

LINCOLN CENTER

70 Lincoln Center Plaza, New York, NY 10023-6583 | [LincolnCenter.org](https://www.lincolncenter.org)

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. New York State Arts Day February 16, 2024

*Comment Submission of
Miranda Hoffner, Director of Accessibility*

In response to the release of the Proposed 5-Year Accessibility Plan by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA), we submit these comments on behalf of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, based on learning from, working with, and serving the disability community through programming and accessible design in our venues.

In New York City there are about 900,000 New Yorkers living with disabilities which is about 10.6% of the total population, according to data released by the Mayor's Office of People with Disabilities (MOPD), representing all races/ethnicities and boroughs. Additionally, as we discuss the economic impact of the arts serving as a node to attract tourism, there are millions of visitors with disabilities that visit annually.

For nearly 40 years Lincoln Center has been an institutional leader developing targeted programs around the experience of audiences with disabilities. Passport to the Arts, one of our longest running access programs, provides free and inclusively designed performances and behind the scenes experiences with world class artists, in person and virtually, serving more than 3,500 children, teens, and adults with disabilities last year. Lincoln Center Moments uses performance and facilitated art making to reconnect people with dementia with the joy, healing, and community that the performing arts provides. Additionally, Lincoln Center Moments is offered virtually for audiences across New York State that cannot physically join us but can still benefit from the healing community the program creates.

Lincoln Center supports disabled New Yorkers as a critical constituency on stage and backstage, featuring disabled artistry, activating accommodations as a rich expression of creativity, and investing in the pipeline of future cultural workers.

We appreciate DCLA's compliance with Local Law 12 and offer a few suggestions that would enhance how the community is served by arts organizations and how the arts ecosystem could better support people living with disabilities:

- **Investment in Disabled Artistry and Access Workers** – The field has been greatly impacted by the Disability Forward Fund, which allowed artists and cultural organizations to experiment with new work, create more access to arts programming and bring more audiences in. While Lincoln Center was not a recipient, we saw the results of that funding through an expansion in the field. We encourage DCLA to continue to directly support artists and cultural organizations so that their innovative work can continue.
- **Best Practices Convener** – In the tenet of the Disability Rights Movement, “nothing about us, without us,” Lincoln Center encourages DCLA to use its platform to act as a convener to shine

light on exceptional work in disability artistry, access workers and cultural access and build a more direct pipeline of feedback from disabled stakeholders and cultural organizations.

- **Workplace Inclusion** – Lincoln Center has had great success with the Access Ambassadors program, designed to help combat the high unemployment rate for people with disabilities, provides weekly lessons on job readiness for high school students with disabilities along with onsite experience greeting guests at Lincoln Center performances. Hundreds of students from New York City Public Schools have participated in this program, including several who have been hired as employees at Lincoln Center. These are talented individuals that could go on to careers in the arts. Programs like NYC:AT WORK support recruitment with approaches tailored to the disability community.
- **Effective Communication / Assistive Listening** – One approach to eliminating barriers to participation is building accessible accommodations into the audience experience whether in-person or online. Accommodations such as assistive listening systems, American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, captioning, audio descriptions, large print, and braille programs are available for all performances and events across our campus. We encourage DCLA to include these accommodations within spaces for public meetings and events hosted by DCLA.

We look forward to continuing the dialogue with DCLA and invite you to collaborate with us on a convening with members of the disability arts community. Lincoln Center is committed to New York as a place where everyone is welcome and where they belong, and we continue to engage as lifelong learners to do better as an artistic, civic hub.

Respectfully submitted,

Miranda Hoffner
Director, Accessibility
Lincoln Center
mhoffner@lincolncenter.org

cc: Sara Cobb, Disability Service Facilitator, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs