

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
COMMITTEE REPORT**

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004

DRAFT

TO: All Councilmembers

FROM: Chairman Phil Mendelson
Committee of the Whole

DATE: May 2, 2023

SUBJECT: Report on PR 25-135, the “Commission on the Arts and Humanities Aaron L. Myers, II Confirmation Resolution of 2023”

The Committee of the Whole, to which PR 25-135, the “Commission on the Arts and Humanities Aaron L. Myers, II Confirmation Resolution of 2023” was referred, reports favorably thereon, and recommends approval by the Council.

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I. BACKGROUND AND NEED

Proposed Resolution 25-135, the “Commission on the Arts and Humanities Aaron L. Myers, II Confirmation Resolution of 2023,” was introduced by Chairman Mendelson at the request of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities on March 3, 2023 and referred to the Committee of the Whole. The purpose of PR 25-135 is to appoint Aaron L. Myers, II as Executive Director of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities, to serve the remainder of the unexpired 4-year term to end on September 30, 2024.

Mr. Myers is a Ward 1 resident. Originally from Goodlow, Texas, he attended Navarro College in Corsicana, Texas majoring in Theater, while serving as an Orientation Leader. Mr. Myers currently serves as Interim President and CEO of Crittenton Services of Greater Washington and as the minister of music at Covenant Baptist United Church of Christ. Prior to that, he served as a host on WPFW 89.3FM’s “Jazz Stories” from 2018 to 2022, and as an Artist in Residence at Georgetown University in 2019 and 2020. Mr. Myers also served in the United States Army as a multichannel-transmission systems operator-maintainer from 2001 to 2003.

Mr. Myers is an advocate for mental health and LGBTQIA+ Rights. As part of his advocacy, he chairs the Board of Directors for the Capitol Hill Jazz Foundation. He also sits as a member of the board of directors for CTE Vision Foundation and Covenant Full Potential Development Center. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he led the DMV Music Stakeholders cohort as they shared resources, offered relief, and advocated for community needs to help strengthen and preserve the District's music ecosystem.

An accomplished pianist and vocalist, his credits include 4 albums: "Leo Rising", "The Lion's Den", "The Pride Album", and the holiday album "Snowing in Vegas." Mr. Myers is a Governor & voting member with the Recording Academy. He was awarded best Jazz Artist by the International Music and Entertainment Awards in 2016, the Wammie Award (presented by The Musicianship) for Advocacy 2019 and 2020, and the Best Jazz Artist & Best Jazz Song by the Wammies in 2022.

The Commission on the Arts and Humanities was established by 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.*). The Commission is now an independent agency within the District of Columbia government and is designated by the National Endowment of the Arts as the state arts agency for the District of Columbia. Its role is to evaluate and initiative action on matters relating to the arts and humanities and to encourage programs and the development of programs that promote progress and in the arts and humanities.

The Commission now consists of 16 members appointed by the Mayor for three-year terms, with the advice and consent of the Council. The Commission is tasked with appointing an Executive Director who serves as the chief administrative officer of the Commission. In addition, the mission of the Commission is to provide grants, programs, and educational activities that encourage diverse artistic expressions and learning opportunities so that all District residents and visitors can experience the District's rich arts and humanities community.

Members of the Commission must be District residents and must have displayed an interest or an ability in the arts and humanities or must be active in the furtherance of the arts or humanities. Moreover, the Mayor must give due consideration to recommendations made by the arts and humanities community and has to ensure that there is reasonable representation of all the wards in the District when considering appointments to the Commission. Further, no employee of the District government can serve as a member of the Commission.

The Executive Director is charged with the following duties: supervise the staff of the Commission; assist the Commission in executing its policies and duties; perform other duties as directed by the Commission; and report regularly on the activities and operations of the agency to the members of the Commission.

Mr. Myers discussed bringing an increased focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, innovation and wellness to the Commission. His goal is to bring stable, compassionate leadership to the Commission, to be a bridge between working artists and the Commission, and to restore trust with the community in the areas where that trust has eroded. Mr. Myers plans to emphasize data collection and retention in order to provide a clear picture of how the creative community adds to

the District's economy. He also noted that prioritizing systems that impact Commission grantees will be a central focus.

The wellness and mental health of both the staff and the creative community also will be a key focus. Mr. Myers noted that the true toll upon the mental and emotional health of many government workers has not been quantified post-pandemic. His goal is to mitigate the potential anxiety of those who work at the Commission, as well those who regularly interact with the Commission, by implementing reliable systems and a structure that emphasizes consistent processes for grant applicants.

Mr. Myers brings extensive and relevant experience, as well as a commitment to the arts and the District's artistic community. The Committee is impressed with this candidate and recommends Council approval of PR 25-135 to appoint Aaron L. Myers, II as the Executive Director of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

II. LEGISLATIVE CHRONOLOGY

March 3, 2023	PR 25-135, the "Commission on the Arts and Humanities Aaron L. Myers, II Confirmation Resolution of 2023" is introduced by Chairman Mendelson.
March 7, 2023	PR 25-135 is "read" at a Legislative Meeting and the referral to the Committee of the Whole is official.
March 10, 2023	Notice of Intent to Act on PR 25-135 is published in the DC Register.
March 10, 2023	Notice of the public hearing on PR 25-135 is published in the <i>DC Register</i> .
March 30, 2023	The Committee of the Whole holds a public hearing on PR 25-135.
May 2, 2023	The Committee of the Whole marks-up PR 25-135.

