and current funding levels, the agency confirmed that the program will not reopen for new designations in the next fiscal year.

A motion to accept the recommended slate was made by Vice Chair Goodwin and seconded by Council Member Estrada.

Vote Tally	Count	Names
Yes	8	Goodwin, Duarte, Estrada, Israel, Keehn, Mercado, Minor, Messina Captor
No	0	
Recused	2	Stein, Hirabayashi
Result	Passed	10 New Designations Approved

The 10 New California Cultural Districts:

- American Indian Cultural District (San Francisco)
- Arts District Liberty Station (San Diego)
- Black Arts Movement Business District (Oakland)
- Dos Rios Arts and Cultural District (Modesto)
- Downtown Merced Cultural District (Merced)
- Downtown Oxnard Cultural District (Oxnard)
- Historic South Los Angeles Black Cultural District (Los Angeles)



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- San Jose Japantown (San Jose)
- Arts and Cultural District, Riverside (Riverside)
- Watsonville Cultural District (Watsonville)

The approval increases the total number of California Cultural Districts to 24. Leadership committed to returning to the Council with a revised timeline and proposed amendments to the selection process for future cycles to better incorporate Council input.

With these additions, California now officially recognizes a total of 24 state-designated cultural districts.

14. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment

All public comment listed at the end of these minutes.

15. Committee Reports

Legislative Committee

The Legislative Committee opted to postpone [its formal report](#) until the subsequent meeting to allow for more comprehensive data collection. During the interim, Council Member Stein emphasized the importance of legislative engagement for the upcoming Town Halls, recommending that members of the State Legislature and their staff receive direct invitations to participate. Staff confirmed that regional leads have already initiated this outreach.

Ad Hoc 50th Anniversary Fundraising and Sponsorships Committee

Council Member Phil Mercado [reported that the committee](#) is actively pursuing financial support for the April 2026 celebration.

Ad Hoc 50th Anniversary Committee

The [50th Anniversary Committee report](#) began with concerns regarding project clarity and staff prioritization noting the lack of a website presence and highlighting that the council had approved a mechanism to raise funds in June. Committee and staff confirmed that they are following the September 2025 Council-approved strategy,



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maintaining bi-weekly meetings and coordination with the Governor's office.

With the April 20, 2026 event approaching, the Council discussed the need for flexibility and adjusting the plan as funds are raised. An RFP for the event producer of the event is underway.

Ad Hoc Partnerships Committee

The Ad Hoc Partnerships Committee directed Council to [their memo](#).

18. General Public Comment

All general public comment is listed at the end of these minutes.

19. Open Council Discussion & Acknowledgement

In the interest of time, Chair Messina Captor opted to table this item until the next council meeting.

20. In Memoriam

Vice Chair Goodwin led a tribute honoring individuals who passed away since October 24, 2025.

The "In Memoriam" section honored the following artists and advocates who have passed:

- Ellen Bryant Voigt (October 23): Acclaimed American poet who passed at the age of 82.
- June Lockhart (October 23): Legendary American stage and screen actress known for her iconic roles in *Lassie* and *Lost in Space*.
- Benita Valente (October 24): Celebrated American soprano who performed with the Metropolitan Opera; she was 91.
- Dawn Little Sky (October 24): Native American artist and actress featured in *The Apple Dumpling Gang* and *Rawhide*; she was 95.
- Jack DeJohnette (October 26): Influential American jazz drummer who collaborated with legends such as Miles Davis and Ron Carter.
- Ruth Thorne-Thomsen (October 27): Renowned American photographer recognized for her innovative work using a pinhole camera.
- Melvin Leipzig (November 1): Prominent American figurative painter known for works such as *Joshua's Tattoos* and *Francesca at the Door*.
- Ralph Senensky (November 1): Prolific American television director of classic series including *Star Trek* and *Dynasty*; he was 102.



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- Betty Harford (November 2): American actress known for her roles in *The Paper Chase* and *Dynasty*.
- Diane Ladd (November 3): Award-winning American actress famous for her roles in *Chinatown* and *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*.
- Bill Ivey (November 7): American folklorist and former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (1998–2001).
- Richard Lupoff (November 8): Noted American interviewer and author.
- Tatsuya Nakadai (November 8): Highly regarded Japanese actor known for films such as *Harakiri* and *Ran*.
- Anna Sarao (November 10): CEO of Official Body Rock San Diego and a pioneer in international choreography competitions.
- Danny Seagren (November 10): American puppeteer and actor associated with *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company*.
- Cleto Escobedo III (November 11): American saxophonist and bandleader for *Cleto and the Cletones on Jimmy Kimmel Live!*
- Sally Kirkland (November 11): American actress known for her performances in *Anna* and *The Sting*.
- Alice Wong (November 14): Influential American disability rights activist and author of *Year of the Tiger*.
- Dan McGrath (November 14): American television writer best known for his work on *The Simpsons* and *King of the Hill*.
- Gary "Jellybean" Johnson (November 21): R&B, pop, and soul drummer who played with The Time and collaborated with Janet Jackson.
- Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin (H. Rap Brown) (November 23): American Black Power activist, orator, and Muslim cleric.
- Phil Upchurch (November 23): Distinguished American jazz, soul, and blues session guitarist.
- Tom Stoppard (November 29): Academy Award-winning screenwriter of *Shakespeare in Love* and Olivier and Tony Award-winning playwright.
- Steve Cropper (December 3): Iconic rock and soul guitarist for Booker T. & the M.G.'s and co-writer of "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay."
- Frank Gehry (December 5): World-renowned Pulitzer Prize-winning architect who designed the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and Walt Disney Concert Hall.
- Jubilant Sykes (December 8): Acclaimed American baritone opera singer who passed at age 71.

21. Closing Remarks



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The Chair shared her appreciation to former Vice Chair Goodwin for her steady hand and leadership. There was also a big "thank you" to the Crocker Museum for their hospitality the evening prior, along with gratitude for everyone who provided public comment.

22. Adjournment

Chair Messina Captor adjourned the meeting at 3:13 PM.

Public Comment

CAC PUBLIC COMMENT – ALL SUBMISSIONS COUNCIL MEETING DECEMBER 12, 2025

- **Michael Sheehan**
onstagelosangeles.blogspot.com, Los Angeles County

Having done theatre site visits for CAC in the past, I produce that as a vetting .. At this moment, I've hoped to present an idea for CAC and the State of CA to institute a "come one / come all" opportunity for visual and concept artists . Simply. as with the LAMAG in Hollywood, find a venue and sponsor a call for artists to enter for a small fee an Open Call. The fee will cover costs of staff? and a public vote kiosk may allow patrons to vote for favorite pieces. A small prize will be awarded to the work w/ the most votes? This may provide exposure for burgeoning artists and a gathering of the Clans and Community. New and middle career artists will most benefit if the pieces may be sold w/ a percentage going to the organizers/ CAC. LAMAG in Barnsdall Park would be an ideal opportunity for CAC to partner with the City of LA. LAMAG has done Open Call successfully in the past. Bring Community together. wish I knew how many strokes I have left.

- **Carlo Gomez Arteaga (He/Him/His)**
Transgender District, San Francisco County
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award



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Growing up trans in the United States, I never found my own story reflected in history books, films, or art. I didn't even meet another transgender person until I was in my twenties. Yet our history spans millennia—even when so many of our stories are left untold.

