


Chairman Phil Mendelson

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A BILL

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To amend the Commission on the Arts and Humanities Act with respect to budget allocations; to provide additional General Operating Support grants for organizations; to authorize stipends to volunteers on grant review panels; and to provide for the transfer of funds to HumanitiesDC to administer the Humanities Grant Program.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this act may be cited as the “Equity in the Arts and Humanities Amendment Act of 2021”.

Sec. 2. The Commission on the Arts and Humanities Act, effective October 21, 1975 (D.C. Law 1-22; D.C. Official Code § 39-201 et seq.), is amended as follows:

(a) Section 6(c-1) (D.C. Official Code § 39-205(c-1)) is amended to read as follows:

“(c-1) For the fiscal year 2022 budget and every fiscal year thereafter the Commission shall allocate the annual budget as follows:

“(1) Not more than 22% of the annual budget shall be allocated for administrative costs.

“(2) Not less than 78% of the annual budget shall be allocated for the following purposes:

33 “(A) 17% for grants to fund capital projects in support of either the Arts
34 and Humanities Cohort or the National Capital Arts Cohort; provided, that during Fiscal Years
35 2021 and 2022, these grant funds may be used, if approved by the Commission, to pay:

36 “(i) Rent or mortgage expenses for the operation of a grant
37 recipient’s arts-or humanities-related home-based office in the District; and

38 “(ii) Rent or mortgage expenses for the operation of a grant
39 recipient’s space in the District used to produce or publicly present arts-or humanities-related
40 work.

41 “(B)(i) 54% for General Operating Support grants to all eligible arts and
42 humanities individuals and organizations.

43 “(ii) Awards of General Operating Support grants shall be
44 competitive, and each application of an individual or organization shall be reviewed in cohorts of
45 similar budget size, and with grant award amounts tiered in relation to the grantee’s budget size;
46 and

47 “(C) 25% for other art grant programs established by the Commission.

48 “(D) 4% the for the Humanities Grant Program administered by
49 HumanitiesDC.

50 (b) Section 6 (D.ZC. Official Code § 39-205) is amended by adding a new subsection (f)
51 to read as follows:

52 “(f) The Executive Director is authorized to pay out of the Commission’s administrative
53 costs a stipend to each member of its grant review panels.

54 (c) Section 6b (D.C. Official Code § 39-205.02) is amended as follows:

55 (1) Subsection (b) is amended to read as follows:

56 “(b)(1) Notwithstanding the Grant Administration Act of 2013, effective December 24,
57 2013 (D.C. Law 20-61; D.C. Official Code § 1-328.13 *et seq.*), the Commission shall have
58 grantmaking authority to provide funds to HumanitiesDC, provided, that such funds are included
59 in an approved budget and designated for the Humanities Grant Program, which shall be used to
60 make subgrants in the humanities for the purpose of promoting cross-cultural understanding and
61 appreciation of local history in all District neighborhoods.

62 “(2) Up to 30% of each disbursement from the Humanities Grant Program budget
63 to HumanitiesDC may be utilized by HumanitiesDC for administrative expenses, capacity
64 building, technical assistance, and evaluation of the Humanities Grant Program.

65 (2) Subsection (d) is repealed.

66 (3) Subsection (e) is amended by striking the phrase “the grant-managing entity”
67 and inserting the phrase “HumanitiesDC” in each place it appears.

68 Sec. 3. Fiscal impact statement.

69 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement of the Budget Director as the fiscal impact
70 statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975, approved
71 October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

72 Sec. 4. Effective date.

73 This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the Mayor,
74 action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as provided
75 in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December 24, 1973
76 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code §1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of Columbia
77 Register.



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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May 28, 2021

STATEMENT UPON INTRODUCTION
“Equity in the Arts and Humanities Amendment Act of 2021”

Today I am introducing a bill, the “Equity in the Arts and Humanities Amendment Act of 2021,” in response to several recommendations I have received since the Council established the Commission on the Arts and Humanities, in 2019, as an independent agency of the District government.

First, this bill revises the allocations required by law for grantmaking by the Commission. The primary purpose of the Commission is to promote the arts, which includes nurturing nascent organizations and artists as well as encouraging diversity. To effect this, as we’ve seen elsewhere in jurisdictions prominent in the arts, the Commission makes grants. Grants are critical to the Commission’s purpose.

The Council adopted a formula for grantmaking simultaneous with independence, in part to reduce demands for Council earmarks. Since that time a new consensus has emerged to revise that formula. The proposed bill eliminates a set aside for the National Capital Arts Cohort, modeled after a federal program, of almost two dozen large performing arts organizations. Instead, the bill substantially increases – to 54% of the grants budget – funding for general operating support for all artists and arts organizations. Consistent with an April resolution of the Commission, the general operating support grants shall be competitive, with applicants reviewed in cohorts with other applicants of similar budget size, and with grant award amounts tiered in relation to the grantee’s budget size.

Second, this bill includes a December 2020 recommendation of the Commission’s Task Force on Equity & Inclusion that grant-review panelists be eligible to receive a stipend for their otherwise volunteer work. The Commission has around 50 panels per year; each panel takes a month to review grant applications and then there is a full day meeting. Currently the panelists are unpaid, which means that sole-practitioner artists are less likely to participate because they are less able to volunteer the time – an equity issue.

Third, this bill clarifies the transfer of funds from the Commission to the Humanities Council, with the intent of making the transfer easier, earlier, and less uncertain. The formula adopted in 2019 (slightly revised in the attached bill) substantially increases the funding available for the humanities, but since that time we have seen that it takes a half year or more for the funds to transfer and the subgrantees are severely constrained in their ability to spend the funds within the fiscal year. This bill is meant to correct those problems.

This legislation makes slight – but important – adjustments to the Council’s 2019 legislation that granted independence to the Commission. With lessons learned from the Commission’s Task Force on Equity & Inclusion, this bill is another step toward the District government’s commitment to the arts and humanities.