III. POSITION OF THE EXECUTIVE

Mr. Myers is the Commission's nominee for appointment as Executive Director. The Chairperson of the Commission, Reginald Van Lee, introduced the nominee and offered testimony in support of the nomination. The Committee received no additional testimony or comments from the Executive on PR 25-135.

IV. COMMENTS OF ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSIONS

The Committee received no testimony or comments from any Advisory Neighborhood Commission on PR 25-135.

V. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY

The Committee of the Whole held a public roundtable on PR 25-135, on Thursday, March 30, 2023. The testimony summarized below is from that hearing. Submitted copies of testimony are attached to this report.

Sunny Sumter, President and CEO, DC Jazz Festival, testified in support of Mr. Myers' nomination, and spoke to Mr. Myers' leadership ability and the potential for his appointment to aid the Commission in strengthening community awareness and connectedness and in improving its own governance and organizational structure.

Chris Naoum, Founder, Listen Local First DC, testified in support of Mr. Myers' nomination, and spoke to the unique perspective that Mr. Myers' would bring to the position as a working musician who is intimately familiar with the practical aspects of the District's arts community.

Graham Smith-White, DC Artist, Community Advocate, testified in support of Mr. Myers' nomination. He spoke to high standards that the nominee holds himself to as an artist, and the nominee's commitment to advocating for the needs and well-being of local artists.

Abiola Agoro, Executive Director, Disturbing Inequity, testified in support of Mr. Myers' nomination. She spoke to the nominee's genuine love for helping other people achieve their goals.

Akosua Ali, President, NAACP DC Branch, testified in support of Mr. Myers' nomination. She spoke to Mr. Myers' extensive leadership experience, and her belief that the Commission would make additional strides toward social justice and racial equity under his stewardship.

Teela Norris, NAACP DC Branch, testified in support of Mr. Myers' nomination. She spoke to the nominee's strong record of executive leadership and his advocacy for civil rights and racial justice.

Robert Vinson Brannum, Vice President, NAACP DC Branch, testified in support of Mr. Myers' nomination. He spoke to the nominee's appreciation for diversity in the arts, and the nominee's organizational and planning ability.

Rhonda Humphries, LGBTQIA+ Chair, NAACP DC Branch, testified in support of Mr. Myers' nomination. She spoke to the nominee's executive leadership acumen, and her belief that Mr. Myers would manage the Commission's affairs with a focus on being mission-oriented and transformative.

Reginald Van Lee, Chairperson, Commission on the Arts and Humanities, introduced the nominee and expressed support for the nomination.

Aaron Myers, II, Nominee, testified and answered questions from Chairman Mendelson and Councilmember Robert White regarding his background and experience as it pertains to the

District's arts and humanities community and his interest in serving as the Executive Director of the Commission.

VI. IMPACT ON EXISTING LAW

The Executive Director of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities is established pursuant to the Commission on the Arts and Humanities Act (D.C. Law 1-22; D.C. Official Code § 39-205(a) and (b)).

VII. FISCAL IMPACT

PR 25-135 will not have a fiscal impact. The position of the Executive Director of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities is an existing position that is already funded in the current financial plan.

VIII. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

<u>Section 1</u>	States the short title of PR 25-135.
<u>Section 2</u>	Appoints Mr. Aaron L. Myers, II as the Executive Director of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities to complete the unexpired term ending on September 30, 2024.
<u>Section 3</u>	Requires that a copy of the resolution, upon adoption, be transmitted to the appointee and to the Commission on the Arts and Humanities.
<u>Section 4</u>	Provides that PR 25-135 shall take effect immediately.

IX. COMMITTEE ACTION

X. ATTACHMENTS

1. PR 25-135 as introduced.
2. Nominee's responses to Committee pre-hearing questions.
3. Written Testimony and Comments.
4. Legal Sufficiency Review.

5. Committee Print for PR 25-135.



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMISSION ON THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Reginald Van Lee
Chairperson

March 3, 2023

The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 504
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

In accordance with section 2 of the Confirmation Act of 1978, effective March 3, 199 (D.C. Law 2-142; D.C. Official Code § 1-523.01), and pursuant to section 6 of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities Act, effective October 21, 1975 (D.C. Law 1-22; D.C. Official Code § 39-205 (a)), I am pleased to nominate the following person for appointment:

Aaron L. Myers, II
18th Street NW
Washington, D.C., 20010
(Ward 1)

as the new Executive Director for the Commission on the Arts and Humanities, for a renewable 4-year term. Mr. Myers' nomination was agreed to by roll call vote at a special meeting of the Commission on February 2, 2023.

Enclosed you will find biographical information that details Mr. Myers' professional experience, together with a proposed resolution to assist the Council during the Council's confirmation process.

On behalf of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities, I respectfully request the Council's earliest consideration of this nomination for confirmation. Please do not hesitate to contact me should the Council require additional information.

Sincerely,

Reginald Van Lee, Chairperson



Chairman Phil Mendelson

At the request of the Chairperson of the
Commission on the Arts and Humanities

A PROPOSED RESOLUTION

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To confirm the appointment of Aaron L. Myers, II as Executive Director of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this act may be cited as the "Commission on the Arts and Humanities Aaron L. Myers, II Confirmation Resolution of 2023".

Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia confirms the appointment of:

Aaron L. Myers, II
18th Street, NW
Washington, D.C., 20010
(Ward 1)

as Executive Director of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities, pursuant to section 6(a) of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities Act, effective October 21, 1975 (D.C. Law 1-22; D.C. Official Code § 39-205(a)) for the remainder of the unexpired 4-year term ending September 30, 2024

Sec. 3. The Council of the District of Columbia shall transmit a copy of this resolution, upon its adoption, to the nominee and to the Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

Sec. 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

My objective is to find employment with a company that will view me as an asset. My goal is to be a team builder and a team player. I want to aid the company by being innovative, motivated, and a positive influence.

EXPERIENCE

Interim President/CEO: Crittenton Services of Greater Washington June 2022 - Present

- Manage staff of 20 people, conduct reviews, curate training
- Identify / Hire / Coordinate with contractors
- Report to Board of Directors (BOD) and strategize/execute directives with/by the BOD
- Coordinate with team and program staff to evaluate curriculum & curriculum delivery
- Review pre/post test results from participants and coordinate updates to curriculum as needed
- Identify grant opportunities - meet grant requirements - report grant deliverables
- Raised 550K from June 2022 - October 2022 (projecting 1.2 million by July 2023)
- Expanded programs to serve highest number of participants (1100+)
- Expanded partnerships with higher learning institutions
- Created site placement program for BSW & MSW students
- Facilitate grant awards for qualifying participants
- Plan and Execute annual fundraising event (300K goal)
- Testify before DC City Council & Montgomery County Council

Covenant Baptist UCC: Minister of Music April 2010 - Present

- Prepare Budgets
- Prepare & Organize all services for church
- Organize & approve community outreach services (ie. Jill Biden visit, Del. Eleanore Holmes Norton visit, & other notables)
- Manage a multi-generational staff
- Organize Rehearsals
- Prepare materials for rehearsals for 5 singing aggregations.
- Write music
- Manage a technical team, oversee upkeep of technical equipment.

Host "Jazz Stories" WPFW 89.3FM Feb 2018 - July 2022

- Curate music for show (2 hour show weekly)
- Conduct interviews with industry professional
- Coordinate and Execute on-air fundraising appeal quarterly
- Research music, artists, for talking points during the show
- Ability to break news live on the air (we were the first to announce death of Chick Corea)
- Communicate effectively with Program Director and General Manager
- Craft communications and pr strategy to promote the show
- Capability to pre-track shows when needed

Artist in Residence: Georgetown University

2019 & 2020

- Create lesson plan
- Coordinate with dean to execute objectives for the class
- Lecturing the intersection of Art & Activism
- Three Classes (one interactive & 1 live performance)
- Taught the process of how to create policy, present it to elected representatives, and see it through to passage

Independent Artist:

2006 - Present

- Created 4 albums (identified studios, engineers, musicians, created release strategy, composed the music)
- International performances in over 24 cities
- 2 tours in Russia
- Facilitate Rehearsals
- Organize Media/Press Relations
- Negotiated Artist Residences (Black Fox Lounge - 150 Shows / Mr. Henry's Restaurant - 230 Shows / The Eaton *Curation)
- Social Media strategy & execution
- Venue scouting
- Contract negotiations
- Tour scheduler & booker
- Create/Manager email list
- Host ("Jazz Stories" weekly on WPFW 89.3FM - The Exchange Online)
- Stand-Up Comedian
- Writer: Two feature scripts "Upon a Rivers End" and "Paths at Sunset" (both registered with the Writers Guild of America).

Global Family Program: National Director December 2008 – March 2009 (Organizational Sunset)

- Identified complex problems and reviewed related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions.
- Integrated social marketing within the program which established a Youtube, Facebook & Myspace presence. • Coordinated with Latchezar Petkov (Bulgarian Ambassador) to establish a delegation of Ambassadors to be presented to the European Union. Organized and held press conferences with the Ambassador and also John Conyers (co-founder of Global Family Day Program).
- Incorporated a new public relations strategy, organizing delivery of program materials to every Embassy in Washington DC and New York, which resulted in the material being presented to their respective heads of state. Built press event for New Years Eve with John Conyers and Frank Liu (founder and Executive Director of the NGO World Harmony Foundation). This resulted in our presence in the Washington Post New Years Day.
- Negotiated the \$300,000 sponsorship between the Black Leadership Forum and the newly formed World Harmony Alliance (a 3 organization alliance between Friends of the United Nations, World Harmony Foundation and The Global Family Program), for the Lamplighter Awards held at the Lincoln Theater.
- Supervised the creation of a new website, and worked with the web developer to assure an effective online presence. Coordinated "Blog Blowout" with supporting bloggers who wrote on their blogs about our program, new site, and new direction, consequently raising our Google search by 1.2 million (As of January 3, 2009, Global Family Day being January 1st).
- Liaison between Global Family and Congressional Sponsors formerly and currently serving in Congress. • Liaison between the Organization and International Ambassadors.
- Assessed the feasibility of proposals and identified necessary changes which needed to be made. • Effectively communicated with lawyers regarding the best possible path to dissolve and negotiated with creditors.