From the First Nations of California to those who journey to the Transgender District in San Francisco seeking the freedom to live authentically, this place stands as a living monument. It is a model of trans, queer, and gender-expansive history, built by culture makers who came here simply for the right to be. The District is home to pivotal history, including the Compton's Cafeteria uprising that helped spark LGBTQIA+ liberation movements. At the corner of Turk and Taylor now stands the first transgender national landmark in the country. Visitors from around the world come here to discover a space rich with vibrancy, legacy, and the freedom to exist openly.

This unique place is part of an intricate historical tapestry—one inseparable from the broader LGBTQIA+ movement and broader California history. It deserves permanent recognition as a California Cultural District.

- **Bilal Mahmood (He/Him/His)**
San Francisco Board of Supervisors, District 5, San Francisco County
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

Dear Members of the California Arts Council,

I'm writing in full support of the Transgender District's application to become a designated California Cultural District.

The Tenderloin has sustained a strong transgender presence for over a century, shaping the neighborhood long before the Compton's Cafeteria Riots of 1966. Founded in 2017 by three Black transgender women, the Transgender District has turned this legacy into a cultural anchor that nurtures creativity, economic opportunity, and community pride.



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Its programs show how cultural preservation and material support can work together. The Entrepreneurship Accelerator helps transgender and queer entrepreneurs of color launch businesses through mentorship, technical help, and seed funding, strengthening both local artists and the Tenderloin's economy. The Name and Gender Change Clinic removes barriers to legal recognition, allowing residents to claim their identities with dignity. Both efforts reflect the values the Cultural Districts Program aims to uplift.



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These initiatives honor the neighborhood's history while building a safer, more creative, and more economically secure future. Designating the Transgender District as a California Cultural District would sustain this work and recognize generations of transgender residents who shaped the Tenderloin.

I urge your full support.

Respectfully,
Supervisor Bilal Mahmood
San Francisco Board of Supervisors

- **Grace Lee (She/Her/Hers)**
San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development,
San Francisco County
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

My name is Grace Lee, and I am the Cultural Districts Program Manager at the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD). I am pleased to support the designation of the Transgender District, the Bayview Hunters Point Neighborhood (through a partnership with the San Francisco African American Arts and Cultural District and Economic Development on Third), American Indian Cultural District, and KOHO (a project spun out of Japantown Cultural District) as California Cultural Districts.

We recognize these organizations' critical role in preserving and amplifying the cultural and economic legacy of San Francisco's vibrant communities through place-keeping initiatives including public art, storytelling, and community-led programs. It has been an honor to support and partner with each of these districts and see their critical community work in action. I strongly urge you to please vote yes for the Transgender District, the Bayview Hunters Point Neighborhood, American Indian Cultural District, and KOHO.



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- **Anonymous**
San Francisco County
RE: Agenda Item 14. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Greetings –

I know that budget is really really tight, but is there any way that we can have more program officers? So that they can quickly get back to grantees and applicants when they have questions? Thanks!

- **Pam Yoshida (She/Her/Hers)**
Co-President of the Japantown Community Congress of San Jose (non-profit), and Co-Owner of Nikkei Traditions of San Jose Japantown (retailer), Santa Clara County
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

I am Pam Yoshida-the Co-President of the Japantown Community Congress of San Jose and a retail owner of contemporary Japanese American Arts, crafts and gifts. The designation of San Jose Japantown, as a cultural district gives this historic community the respect that it so deserves. It would be the 'red flag' protection that the community should be consulted on proposals that would affect the historic nature of this area.

- **Brendan Rawson (He/Him/His)**
San Jose Jazz, Santa Clara County
Current or Former Grantee: Arts Education Exposure; Artists in Communities
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

I am 20+ year resident of Japantown San Jose and a 30+ year active worker in our Santa Clara County arts community. Japantown San Jose is a geographic beacon for our regional cultural community. Through robust heritage preservation programs and exciting contemporary cultural offerings Japantown is a critical touchstone in our region's understanding of how the arts and culture build and maintain healthy, vibrant communities. Cultural District designation will not only



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help our Japantown neighborhood but also our entire region to better understand how to care for our communities.

- **Fran Lujan (She/Her/Hers)**
Pacific Island Ethnic Art Museum, Los Angeles County
Current or Former Grantee: Impact Projects
RE: Agenda Item 14. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

My name is Fran Lujan, the Museum director and Curator at the Pacific Island Ethnic Art Museum in Long Beach. I am carried by the salt waters of the Mariana Islands and Turtle Island.

I want to bring to your attention an email I received on July 8, 2025, on our application CAC GEN-25-25593 to the General Operating Support grant program. Specifically, it said “The reason for your application’s ineligibility is outlined below: Your organization’s application does not demonstrate a primary purpose of providing arts programming/services.”

This is an unjustified reasoning solely based on our fiscal agency situation. We, the Pacific Island Ethnic Art Museum programming, just for this year of 2025 includes: 3 exhibits, 6 special events, 1 youth artist- in-residence, 3 school tours, 12 community-based partnerships, 4 ancestral remains repatriation, and countless of hours of teaching individual students from local colleges on the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander ethnicities and California specific socio-determinants through an arts lens. All this with a staff of only two. Our parent organization so broadly labeled as also fiscal agency contributes per year no more than \$5000 for all our programming.

I ask you to expand what you define as fiscal agency in your grant form to hold space for the interstices of our living community we hold at the Pacific Island Ethnic Art Museum. May you, learn in a good way.

- **Alexandra Urbanowski (She/Her/Hers)**
SVCcreates, Santa Clara County
Current or Former Grantee: State-Local Partnership;
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

Santa Clara County is a diverse county of nearly 2million people. It includes the 2nd largest Vietnamese population in the US, ranges through San Jose’s Mayfair Neighborhood, one of the birthplaces of the Chicano labor movement, to the agricultural, predominately Latinx city of Gilroy. Many of our arts organizations are led by culture-bearers who work to preserve heritage & serve distinct cultural communities. While our arts ecosystem is rich with the diverse, artists driven, small arts groups that the CAC aims to support, our south end of the Bay Area is frequently underrepresented in CAC grants, fellowship awards and other programs. We were disappointed to see that in the cultural district application review process a strong application from the School of Arts & Culture at the Mexican Heritage Plaza, while on surface seemed to tie in score with other applications from the Bay Area, did not make it to the interview stage. I hope the Council will consider changes to the Cultural District program for future; I’d like to suggest 2 areas that might be explored. First, to separate any competitive grant making for cultural districts from the awarding of the designation. Second, a further update of the GAP analysis to consider how the regions in the state are identified as they have shifted over the years for different CAC programs, from Creative Corp to Individual Artist Fellowships. Thank you for your time & thoughtful work on these complex issues.

Anonymous
San Pedro City Ballet, Los Angeles County
Current or Former Grantee: Artists in Schools; Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief

We are inquiring about the approval process for the General Operating grants. In prior years, we did receive support from the Council. However, our grants were rejected these 2 most recent years. Looking at the scores from the panel, we are left confused as almost every answer receives the highest as well as the lowest rankings. Our organization is not new, but we serve the financially-challenged and underserved of the community, and we are seeing other long-running organizations continue to receive your funding. We have a proven track-record of success in providing unique arts opportunities, with the incredibly successful Misty Copeland serving as the ultimate example of a student whose life was changed by our dance programs. We need more guidance and understanding of why we are no longer receiving your support, but we are only presented with the range of scores which offer no clarity. Can the panel provide comments? Can the panel offer office hours? Do panel members change each year to ensure fair judgment? This loss of support comes at a particularly challenging time when our organization is attempting to navigate threats to our funding from changing government policies, less arts funding in school districts, and the other challenges of operating an arts nonprofit during these tumultuous times. We would appreciate more guidance on how we can again receive your support for our students who need our programs.

- **David Salazar (He/Him/His)**
Urban Planner, Los Angeles County
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

Please approve the cultural district designation for a Latino Cultural District in Long Beach. The Mexican American and greater Latino community in Long Beach (approximately 47% of the population) does not have an area in the city that represents their historic, cultural, and economic presence and contribution. Moreover, the designation of a Latino Cultural District will help establish a cultural home and the “creation of place” for the community. Your vote of approval will represent a significant cultural milestone for the Long Beach Latino community and benefit it for generations to come. ds

- **Abi Collomb (She/Her/Hers)**
Tahoe Flow Arts Fitness, Placer County
Current or Former Grantee: Arts Education Exposure;Local Impact;

Tahoe Flow Arts and Fitness has been a cornerstone of the North Tahoe community for the past 10 years, standing out as a leading studio in aerial arts and children’s circus training. What makes this studio so unique is its commitment to inclusivity and wellness, welcoming individuals of all ages and backgrounds. It’s not just a place to learn; it’s a place where people can grow, thrive, and connect. Supporting this studio has truly been both an honor and a privilege.

Representing Kelly Smiley, our beloved founder, fills me with purpose and motivates me to inspire others while continuing my own journey of personal growth. The sense of community and passion that flows through Tahoe Flow Arts and Fitness is a constant source of strength, and I’m grateful to be part of it.

- **Jessica Quintana (She/Her/Hers)**
Centro CHA Inc., Los Angeles County
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

I am honored to submit this public comment in strong support of Item 17: the designation of the Long Beach Latino Cultural District. Long Beach is a city deeply shaped by Latino families, workers, artists, veterans, and small business owners. 43.4% of Long Beach residents identify as Latino, yet there has never been a state-recognized Latino Cultural District to honor and invest in this legacy. The Long Beach Latino Cultural District is ready for implementation. In 2021, the Long Beach City Council approved a motion supporting the development of a Latino Cultural District and Mercado. The City has committed \$4 million in Measure A funding for renovations at the Latino Cultural Center at Cesar Chavez Park. Centro CHA and its partners have completed a comprehensive business plan, cultural asset inventory, and years of community engagement. The district centers the voices of youth, elders, artists, and working families while creating pathways for cultural preservation, economic opportunity, and community-led storytelling. A strong coalition of partners, including the Arts Council for Long Beach, Downtown Long Beach Alliance, the City of Long Beach, Museum of Latin American Art, Latinos in Action, and neighborhood leaders, is actively committed to its success. I respectfully urge the California Arts Council to vote YES on Item 17. This designation affirms that Latino history and culture are essential to California’s story and deserving of lasting recognition and investment.

- **Tracy M. Colunga (She/Her/Hers)**
Colunga & Associates LLC, Los Angeles County
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

My name is Tracy M. Colunga, CEO of Colunga & Associates, a Latina-owned consulting firm based in Long Beach. My family and I have proudly lived and worked in Long Beach for over 20 years, raising our children here and investing our time, talent, and resources into this

community. I am honored to submit this public comment in strong support of Item 17: the designation of the Long Beach Latino Cultural District. Latino families, artists, workers, veterans, and small businesses are foundational to Long Beach's identity and success. The Long Beach Latino Cultural District is ready now. Years of planning, community engagement, and public investment are already in place, including a \$4 million City of Long Beach commitment to renovate the Latino Cultural Center at Cesar Chavez Park. This district will create a permanent, visible home for Latino culture while driving economic opportunity, youth engagement, and cultural preservation. As a local business owner and community member, I see firsthand how this designation will uplift families, inspire young people, support entrepreneurs, and strengthen community pride and belonging. I respectfully urge the California Arts Council to vote YES on Item 17 and help ensure that Latino history, creativity, and leadership are recognized as essential to California's cultural future. Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

- **Jennifer Drolet (She/Her/Hers)**
Arts Council for Long Beach, Los Angeles County
Current or Former Grantee: California Creative Corps
RE: Agenda Item 13. VOTING ITEM: PROGRAMS POLICY COMMITTEE (CAC Grant Guidelines Framework)

My name is Jennifer Drolet. I am a Board Member of the Arts Council for Long Beach, submitting this comment in my role as a volunteer board member with long-standing involvement in arts and culture in our community.

Arts Service Organizations play a vital role in advancing statewide arts goals at the local level. They serve as regrantors, fiscal sponsors, and providers of technical assistance for artists and small organizations that often cannot access state funding independently.

Under the current framework, these organizations are disadvantaged by scoring models that rely heavily on total revenue without accounting for pass-through funds. While service organizations may appear larger on paper, much of that revenue is redistributed on behalf of artists and community partners, not retained for operations.

The Arts Council for Long Beach has been unfunded by the California Arts Council for the past two years, yet it continues to administer grants, support artists & micro-organizations, and deliver community-based programming in high-need neighborhoods. This reflects a gap in how value is measured, not a lack of impact or commitment.

I urge the California Arts Council to include a clear funding pathway for Arts Service Organizations so it can more fully partner with organizations already doing this work on the ground.

- **Alexandra Urbanowski (She/Her/Hers)**
SVCcreates, Santa Clara County
Current or Former Grantee: State-Local Partnership
RE: Agenda Item 13. VOTING ITEM: PROGRAMS POLICY COMMITTEE (CAC Grant Guidelines Framework)

SVCcreates is the state and local partner for the CAC in Santa Clara County. We appreciate the recommendation for 2 year grants for the SLP program. We also ask that you consider moving the SLP grant program away from grant amounts based on scoring and ranking, and that every SLP that meets minimum criteria or minimum score receive flat full funding. The eligible pool of SLP applicants is already identified by each county and is part of the public infrastructure for each county where every county is served across the state, so stable funding for this stable cohort of SLPs would seem to make sense. Thank you Council and CAC staff for all your work on these processes and formulas.

- **Marc Davidson (He/Him/His)**
Arts Council for Long Beach, Los Angeles County
RE: Agenda Item 13. VOTING ITEM: PROGRAMS POLICY COMMITTEE (CAC Grant Guidelines Framework)

Good morning. My name is Marc Davidson, and am a Board Member of the Arts Council for Long Beach.

I am providing comment on the equity metrics within Item 13.

In dense urban areas, zip-code-level data can mask significant disparities. Entire neighborhoods with deep need can be averaged out due to arbitrary geographic boundaries.

Arts Service Organizations working at the census-tract level are often the only entities capable of reaching those communities effectively. Yet the current framework does not consistently recognize or resource that work.

As part of your vote on this framework, I urge you to direct staff to refine equity metrics and ensure organizations serving high-need communities have a viable path to funding as CAC partners.

- **Ariana Sahagun (She/Her/Hers)**
Centro CHA Inc, Los Angeles County
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

Hello, my name is Ariana Sahagun, Community Health Justice Manager at Centro CHA Inc in Long Beach. I work with the organization leading community outreach and education efforts through a promotora network. I'm submitting a public comment to strongly urge you to vote YES on the designation of the Long Beach Latino Cultural District. Long Beach is 43.4% Latino, yet this is the first official Latino Cultural District and Cultural Center. We need a cultral district to provide space and place for the Latino community to feel empowered, have access

to economic opportunities, educational opportunities, and engage in cultural expression and preservation. On behalf of the Long Beach community, I respectfully ask you to vote YES on the Long Beach Latino Cultural District designation. This vote is not just about a map—it's about recognizing generations of Latino contributions and investing in a vibrant, equitable cultural future for California.

- **Sheila (She/Her/Hers)**
Catalina Museum for Art & History, Los Angeles County
Current or Former Grantee: Impact Projects; Creative Youth Development (formerly Youth Arts Action); Arts Education Exposure; Artists in Communities
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

Hello Council Members, and thank you for the opportunity to speak.

First, I want to congratulate the districts that were selected to advance—this is important work, and I honor the communities represented today.

At the same time, I want to raise three concerns that affect many of us who were not moved forward.

First, several applicants—including our own—received panel scores equal to or higher than those advanced to Round 2. Yet we were not selected. The published guidelines did not indicate that additional factors, such as geographic distribution or SLP alignment, would supersede scoring. This gap between the written criteria and the actual decision-making creates confusion and undermines trust.

Second, the Council's own Gap Analysis emphasized the need to include culturally specific districts, including Black Cultural Districts. Despite meeting that priority and submitting a strong, community-backed application, we still did not progress. This raises questions about how equity goals are being operationalized.

Finally, I respectfully request that the Council reopen the Cultural Districts opportunity—ideally in the summer of next year—so that qualified applicants affected by unclear criteria can reapply under a fair and transparent process aligned with the published guidelines.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Happy Holidays!

Dr. Sheila Bergman

- **Nick Calubaquib (He/Him/His)**
City of Watsonville, Santa Cruz County
Current or Former Grantee: California Cultural Districts
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

On behalf of the City of Watsonville, I want to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for the CAC and the selection committee for choosing our community for this esteemed recognition. We are at the beginning of an arts and cultural movement, and this designation will surely help exponentially propel these efforts. As a small, agricultural community with a large Latinx population, we are completely humbled by the recognition and the opportunity for Watsonville to be seen and our stories to be told statewide through our rich arts and culture.

- **Elizabeth Barcelos (She/Her/Hers)**
Office of Councilmember Anthony Tordillos, San Jose District 3, Santa Clara County
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

Thank you for selecting Japantown San Jose as a finalist! This formal designation recognizes its multigenerational legacy and decades of collective action and shared values rooted in cultural stewardship, interdependence, and mutual respect. By reinforcing its intergenerational character, honoring its multiethnic roots, and sustaining the community-led vision already underway, the Cultural District designation will help ensure that Japantown's identity and energy remain not only intact—but thriving—for current and future residents.

- **Julie Baker (She/Her/Hers)**
CA for the Arts
Current or Former Grantee: Statewide and Regional Networks
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

Re: Cultural Districts

We have received feedback that the application process is rigorous, with the time and resources required often comparable to the eventual funding received upon designation. Therefore, we urge you to consider separating the designation process from the funding allocation and to offer rolling or bi-annual opportunities for communities to apply for designation.

It is highly beneficial for California to increase the number of designated cultural districts, especially following the passage of landmark legislation AB 812 in 2024, which allows up to 10% of affordable housing units in cultural districts to be prioritized for artists. With these 10 new districts, California will have 24, which still lags behind states like Texas, which has 57 cultural districts supported by \$12 million in funding, and Nebraska, whose program was established after California's, which has 36 Certified Districts and 20 more in application.

Given the significant interest and the limited funding, it was likely a difficult decision to narrow the selection to just 10. We question why more districts cannot be certified, especially when the funding is insignificant.

Our ultimate goal is to see dedicated annual funding for this program reinstated by the legislature. Once funding is secured, it makes sense for that funding to be competitive. However, the designation or certification without associated funding should be open to all eligible communities.

- **Wisa Uemura (She/Her/Hers)**
San Jose Taiko Group, Santa Clara County
Current or Former Grantee: Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

Thank you for the recommendation for cultural districts designation. San Jose Japantown is a cultural jewel of the region with vibrant annual events, historic sites predating the WWII Incarceration, a thriving community of artists and culture bearers and a long history of multiculturalism and inclusion. This designation will prevent displacement of our artists, cultural bearers, and cultural organizations. It is an honor to be amongst such amazing applicants, semi-finalists, and designees. We implore state legislature and CAC to allocate more funding to reopen the cultural district process to include even more of our worthy communities.

- **Alexander Matias (He/Him/His)**
City of Vallejo, Solano County
Current or Former Grantee: Not a current or former grantee
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

My name is Alexander Matias, MPA and I'm a Councilmember in the City of Vallejo, a city with a population of 125,000. It is one of the most diverse countries in the country, with a rich maritime industry, a rich history of entertainers and athletes like ConFunkShun, E-40, LaRussell, HER, CC Sabathia and Jeff Gordon and others. First, I would like to thank agency staff for considering the Solano Arts Council application for consideration as a Cultural District. This designation would support efforts underway from our vibrant and rich arts community. It would address identified gaps, specifically areas of the state underfunded or not funded by the Arts Council, like Solano County which does not appear as a county even currently funded by the Arts Council. Second a second gap called for designation of lower-income counties and cities with Vallejo having multiple federally designated opportunity zones, as well as districts that represents Latinx, Asian American, and Native American communities. We applied in 2019 and did again this year and this year represents an opportunity to make a firm commitment to equity, considering not only cultural diversity but also our income and location. The City of Vallejo meets the criteria identified in the application and receives minimal philanthropic support. I urge the Council Members to consider the Solano Arts Council application on behalf of the City of Vallejo as our Vallejo City Council charts a new path for people and our city.

- **Brenda Dyson (She/Her/Hers)**
School of Arts and Culture at MHP, Santa Clara County
Current or Former Grantee: Administrators of Color Fellowship; Creative Youth Development (formerly Youth Arts Action); California Creative Corps; Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief; Artists in School
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

My name is Brenda Dyson, submitting this comment on behalf of the School of Arts and Culture at MHP, which applied for Official State Cultural District designation but did not advance to Round 2.

Our application was not driven by funding. We applied because designation itself matters. State designation unlocks policy tools such as AB 812, which supports affordable housing for local artists near designated districts, an important anti-displacement strategy. For communities like East San José, designation—not dollars—is the primary benefit.

Our application received an unrounded score of 4.75, tying for ninth out of more than 50 applications. Only eight scored higher, yet we did not advance while lower-scoring applications did. While the published guidelines state that advancement is based on panelist scores, CAC later referenced a Strategic Framework that was not included in the published criteria. Greater transparency would strengthen trust, and we understand similar concerns have been raised by other applicants.

While a cultural district in San José has been recently recommended, regional equity concerns remain. Across cycles, the South Bay has had limited access to designation opportunities. If Cultural Districts are intended as a statewide strategy, these disparities must be addressed.

We respectfully recommend increased transparency, opening another designation process soon, exploring a non-funded designation pathway, and explicitly addressing regional equity.

- **Katherine Hill (She/Her/Hers)**
Tahoe City Downtown Association, Placer County
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

While we are disappointed that the North Tahoe Cultural District was not designated in this current cohort, we remain deeply committed to the vision of a Cultural District for our region and hope to have the opportunity to apply again in the future. The designation of a North Tahoe Cultural District would be truly transformational for our community — not just as a title, but as a long-term framework for economic vitality, placemaking, and community identity. Our events, public art, music, literary programming, and community gatherings consistently bring people to North Tahoe during shoulder seasons, extend visitor stays, and directly support local businesses.