Obama for America: Texas (Primary) Ft. Myers, FL (General Election) February 2008 - November 2008

- Organized the grass-roots efforts during the Primary in Navarro County, TX, effectively winning the Navarro County Caucus which sent a majority of delegates to the Texas State Democratic Convention, serving on the State Nominations at Large Committee.
- Developed an effective "Faith Outreach" program with spiritual leaders within counties during both the primary and general election.
- Elected "at large" as a delegate representing Navarro County to the Texas State Democratic Convention. • Field Organizer, organizing over 40 precincts in Lee County Florida, headquartered in County Seat of Fort Myers, Florida. Effectively Greater Fort Myers and all outlying precincts until the Campaign were able to send 4 other organizers to work.
- Due to a large Republican population; developed policy and discussion points with the State Policy Director and effectively organized the Republicans for Obama who completed a series of public forums in Republican neighborhoods, approached Republican Elected Officials (gaining the endorsement of the Republican Elected Mayor of Fort Myers, Florida) and organizing a Republican Round Table with Susan Eisenhower.
- Built press events which included canvasses, phone banks, house parties, and supported the campaign in staffing surrogates. Represented the Campaign at local Democratic Party Events and presided as spokesman for Campaign Presence in Southwest Florida at two separate events with Vice-President Joe Biden.

- Trained volunteers in canvassing, utilizing the online voter database (VAN), phone-banking, and how to effectively teach these skill sets to their peers. This led to the creation of many off site Canvass/VAN/Phone-banking centers ran by our trained volunteers.

Youniversal Jamz Entertainment – Vice-President January - October 2007 (left due to illness)

- Managed a staff of 35 full-time/part-time employees: Prepared work schedules, hired contractors, created payroll.
- Generated the official calendar of events and contracted engagements with other entities, managing the promotions of venues 5 nights a week on Hollywood Blvd which included movie/album premiere parties, listening events, cast/crew parties for production companies, birthday parties for individuals, and public awareness events with the LA Aids and Healthcare Foundation, the National Cancer Society, and the "Stop Hating" Project with film/television actor Nick Cannon.
- Event planning responsibilities included; sponsorship procurement, vendor coordination, authoring marketing strategies, and contract facilitation.
- Effectively integrated social media in marketing campaigns, also teaming with start-up software developers to utilize their newest technologies.
- Acted as the primary liaison between agents, managers, publicists and the company. • Responsible for the prompt meeting of deadlines, and networking with the media.

West Angeles COGIC, Los Angeles, CA: Administrative Assistant to Youth Pastor /Youth Minister of Music January 2006 to May 2007

- Prepared invoices, reports, memos, letters, financial statements and other documents, using word processing, spreadsheet, database, or presentation software.
- Read and analyzed incoming memos, submissions, and reports to determine their significance and plan their distribution.
- Handled the scheduling for Youth Pastors: travel arrangements, car rentals, hotel accommodations, booking dates for out of state trips. Acting as department head in his absence; prepared agendas and made arrangements for committee, board, and other meetings.
- Selected and taught worship material. Organized rehearsals for choir and oversaw the hiring/firing of musicians.

Mayoral Candidate of Corsicana, Texas November 2004 to May 2005

- Developed Campaign Strategy, organized voter registration drives and organized local college students to aid with the campaign.
- Created a ballot which was partly adopted by the elected Mayor of Corsicana, Texas. • Conducted radio/newspaper interviews, creating a message and branding the campaign. • Selected a team, and developed a fundraising strategy.
- Sought endorsements from local officials/business/newspapers. (Received public support from a County Commissioner)
- Created schedule of events, built town-hall events and concerts with live entertainment.

United States Army July 2001 to January 2003: 31 Romeo (multichannel-transmission systems operator-maintainer)

- Install, operate, and perform unit level maintenance on assigned equipment.
- Analyze BIT/BITE diagnostics to isolate faults to the Line Replaceable Unit.
- Install, operate, and perform strapping, re-strapping, maintenance, and unit level maintenance on security devices.
- Operate and perform maintenance on assigned vehicles.
- Install, operate, and perform maintenance on assigned power generators.

Education

Navarro College

January 2003 – May 2005

Theatre Major (and Orientation Leader)

Boards and Affiliations

Organizer: DMV Music Stakeholders

- Outreach to Music Creators / Presenters / Non-Profit Administrators
- Organized a weekly call
- Created relief structure for musicians during the pandemic
- Wrote policies for passage
- Cooperated with elected officials in facilitating aid to both small business owners and music creators

NAACP DC Branch Executive Committee (Vice-Chair LGBTQIA Committee)

- Founding Vice-Chair of the LGBTQIA
- Successfully created the first standing LGBTQIA Committee for the National Organization
- Worked with members of the community who've identified grievances
- Testify before the DC City Council when needed

Board of Governors - Recording Academy (DC Chapter) * Co-Chair of Advocacy

Chairman, Capitol Hill Jazz Foundation (Founding)- (Facilitator of the Congressional Jazz Caucus)

- Formation of the Congressional Jazz Caucus
- Testify before the DC City Council
- Work with the Office of the Mayor to communicate new initiatives to wider creative population
- Facilitated the Public/Private Partnership that resulted in the first DC Music Census
- Wrote and oversaw the process of Performing Arts Promotion Amendment Act

Secretary, Crittenton Services of Greater Washington (*Senior Board Member)

- Liaison to DC City Council
- Helped with messaging of the organization
- Testified before the DC City Council Health Committee
- Developed Fundraising Strategy