A Cultural District designation would also unlock access to new funding, partnerships, and statewide visibility, helping us invest more strategically in arts programming, creative placemaking, and cultural infrastructure.

We would also like to respectfully offer our perspective on geographic diversity for future cohorts. This current group does not include mountain communities or communities in Northern California, and we believe those regions bring unique cultural identities, economic challenges, and creative ecosystems that deserve representation.

The North Tahoe Cultural District represents a powerful opportunity to build a more resilient local economy, a stronger community identity, and a more sustainable future for our region.

- **Miriam Nieto (She/Her/Hers)**
San Bernardino Generation Now, San Bernardino County
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

We were happy to have the CAC in the San Bernardino county and specifically in the city of San Bernardino. We would like to have a better understanding on how the score for the cultural district was done. We also heard during the meeting that the city of San Francisco is the only city and county that has a cultural district and that receives funding from their city, in regards to arts. From our understanding, the city of Riverside also has a cultural district and they are also fortunate to receive funding from their city. Regardless of the outcomes of this vote, I am proud of my community in San Bernardino. It was the first time that we came together in very long time as a united front; residents, cultural bearers, bussiness owners and the city as an institution all came together to support this effort with the hopes that it will propel us to the next phase of our efforts which is to bring unity to a much needed community. These hopes still remain and as always we will keep moving forward and hope that other opportunities become eligible to us and one of those days we may just get something. We want to thank you all for visiting us and hope that one day all cities, especially those with the most disparities can have those opportunities and support provided to them.

- **Michael Segura (He/Him/His)**
Garcia Center for the Arts, San Bernardino County
Current or Former Grantee: Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief; California Creative Corps
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

Thank you for reinstating the Cultural District Grant Program to designate State Cultural Districts across California. We recognize that all of the recommended districts are deserving of state support and appreciate the Council's commitment to advancing arts and culture statewide.

While we were disappointed to learn that our district in the City of San Bernardino was not among those recommended, we respectfully request clearer guidance on how we might strengthen our application in the future. Our organization hosted multiple community engagement sessions, convened an arts collaborative supported by partners across sectors, and worked closely with our city government, which participated in our site visit. These efforts reflect a deep, cross-sector commitment to cultural development in our community and arts advocacy needed to advance cultural policy in our city.

Despite the lack of state designation at this time, we will continue moving forward with our partners to advance our cultural district. However, we do so while remaining significantly under-resourced compared to other communities with larger municipal budgets or greater access to philanthropic support. These economic disparities present ongoing challenges to our work and I would like to note that for future processes to take into account.

We remain committed to this effort and grateful to the Council for its continued leadership in arts and culture policy, advocacy, and investment throughout California.

- **Mary Zendejas (She/Her/Hers)**
District One, City of Long Beach, Los Angeles County
RE: Agenda Item 17. VOTING ITEM: Cultural District Designation and Award

On behalf of Council District One in the City of Long Beach, I, Councilwoman Mary Zendejas, am writing in strong support of the Long Beach Latino Cultural Center & El Mercado.

The City of Long Beach (City) is the second largest city in LA County with over 40% of its population identifying as Hispanic/Latino. Latinos in Long Beach have a strong presence that is felt and reflected in the City's rich cultural diversity. Designation to the California Districts program presents a prime opportunity to ensure our Latino community's identity and heritage is preserved, recognized, and celebrated for generations to come.

Additionally, this designation will create important infrastructure for cultural preservation, public engagement, and creative expression. It will offer local artists a platform to share their work, connect to audiences, and deepen their practice. We are particularly supportive of the district's potential to serve as a site for creative placemaking, community-led storytelling, and intergenerational learning, all priorities I am deeply aligned with.

I urge the California Arts Council to support this effort and help establish a Latino Cultural Center & El Mercado that reflects the creative strength, diversity, and resilience of the Latino community in Long Beach.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office at district1@longbeach.gov or my Chief of Staff directly at Lynn.Ward@longbeach.gov.

General Public Received in Person at the December 12th Council Meeting

Item 13. Programs Policy Committee (CAC Grant Guidelines Framework)

Jenny Darlington-Persen, Arts Council of Placer County "I'm Jenny Darlington-Persen, the Executive Director of the Arts Council of Placer County. I thank the California Arts Council for all of your amazing work. As a state-local partner, we want to be partners in this work because we can meet some of the need that you're unable to meet, and we can leverage CAC resources to reach our small nonprofits, rural organizations, and individual artists. We do workforce training, get business skills into those rural communities, and provide fundraising support. Our function is connecting, convening, and reaching into those small bases that sometimes work at the state level can't make."

Jennifer Lane, San Benito County Arts Council / Coalition of County Arts Agencies "My name is Jennifer Lane, Executive Director of the San Benito County Arts Council. I'm here on behalf of the Coalition of County Arts Agencies. We are the boots on the ground and the conduits between the state and the local. I want to thank the committee for listening to us specifically with a recommendation for two-year funding at \$75,000 per year. I also want to share a consideration to

move the state-local partner grant program away from grant amounts based on scoring, and that all SLPs who meet eligibility receive full funding. We don't compete with each other; we collaborate and lift each other up."

Dominique Johnson, Stanislaus Arts Council "My name is Dominique Johnson, I am the Executive Director of the Stanis Arts Council. I am very grateful for the two-year funding that has enabled my arts council to be sustainable in operations and enabled us to continue this conversation on what this partnership really can look like. Coming from a rural community, full funding would be huge for us. It would be something I could take to my county and cities to say the state sees the value we are bringing and ask them to match that need."

Amy Eriksen, Angels Gate Cultural Center / Arts United San Pedro "This is Amy Eriksen, Executive Director at Angels Gate Cultural Center. When we fund all of the arts and all of the youth arts all in one piece, there is no way to make sure that we're getting arts funding to field trips or a certain group of people. I commend you on bringing in the HPI index, but I hope that you will use this index by census tract rather than by zip code. Zip codes in Los Angeles County mean you go from some of the poorest neighborhoods to some of the most high-income neighborhoods in the same zip code. Census tract often finds a better judge of what those numbers look like."

Griselda Suarez, Arts Council for Long Beach "I am Griselda Suarez, Executive Director of the Arts Council for Long Beach. The Arts Council for Long Beach has been unfunded by the California Arts Council for the past two years, yet during that time, we have continued to do the work CAC is seeking to scale. This is not a capacity issue, it's a valuation issue. Under the current framework, art service organizations like ours are not clearly recognized or supported as delivery partners. We respectfully ask that the Council include a clear and direct funding pathway for arts service organizations, whether through a carve-out, a category, or adjusted scoring."

Julie Baker, California Arts Advocates / Californians for the Arts "Julie Baker with California Arts Advocates. We caution against codifying program policy decisions solely based on limited resources. Sustainability of the arts and culture ecosystem must be a central consideration. We respectfully urge the Council to eliminate the current budget cap. This limit restricts the breadth of organizations the CAC represents. We also suggest you appropriate a percentage of grants specifically for organizations with budgets over \$250,000. If the intention is to only fund 250 and under, then your program priorities currently work, but larger organizations experienced the sharpest revenue losses according to recent reports."

Jennifer Caballero, California Association of Museums "This is Jennifer Caballero, Executive Director of the California Association of Museums. I do caution against an over-reliance on the HPI, particularly what Amy Eriksen was noting about reliance on zip codes. Census tract gives you a little bit better of a frame. Additionally, caps are a big concern of ours. That cap has had a chilling effect on many of our organizations even considering doing the work. To not have a carve-out for service networks makes things tremendously challenging to have that sensibility of competing with the institutions you're serving."

Jerry Montoya, B Street Theatre / The Sophia "I'm Jerry Montoya, Executive Producer of The Sophia. I discovered theater at City College and came to B Street after working in every theater in Sacramento. In building this place, we became no longer eligible for many California Arts Council grants. Earlier, there was a comment about mapping the creative economy. We are that. We are the infrastructure. Today, I'm asking you to consider investing in our growth, in our programming, in our reach, and our capacity to keep that cycle alive for the next kid who needs to walk into a cathedral like this and think, 'I could build something.'"

Rachel Osajama, Alameda County Arts Commission "My name is Rachel Osajama, Director of the Alameda County Arts Commission. I'm also concerned about the over-focus on the Healthy Places Index. When it's sorted by zip code, it does not include West Oakland or most areas of East Oakland. The tracks reflect more closely the issues that you're interested in. Additionally, it's very expensive to live in the Bay Area, so many of our small nonprofits do not have their headquarters in the areas that they serve. Their official address might be a board member's home, but they are serving areas like West Oakland. I hope you'll consider this."

Item 15. Ad Hoc 50th Anniversary Arts Award Committee

n/a

Item 17. Cultural District Designation and Award

Matt Serrato, Mayor of the City of Merced

"My name's Matt Serrato, I'm the Mayor of the City of Merced. I want to thank your team for coming and visiting us. It was really an opportunity for our community to show off what we're about, and we're very proud to host it, and we appreciate the recommendation, and we're going to do you proud. So, it was an honor doing it. Really exciting how our community was... we have a young, vibrant, beautiful community, and I think it was on full display that day, and looking to keep making it better and better. So thank you all for your work. We're extremely excited for this. Thank you."

Dr. Emily Murase, Executive Director of the Japantown Cultural District

"Good afternoon, Council Members, I'm Dr. Emily Murase, Executive Director of the Japantown Cultural District. I'm joined today by my Deputy Director, Akiko Kling, our Outreach Intern, Izua Saito, Suze Kagami, the Executive Director of Koho, the lead in our application, is online. And I'm here to ask you to designate San Francisco Japantown as one of the state-designated cultural districts for two reasons. First, before World War II, there were over 80 Japanese American communities throughout the country... and now, there are only three, all of them in California, San Jose, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, but they're not monolithic. Each of the Japantowns have their own histories and their own characters. Second, San Francisco Japantown experienced... the abrupt [closure] of small businesses, not once, but twice. Many of you know about the incarceration, but in the name of redevelopment and slum removal from the Western Addition, the government bulldozed 358 businesses... 1,300 homes, and displaced over 8,000 residents in a second forced removal of Japanese Americans from Japantown. We were delighted to host the Arts Council on November 4th... Your decision represents an important opportunity to redress the harm suffered by Japanese American families, homeowners, and businesses once thriving in San Francisco. Thank you for your leadership."

April Spears-Mayes, Executive Director of San Francisco's African American Arts and Culture District

"Hello, my name is April Spears-Mayes, and I'm the Executive Director of San Francisco's African American Arts and Culture District. Our Culture District is located in Bayview-Hunters Point. It represents one of California's most historically significant African American communities. While our district is formally recognized by the City and County of San Francisco, limited local funding and resources continue to challenge our ability to fully sustain, preserve, and grow the cultural ecosystem that our community has built and protected for generations. State designation through the California Arts Council Cultural District Program is essential to strengthening our long-term sustainability, visibility, and impact. State designation affirms the importance of our cultural districts beyond municipal boundaries and positions our work within California's broader cultural landscape. This

recognition sends a powerful message to city leaders, public agencies, and community stakeholders that sustained investment in African American cultural districts like ours is vital... Baby Hunters Point has long served as a cultural, artistic, and entrepreneurial home for African American artists, musicians, cultural bearers, and small businesses. Our cultural district functions as a community anchor... Through cultural tourism, arts programming, and legacy preservation, our district contributes directly to the local economy while reinforcing a strong sense of place... We had an opportunity to host you all, just a few months ago, and we were able to share our beautiful theater in the Bayview, which is the oldest theater in San Francisco. It's over 100 years old. We would love to continue to provide those spaces for our community to... and guests to come and take part of our beautiful culture. Thank you."

Akiko Kling, Deputy Director of Japantown Cultural District

"Hi, committee members. Nice to meet you all. My name is Akiko Kling, Deputy Director of Japan Culture District, and I'm working under the Emily Murase Japan Task Force. We opened the visitor center last year, and of course, originally, I'm from Japan, and live in California more than 20 years. And San Francisco, California is almost my second hometown... if I go to Japantown, I feel like I'm in Japan. So, it means I want to make the visitor center, like, mini Japan for everybody, visitors, and we are providing the traditional... I try to keep traditional Japanese culture and art. For example, for flower arrangement, ikebana, tea ceremony sado, and also the shodo calligraphy. So, actually, we are getting the very good output, and now we are providing the seasonal event... And also, there's so many art and walks in Japan, and one by one, I want to bring into the visitor center to introduce all visitors. And, it's, and then visitors... Surprisingly, not local people, and also from the world, from around the world... even the workshop, they are, you know, attending from all over the California state. So anyway, I would like to keep active and lively in Japan Cultural District, Japantown Visitor Center, and I would like to... Thank you for the opportunity for us. Thank you."

Rachel Campos de Ivanov, President of West End Arts District / Staff with Radium Presents

"Hi, my name is Rachel Campos de-Ivanov, I'm president of the West End Arts District and staff with Radium Presents in Alameda. Our proposal focused on Alameda Point, the former Naval Air Station, which includes 900 acres of redevelopment where arts, culture, housing, and community are taking shape together. Many of us have waited years for this opportunity for the Cultural District's program to reopen, and I want to congratulate those who are moving forward. Our own application scored well, with 4.75 out of 6, higher than many others who advanced. But alas, we were not selected for the second round. And like several others, we struggled to understand how certain criteria were weighted. After reviewing the staff report and the gap analysis, I believe future rounds would benefit from clearer alignment between the application materials and the criteria used in the evaluation. Key concepts such as cultural heritage versus cultural creation, geographic context, and how geographic context is considered were not clearly defined in the materials at the get-go. If the GAAP report informed scoring, providing it earlier would have helped applicants respond more directly. So I share this constructively to help strengthen the process going forward, and I respectfully urge the Council to identify funds to reopen the program in the very near future for another cohort, with clearer definitions and more transparent guidance. Thank you."

Anthony Tordillos, City Council Member, City of San Jose

"My name is Anthony Tordillos, I'm a City Council member from the City of San Jose, representing Japantown. So I just want to thank the Council for recognizing Japantown's existing contributions to preserving and advancing Japanese American culture and heritage. This is really the culmination of decades of multi-generational investment from our community to preserve and advance that cultural heritage. Japantown has many historic sites. We have arts and cultural nonprofits dedicated to preserving and advancing that legacy, and we have just over a dozen local community groups that

have really spent years advancing this cause. So I think that this cultural district designation from the state [will] hope to continue life's worth for so many individuals in our community. So thank you for your recognition."