Member, Covenant Full Potential Development Center

Member, CTE Vision Foundation

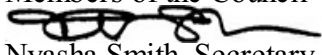
- **Former Executive Director at the Alliance for Education and Progress** (AE&P was an up-start non-profit whose mission is to enhance students' self-awareness and worldview, to encourage them to take greater ownership over their education, and to inspire and better equip them to reach their fullest potential) **With this organization, I have:**
 - a. Conducted the Search for the Board of Directors (board search is now complete we have a working board of directors)
 - b. Developed the Constitution/By-Laws & Conflict of Interest Policy
 - c. Strategized initial funding strategy
 - d. Created an initial budget
- **Social Media Director with the Benjamin Banneker Memorial** (Volunteering as a social media consultant with the board of directors in creating an online presence for the Benjamin Banneker Memorial being built here in Washington D.C.)
- **Co-Leader: Jazz Hubs for America - Doris Duke Foundation**
- **Financial Chair with the 54th Presidential Inauguration**
- **Washington D.C. Young Democrats**
- **Covenant Baptist Church, Washington D.C.**

Awards

- **Advocacy Award: WAMMIES (Washington Area Music Association)**
- **Best Jazz Artist 2022 WAMMIES**
- **Best Jazz Song 2022 WAMMIES**
- **Jazz Journalist Association: Jazz Hero**
- **Jazz Artist of the Year: International Music Entertainment Awards**
- **Distinguished Alumni of the Year: Navarro College**
- **313th Infantry Battalion Commanders' Coin**
- **Fort Gordon, Georgia Post Chaplains Assistant Coin**
- **Key to the City of Corsicana, Texas**
- **Bill Morton Challenge Award (Best Actor for the State of Texas presented by the Texas Community College Theatre Association)**

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20004

Memorandum

To : Members of the Council
From :  Nyasha Smith, Secretary to the Council
Date : Monday, March 6, 2023
Subject : Referral of Proposed Legislation

Notice is given that the attached proposed legislation was introduced in the Office of the Secretary on Friday, March 03, 2023. Copies are available in Room 10, the Legislative Services Division.

TITLE: "Commission on the Arts and Humanities Aaron L. Myers, II Confirmation Resolution of 2023", PR25-0135

INTRODUCED BY: Chairman Mendelson, at the request of Commission on the Arts and Humanities

The Chairman is referring this legislation to Committee of the Whole. This resolution will be deemed disapproved on Thursday, June 15, 2023 without Council action.

Attachment
cc: General Counsel
Budget Director
Legislative Services

**Testimony of
Sunny Sumter, CEO of the DC Jazz Festival
To The Committee on The Whole: PR25-135, “Commission on the Arts
and Humanities Aaron Myers Confirmation Resolution of 2023”
Thursday, March 30, 2023 - Noon**

Good afternoon, Chairman Mendelsohn and members of the DC Council. Thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of the Confirmation of DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities Executive Director Aaron Myers with whom I have had the great pleasure of knowing for more than 7 years as a jazz advocate, music community organizer, arts leader, and artist.

My name is Sunny Sumter and I proudly serve as President and CEO of the DC Jazz Festival. Founded in 2004, we are a nonprofit dedicated to providing engaging programs that introduce people from all walks of life to jazz in DC. I would like to take a moment to thank you Chairman Mendelsohn for your support of our organization—and to each of the Councilmembers who have supported DC Jazz Festival’s mission and goals, we are grateful.

I have watched Aaron Myers grow as a leader in the cultural community since he arrived in DC in 2008. I personally worked with Myers for the first when he asked me to review a draft of the District of Columbia Jazz Preservation Education Promulgation and Performance Artist Act of 2016. I was impressed by his advocacy skills and unique ability to galvanize the community in support of jazz education and performance. Myers soon formed the Capital Hill Jazz Foundation with saxophonist Herb Scott and began a seven-year plus mission to keep jazz presentation center stage by working with the Congressional Jazz Caucus and other stakeholders including the restaurant and hotels associations, Council of BIDS, Office of Planning, and the DC Department of Small and Local Business Development. I witnessed his tenacity as a cultural ambassador, advocating for support of jazz as America’s classical art form in front of members of Congress as well as in front of DC stakeholders. His commitment, poise, and relentless spirit is unmatched, and his leadership has helped the jazz community not only survive but thrive.

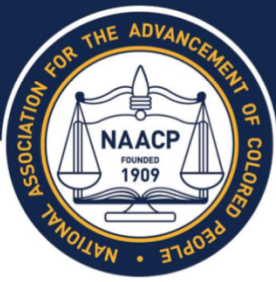
When the pandemic hit in 2020, Myers went a step further to form a DC musicians caucus that brought together presenters, music venue establishments, and artists across musical genres and disciplines. Weekly meetings were held addressing issues related to sustainability and equity as we all were challenged with keep the doors open during a turbulent time. Myers became a coalescing force for the entire music community across wards, inviting to our meetings DC stakeholders including councilmembers, association leaders, and community partners to address a myriad of issues. He built a high level of trust among the music community from DC startups to national organizations. He is truly respected among our peers as a major voice of the arts community. I see him building that same level of trust and respect at the Arts and Humanities agency.

Selecting Aaron Myers as the next Executive Director would be a great step in helping the Commission advance its strategies with:

- 1) A commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity and access;
- 2) Careful attention to leading the pandemic recovery;
- 3) A keen eye to improving and strengthening community awareness and connectedness;
- 4) A thoughtful approach to strengthening district government alignment; and
- 5) An honest rethinking of protocols to improve the DC Commission's governance and organizational culture.