Sharaya Souza, Executive Director and Co-founder, American Indian Cultural District

"Hello, everyone! Thank you. I'm the Executive Director and one of the co-founders for the American Indian Cultural District. The American Indian Cultural District, for folks that don't know, was founded on March 31st, 2020, and the American Indian Cultural District is the first established cultural district of its size dedicated to recognizing, honoring, and celebrating American Indian legacy, people, and culture. I just wanted to say today, I uplift all of the concerns and the thoughts from my other sister, San Francisco cultural districts. They're all absolutely amazing. You know, I hope in the future we consider them as well... That being said, I want to thank the California Arts Council today for recognizing the American Indian Cultural District. Sorry, a little emotional, because it's really important. I don't think there are... I know there are not any other American Indian cultural districts. So I just want to say thank you. It's really important to our visibility and our work for people. So, just wanted to elevate that today, because it's a long time coming, and our cultural district isn't just our cultural district here in San Francisco. We are the home of the longest walk of the occupation of Alcatraz. And, many Native people. And so, thank you."

Tracy Colunga, CEO of Colunga & Associates

"Hi, thank you. Hi, my name is Tracy Colunga, I'm the CEO of Colunga & Associates and a supporter of Central Cha's application for the Long Beach Latino Cultural District. I own a Latina-owned consulting firm based in Long Beach, and my family and I have proudly lived and worked here for over 20 years. I wanted to note that there are 88 cities in LA County, and we do not have a cultural district in Long Beach. Three of the four cultural districts are actually in the city of LA. The City of Long Beach is the second largest city in LA County, and the seventh largest city in California. LA County is 50% Latino, and Long Beach is 43% Latino. Given the ICE raids and the anti-Latino immigrant sentiment, we are calling to ask you to kindly vote yes on the designation of the Long Beach Latino Cultural District. Thank you."

Item 18. General Public Comment

Justina Martino | Artist and Owner, Artonic (Sacramento) "Hello, good afternoon, council members. My name is Justina Martino. I was there earlier, but I, walked to my studio, which is a few blocks away. I am an artist and the owner of Artonic, a small Sacramento-based business with a fiscal sponsor that provides community-engaged art project management and artist professional development support. I would like to express my appreciation for the Statewide and Regional Networks grant that we received this year. Through this support, we have been able to offer professional development workshops, grant application support sessions, and community events to more than 200 artists across multiple counties in California.

I also want to acknowledge a challenge faced by many small organizations like ours. CAC grant applications often take a significant amount of time, sometimes more than 20 hours to complete. Many proposals ultimately go unfunded, representing a substantial loss of capacity for small teams that are already stretched thin. I suggest refining CAC's applications to make them less time-intensive, including reducing the redundancy of questions. A shorter, simplified pre-application or letter of interest stage could help prescreen organizations before they invest extensive hours into a full application. Finally, I understand that the statewide and regional networks grant opportunity may not continue. I strongly encourage the Council to sustain programs that facilitate cross-county

connections for artists and arts professionals. The more connected we are across the state, the more effectively we can support one another and the stronger we can become as a creative ecosystem. Thank you for your time."

Fran Lujan | Museum Director and Curator, Pacific Island Ethnic Art Museum (Long Beach)

"Good wins to you. My name is Fran Lujan. I'm the museum director and curator at the Pacific Island Ethnic Art Museum in Long Beach. I'm carried by the salt waters of the Mariana Islands and Turtle Island. I'm here because I received an email on July 8, 2025, about our application to the California Arts Council General Operating Support Grant. Our application number, CACGEN2525593. The email letter stated that our application was not eligible because, quote, 'your organization does not show that its main purpose is to provide arts programming or services,' even though we have been funded by CAC in the past.

This is not true. This decision seems to be based only on our fiscal agency paperwork, not on the work we actually do. In 2025, the Pacific Island Ethnic Art Museum has been doing a lot of work. We've been hosting 3 art exhibits, 6 special events, we have a youth artisans in residence, a couple of school tours, and we work with 12 community partners, and we support ancestral human remains repatriation back to the Pacific. We spend many hours teaching college students about Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander cultures. We teach through the arts, and we focus on the issues affecting our communities here in California. All this work done by only two staff members. The California Arts Council often says to support small community-based organizations, but this small museum, which is in great need and is exactly doing that kind of work, is being left out. I respectfully ask California Arts Council to change how it defines fiscal agency in its grant application. Please..."

Hilary Amnah | Grants Program Lead for Civic Arts, City of Berkeley

"Hello, Council Member. Hello, Council Members, I'm Hilary Amna, she, they, and I'm the Grants Program Lead for Civic Arts at the City of Berkeley. Thank you for the opportunity to make a public comment on the Cultural District's program presentation. I'm speaking on behalf of the Black Arts and Culture District in Berkeley, which was one of six applicants that scored the same or higher than applicants who moved on to the second round of the cultural district review process, but were denied in the first round evaluation.

Our application represented both rigorous academic research into the historical and current cultural significance of Southwest Berkeley to the Black community, and several methods of deep community engagement to gain input and insight from folks living and working in the district. So, it was disappointing to learn that although we scored high enough, we were not selected to move to Round 2. This was also disappointing knowing that the cultural district gap analysis report specifically calls out Black arts and culture districts as missing from the previous cohort. Berkeley is also uniquely positioned to be the first city to implement AB812, which is the bill for affordable housing for artists, and we cited that in our application. We did appeal the decision to not be included in Round 2 of the review process because of the inaccuracies represented in our panel notes, but that appeal was denied. And I understand that per the Cultural District's presentation and process report, certain decisions were made to select the 20 applicants who would move on to Round 2 of the review. But it would be beneficial to applicants to have those methodologies outlined in the guidelines. It was not clear that geographic diversity would be a consideration in Round 1 of the review. With this, I would encourage the Council to reconsider opening the Cultural District's program application again in the next grant cycle. For our district, time is of the essence in preserving..."

Richard Falcon | Executive Director and Founder, Teatro Nagual (Sacramento)

"Good afternoon, everyone. Richard Falcon, Executive Director and Founder of Teatro Nagual. First off, I want to just take the time to thank you, because it is an honor to be the administering organization for the

Individual Artist Fellowship here within the Capital Region, and we are looking forward to working through that, implementing that, and making you proud. And thanks again for the honor of being part of that. Also, I wanted to take the time to thank my partners and colleagues at the B Street, if not for the B Street, and much of the work that they have done in the time that we have been with them, we would not have achieved many of the successes that we have to date. And so, thank you, Lindsay, Jerry, and everyone else there.

The final thing I wanted, and I'll just touch on it briefly, was on the Creative Economy Workshop there. To let you know that I have been working, as well as many, many arts organizations here in Sacramento and the Capital Region, trying to follow the framework of the California Jobs First that was put out through the governor's office in there. And with that, California Jobs First Initiative specifically names a creative economy as a sector worthy of focus and to be able to strengthen in there. Yet, as we see time and time again, the creative economy is still left behind. I would cite, for example, the SURF program that eventually became the 'We Prosper Together' here in the Sacramento region, and through this collection of varying arts organizations, we applied to put together much workforce development and to put together programs for growing the creative economy and the creative sector for some of the workshop opportunities. And it was sad to find out that we were not... it was not so much that we were not awarded, but very, very few in the creative sector were awarded, for whatever reason. We need to create a better narrative so that people and panelists out there can recognize the value of the creative economy. With that, thank you very much."