I believe Aaron would work with the same tenacity, poise, and commitment for the agency to advance its mission and goals. You could not ask for a better leader for the Executive Director of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities. I endorse Aaron Myers fully.

Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



NAACP *National Association For The Advancement Of Colored People*

Washington, DC Branch

1000 U Street, NW • Suite 100 • Washington, DC 20001

Council of the District of Columbia, Committee of the Whole

Commission on the Arts and Humanities

*Bill 25-189, “Commission on the Arts and Humanities Acting Executive Director
Amendment Act of 2023”*

*PR 25-135, “Commission on the Arts and Humanities Aaron Myers Confirmation
Resolution of 2023”*

Thursday, March 30, 2023

TESTIMONY

Greetings, Chairman and members of the Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the Commission on the Arts and Humanities. My name is Teela Norris, Director of Program Operations for the NAACP Washington, DC Branch. On behalf of the NAACP DC Branch, the NAACP supports the confirmation of Mr. Aaron Myers as the new Executive Director of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

Aaron Myers brings a record of Executive Leadership advancing Racial Equity through a diverse portfolio of professional experience and leadership in advancing racial justice through the NAACP and other organizations. The NAACP is nation’s oldest and largest civil rights organization, which has championed the fight for racial justice and equity for over 112 years. Aaron Myers is a long-time advocate for Civil Rights and Racial Equity demonstrated through over 20 years of service in the NAACP. Originally from Goodlow, Texas, Aaron Myers began his civil rights journey at the age of 11, as a youth member the Navarro County NAACP Branch in Texas. Over the years, Aaron has exemplified service and sacrifice advocating racial and resource equity across underserved communities. Today, Aaron Myers continues to lead social justice and racial equity initiatives through the NAACP Washington, DC Branch.

Aaron Myers brings a depth of Executive Leadership experience driving organizational transformation and crisis management yielding operational success. His experience includes serving as the Interim President & CEO for Crittenton Services of Greater Washington, which is a leadership and advocacy organization for youth and teenage girls to overcome obstacles, make positive choices, and achieve their goals through programs in schools throughout the Greater Washington area. Aaron Myers also served on Crittenton's Board of Directors for over 7 years. Mr. Myers is a veteran of the United States Army where he's certified as a Radio Telecommunications Specialist, and an alumnus of Navarro College in Corsicana, Texas.

Aaron Myers' professional experience also includes previously serving as the National Director of the nonprofit Global Family Program and the Minister of Music of Covenant Baptist United Church of Christ, which is a position he's held for 12 years.

Aaron Myers brings unique qualifications as an Executive, Civil Rights Leader and an Artist. Aaron is a jazz and soul musician with a record of serving the community. He is the founding Chair of the Board of Directors for the Capitol Hill Jazz Foundation and serves on the Board of Governors with the Recording Academy DC Chapter. He is also a member of the board of directors for CTE Vision Foundation and Covenant Full Potential Development Center. Mr. Myers' activism has been recognized by the Jazz Journalist Association and he's been twice awarded a WAMMIE Award for his activism and service in Washington DC.

The NAACP fights for racial equity and economic empowerment of Black communities. When we talk about racial equity, we're talking about funding opportunities, wealth and access to resources directly impacting the lives of Black people in the District. Racial injustices and systemic inequalities are rooted in a community's ability to acquire, maintain, retain and transition wealth across generations. The Commission's funding has a direct impact on the quality of life of the DC arts community. The work of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities is critical to empowering and sustaining a strong, diverse arts community in the District of Columbia. The Commission provides critical funding to support the arts and humanities in the District. The CAH has an ongoing responsibility to equitably invest in artists and arts institutions across all 8 wards of the District.

Professionally, Aaron Myers is an Executive Leader with a proven-record of delivering transformative leadership, mission-focused execution; managing budgets and scaling

organizations efficiently for successful outcomes. Through his service as the Interim President/CEO at Crittenton Services of Greater Washington, he managed a high-performing team delivering programming execution, grant management, budget management, development and fundraising. Amidst his qualifications as professional Executive, with a commitment to advance racial equity and inclusion, Aaron's passion is rooted in arts. Aaron is a respected musician committed to uplifting communities through the arts and humanities.


Under the transformative and steadfast leadership of the Commission's new Chairman Reginald Van Lee, the Commission has made significant strides towards advancing racial justice and ensuring funding reaches more Black artists in the District's most vulnerable communities. The Commission's leadership has yielded progress towards equity in the FY22 and FY23 grants awarded across the District. The next steps towards advancing the critical work of this commission is to confirm an Executive Director with a record of delivering on mission-success.

Historically, this Commission has faced challenges and has fallen short by not properly investing in Black artists and Black communities East of the River. This Commission is highly impactful and critical and through the continued leadership of Reginald Van Lee and the Executive Staff Leadership of Aaron Myers, we look forward to steering this ship out of crisis into stability and successful outcomes for the DC arts community.


On behalf of the Washington, DC Branch of the NAACP, we strongly urge your confirmation of Aaron Myers as the Executive Director of the Commission of the Arts and Humanities.

Thank you!

Sincerely,


Akosua Ali
President
NAACP DC Branch

Sincerely,


Teela Norris
Director of Program Operations
NAACP DC Branch

Council of the District of Columbia
Committee of the Whole
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington DC 20004

March 29 2023

**Testimony Supporting the Confirmation of DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities
New Executive Director Aaron Myers**

Dear Councilmembers,

My name is Chris Naoum and I am the founder of Listen Local First DC, the Down in the Reeds Festival and Vice Chair of the Mid Atlantic Chapter of the National Independent Venue Association. I am here to testify in support of my friend and colleague Aaron Myers to be the future Executive Director of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

I have worked closely with Aaron for the better part of the last eight years. Aaron is a trusted leader in the music and arts community and has been a tireless advocate for our city's world renowned music and creative ecosystem. What separates Aaron from most arts leaders and advocates has been his ability to grow and form coalitions of creatives. When COVID hit the music community was in shock and disbelief. It was Aaron who reached out to advocates and community leaders and asked me to join him in hosting a weekly call where we all shared resources and information to support the members of our community who were struggling the most. This coalition of artists eventually grew to the DMV music stakeholder coalition that has been meeting regularly for the past 3 years. The Coalition now includes over 350 artists, art collectives, venues, producers, sound engineers, managers and community leaders. It was Aaron who brought this community that had previously been at odds with each other together to help them understand that everyone is valued in this complicated ecosystem and each sector plays a part in assuring its survival. I know that this purpose behind Aaron's work will greatly serve the Arts Commission which should play a huge role in coalition building among arts disciplines in this city.

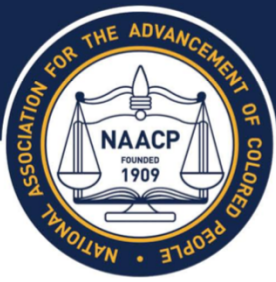
Aaron is extremely qualified for the job of Executive Director because of his perspective and experience as a working musician in this community. Aaron understands first hand the struggle of the working creative and also understands how valuable an agency like DCCAH can be for these communities. Aaron has applied for grants, dealt with delays in grant funding, advised on institutional non profit operating budgets, and understands the necessity of making sure the Commission's resources and information reach the most remote corners of the creative community.

Finally perhaps Aaron's most impressive leadership quality is his ability to find common ground in advocacy. I have seen him work and communicate effectively with all of the Council, various agencies and major local industry organizations to help pass legislation and create dialogue in

spaces it did not previously exist. I believe this skill set will serve him greatly in the Commission because Art and Music do not exist in a silo. The Arts impact economic growth, city planning, environmental policy, education, housing, social justice, tourism and so many sectors of our lives that we need to make sure all of the sectors of our government understand the impact arts play throughout the city. Knowing Aaron for as long as I've known him, I know he will be the champion the arts community needs to build these bridges throughout the city.

Thank you for your time,

Chris Naoum, Listen Local First DC, Down in the Reeds, National Independent Venue Association



NAACP *National Association For The Advancement Of Colored People*

Washington, DC Branch

1000 U Street, NW • Suite 100 • Washington, DC 20001

Council of the District of Columbia, Committee of the Whole

Commission on the Arts and Humanities

*Bill 25-189, “Commission on the Arts and Humanities Acting Executive Director
Amendment Act of 2023”*

*PR 25-135, “Commission on the Arts and Humanities Aaron Myers Confirmation
Resolution of 2023”*

Thursday, March 30, 2023

TESTIMONY

Greetings, Chairman and members of the Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the Commission on the Arts and Humanities. My name is Akosua Ali, President of the NAACP Washington, DC Branch and a Ward 7 resident. The NAACP supports the confirmation of Aaron Myers as the Executive Director of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

The NAACP is nation’s oldest and largest civil rights organization, which has championed the fight for racial justice and equity for over 112 years. Today, the NAACP is a fierce, advocate committed to the fight for funding, resources and policies to positively impact on Black lives. The NAACP fights for racial equity and economic empowerment of Black communities. When we talk about racial equity, we're talking about funding opportunities, wealth and access to resources directly impacting the lives of Black people in the District. Racial injustices and systemic inequalities are rooted in a community’s ability to acquire, maintain, retain and transition wealth across generations. The Commission’s funding has a direct impact on the quality of life of the DC arts community. Financial empowerment impacts access to quality healthcare, education, employment, housing, criminal justice and legal representation. When the Black art organizations, businesses and artists have increased opportunities for economic empowerment, all of our communities win.

Aaron Myers is a leader with a record of delivering organizational transformation and a demonstrated passion for the Arts, Civil Rights and Racial Equity. Aaron Myers is a long-time advocate for Civil Rights, Racial Equity and Justice, demonstrated through over 20 years of service in the NAACP. Beginning at the age of 11, Aaron Myers learned the importance of activism through the arts as a youth member the Navarro County NAACP Branch in Texas. Over the years, Aaron has exemplified service and sacrifice advocating racial and resource equity across underserved communities. Today, Aaron Myers continues to lead social justice and racial equity initiatives through the NAACP Washington, DC Branch.

The work of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities is critical to empowering and sustaining a strong, diverse arts community in the District of Columbia. The Commission provides critical funding to support the arts and humanities in the District. The CAH has an ongoing responsibility to equitably invest in artists and arts institutions across all 8 wards of the District.