Amy Eriksen | Chair, Arts United San Pedro "Thank you so much. Amy Erickson, Chair of the Arts United San Pedro, and a member of the California Cultural District Coalition for the last 7 years. I'm gonna actually take that hat off and just say Amy Erickson as a supporter of arts in everywhere, and a community member here in Long Beach. We really have an opportunity here, I believe, to take the good work that you have already done in all of the site visits and all of the work you've done on cultural districts over the last 7 years, and think about designation as power. AB189 does not say that these, cultural district designations have to come with dollars, and we all know that for a large cultural district with many artists in it, you can't get dollars to each of those artists with just even \$10,000. But what we can do is we can get representation. Representation at the state level is most important for not only cultural districts and artists, but for all of you and the, California Arts Council, because every time we add a new politician with a cultural district, adds another person that understands what arts can look like and how we can make sure to bring fiscal dollars to that situation.

I implore you to take a look at the people that you already did site visits for, and maybe even other, because I haven't seen the rankings lately, cultural districts that applied in this group of 59, to see who you could designate right now. Because as a coalition, we've always said, if we can get to 40 or more cultural districts designated in the state, the work and the advocacy we can do together is gonna be the most important piece. So, I just ask as a community member, because I haven't had a chance to talk to the Coalition in the last 40 minutes of this meeting, but, that you think about bringing that to the next meeting, and thinking about just designating a certain number more, to keep moving this program forward. Thank you for all the hard work you do, and thank you for always staying late and keeping pushing this through. Thank you so much."

Julie Baker | CEO, Californians for the Arts "All right, so I also want to make a cultural district comment. So, you know, we of course appreciate the staff's thorough work in reviewing over the, you know, 50 applications, and congratulate the 10 selected. We have received feedback that the application process is rigorous by design, with the time and resources required often comparable to the eventual funding received upon designation. Therefore, we urge you to consider separating the designation process from the funding allocation, and to offer rolling or biannual opportunities for

communities to apply for designation. Really plus one to what Amy said. Take what you have, and let's get it going.

It is highly beneficial for California to increase the number of designated cultural districts, especially following the passage of landmark legislation, AB812, as mentioned by the City of Berkeley. With these 10 new districts, California will have 24 total, which lags behind states like Texas, which has 57 cultural districts, supported by \$12 million in funding—are you listening, Governor Newsom, please?—and Nebraska, whose program was established after California's, which is 36 certified districts and 20 more in application. Given the significant interest and the limited funding, it was likely a difficult decision to narrow the selection to 10. We question why more districts cannot be certified, especially when the funding is insignificant. Our ultimate goal is to see dedicated annual funding for this program reinstated by the legislature. Once funding is secured, it makes sense for the funding to be competitive. However, the designation or certification without associated funding should be open to all eligible communities. Please consider this important policy change, and we look forward to seeing you in April when we'll be advocating for \$50 million for the California Arts Council in your 50th year. Thanks."

Griselda Suarez | Executive Director, Arts Council for Long Beach "Good afternoon, council members. Thank you again for all your work today and service to the arts community in our wonderful state. I'm here to continue the comment of our elder here in Long Beach, Auntie Fran, from the Pacific Islander Ethnic Art Museum. As an Arts Council grantee, we are proud to support this amazing museum and community partner. All their work is done only by two staff members, and their fiscal agent, the Gumbiner Foundation, gives no more than \$5,000 a year for its programming. They have been an awardee in the past, and so it was really hard to hear that they got an ineligible letter. I understand that, within general operating, these technicalities made that letter possible, so I respectfully ask on behalf of the Pacifica community here in Long Beach that the California Arts Council change how it defines its fiscal agency for its grant applications. Please make room for community-based museums like PIM, the Pacific Islander Ethnic Art Museum, which serves living cultures, real people, every day. Thank you so much, and again, we urge you to redefine fiscal agency for your grant applications."

Alexander Matias | Council Member, City of Vallejo "Thank you. Good afternoon, council members and staff. My name is Alexander Matias, Council Member in the City of Vallejo. Our city, through the Solano Arts Council, submitted an application for consideration as a cultural district. We made it to the semifinalist stage and had representation from every part of the city at the site visit. Although I have deep gratitude and appreciation for staff's visit to our city, I have deep concerns about how equity is being considered into this process. Council members identified this afternoon that they didn't have much information on any of the semifinalists, or really got to engage in robust discussion. As a reference point for the Council this afternoon, Solano County with 1% of the state's population receives no funding from the Arts Council, receives pennies on the dollar from the philanthropic sector, and is, one of the most rich, in terms of racial and ethnic diversity areas in our state. But this same county has disparities across many different areas. Specifically for this process, the Solano Arts Council has now applied two times for the Cultural District designation, addresses all of the identified gaps in the gaps analysis report, and specifically for the City of Vallejo, has a council that is working to support the arts, cultural, and economic development efforts, as well as, tenant protection rights, across other areas. The recommendation in the gap analysis report specifically calls for applications that promote equity. We have multiple federally designated opportunity zones, a lower than median income for our county, and we have, again, one of the most diverse cities in the country with strong Black, Hispanic, and Asian American populations. I would ask the Council to consider if the proliferation of cultural districts in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego is a commitment to

identify gaps around serving less well-served counties and also the grounding of equity, both in terms of racial, cultural, and geographic diversity."

Dominique Johnson | Stanislaus Arts Council (Stanislaus County) "Hello again, Council. I'm Dominique Johnson. I'm here representing Stanislaus County and the Stanislaus Arts Council. I, myself, am an artist, I'm a mother of artists, I am a daughter of an artist, and I absolutely love my creative community. First, I want to say thank you so much to the CAC staff for not only coming to our community for the Cultural District site visit, but for being so, thoughtful in the process. There were so many questions asked, there was so many conversations, the scrupulous amount of notes that were taken. I do hope that that information is shared with the Council, because I think that it would be of benefit for you all to understand these communities that you are recognizing. Even in a PowerPoint would probably be easy enough.

But I do also invite you all to my community, because I would love to show you around individually or collectively. And additionally, I would like to thank you for the State Local Partnership Program. It is truly a partnership, and I look forward not only to continuing the conversation and the work next year, but also looking at you all and thanking you for the strides that we made this year, because I started in my position in the beginning of 2024, and the momentum that I can only give credit to you all is because of you all, and the decisions that you're making to really look at the state and local partnership program as an asset, and a way to move throughout the whole state. So thank you so much for your time, and for your support, and for your dedication to the work that you're doing, so important to myself and the creative economy in California. Thank you so much."

Rachel Osajima | Director, Alameda County Arts Commission "Good afternoon, I'm Rachel Osajima, the Director of the Alameda County Arts Commission. So I'd like to start by saying congratulations on adding the new 10 state-designated cultural districts, which includes the Black Arts Movement District in Oakland, which I'm very pleased to, support. Additionally, I would like to say that I very much hope that you will indeed re-envision and expand the cultural district program—designation is the power. I estimate there's over 20 naturally occurring cultural districts within Alameda County. You heard from many of them. They desire so very much to be recognized at the state level, and so I would love it if I and the state-local partners can help with encouraging that and work with all of you.

Additionally, in representing the Coalition of County Arts Agencies, which are the state-local partners, we would like to say that we very much look forward to continuing to celebrate your 50th anniversary. I mean, start celebrating your 50th anniversary, attending your event, but also we would love to promote the 50th anniversary throughout the year on our communications and our social media. We look forward to having that opportunity for the expansion of the branding. All of us must work together to raise our profile for the important work we're doing, so we look forward to that very, very much. And of course, we want to be strong partners with you on your strategic plan. And lastly, thank you for this wonderful meeting, and for everything you do, and congratulations. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you."