Professionally, Aaron Myers is an Executive Leader with a proven-record of delivering transformative leadership, mission-focused execution; managing budgets and scaling organizations efficiently for successful outcomes. Through his service as the Interim President/CEO at Crittenton Services of Greater Washington, he managed a high-performing team delivering programming execution, grant management, budget management, development and fundraising. Amidst his qualifications as professional Executive, with a commitment to advance racial equity and inclusion, Aaron's passion is rooted in arts. Aaron is a respected musician committed to uplifting communities through the arts and humanities. As an Executive, Musician, Veteran and Activist within the dc community, Aaron Myers has developed strong leadership and relationship skills while leading departments, building campaigns, and working in the space of music advocacy within the greater Washington DC community. Aaron Myers has developed deep relationships, respect and a repour with partners and artists across the DC arts community. Aaron began playing the piano at the age of 3, and his talents were further fostered in the church along with a classical teacher.

Under the transformative and steadfast leadership of the Commission's new Chairman Reginald Van Lee, the Commission has made significant strides towards advancing racial justice and ensuring funding reaches more Black artists in the District's most vulnerable communities. The Commissions leadership has yielded progress towards equity in the FY22 and FY23 grants

awarded across the District. The next steps towards advancing the critical work of this commission is to confirm an Executive Director with a record of delivering on mission-success.

Historically, this Commission has faced challenges and has fallen short by not properly investing in Black artists and Black communities East of the River. This Commission is highly impactful and critical and through the continued leadership of Reginal Van Lee and the Executive Staff Leadership of Aaron Myers, we look forward to steering this ship out of crisis into stability and successful outcomes for the DC arts community.

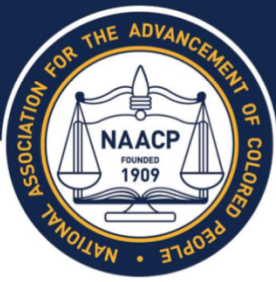
As leader with a record of delivering innovative and transformative solutions, while managing crisis and operational success, Aaron Myers is the leader for such a time as this. Improving the operational efficiencies of the Commission, will have a direct impact on the financial empowerment and quality of life of the DC arts community. Through strong leadership, crisis management and stability, DC's arts community will thrive and all of our communities will win.

On behalf of the Washington, DC Branch of the NAACP, we strongly urge your confirmation of Aaron Myers as the Executive Director of the Commission of the Arts and Humanities. Thank you!

Sincerely,



Akosua Ali
President
NAACP DC Branch



NAACP *National Association For The Advancement Of Colored People*

Washington, DC Branch

1000 U Street, NW • Suite 100 • Washington, DC 20001

Council of the District of Columbia, Committee of the Whole

Commission on the Arts and Humanities

*Bill 25-189, “Commission on the Arts and Humanities Acting Executive Director
Amendment Act of 2023”*

*PR 25-135, “Commission on the Arts and Humanities Aaron Myers Confirmation
Resolution of 2023”*

Thursday, March 30, 2023

TESTIMONY

Greetings, Chairman and members of the Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the Commission on the Arts and Humanities. My name is Rhonda Humphries, I serve as the LGBTQIA+ Chair for the NAACP Washington, DC Branch. The NAACP supports the confirmation of Aaron Myers as the Executive Director of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

The NAACP is nation’s oldest and largest civil rights organization, which has championed the fight for racial justice and equity for over 112 years. Today, the NAACP is a fierce, advocate committed to the fight for funding, resources and policies to positively impact on Black lives. The NAACP fights for racial equity and economic empowerment of Black communities. When we talk about racial equity, we're talking about funding opportunities, wealth and access to resources directly impacting the lives of all resident, particularly Black residents in the District of Columbia.

Aaron Myers is a leader with a record of delivering organizational transformation and a demonstrated passion for the Arts, Civil Rights and Racial Equity. Aaron Myers is a long-time advocate for Civil Rights, Racial Equity and Justice, demonstrated through over 20 years of service in the NAACP. Over the years, Aaron has exemplified service and sacrifice advocating racial and

resource equity across underserved communities. Today, Aaron Myers continues to lead social justice and racial equity initiatives through the NAACP Washington, DC Branch.

The work of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities is critical to empowering and sustaining a strong, diverse arts community in the District of Columbia. The Commission provides critical funding to support the arts and humanities in the District. The CAH has an ongoing responsibility to equitably invest in artists and arts institutions across all 8 wards of the District.

Professionally, Aaron Myers is an Executive Leader with a proven-record of delivering transformative leadership, mission-focused execution; managing budgets and scaling organizations efficiently for successful outcomes. Through his service as the Interim President/CEO at Crittenton Services of Greater Washington, he managed a high-performing team delivering programming execution, grant management, budget management, development and fundraising. Amidst his qualifications as professional Executive, with a commitment to advance racial equity and inclusion, Aaron's passion is rooted in arts. Aaron is a respected musician committed to uplifting communities through the arts and humanities.

On behalf of the Washington, DC Branch of the NAACP, we strongly urge your confirmation of Aaron Myers as the Executive Director of the Commission of the Arts and Humanities. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Rhonda Humphries (she/her/hers)
LGBTQIA+ Chair
NAACP DC Branch

From: [Pie Lady](#)
To: [Committee of the Whole \(Council\)](#)
Subject: Testimony Aaron Myers" confirmation as Executive Director of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities (DCCA)
Date: Wednesday, March 29, 2023 11:53:45 AM

I am honored to provide my testimony in support of Aaron Myers' confirmation as Executive Director of the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities (CAH). Aaron is a well-respected advocate, artist, and community leader who possesses extensive non-profit and policy experience. His contributions and accomplishments are well known, and I believe that having someone with his level of experience and expertise taking the helm at CAH is the best possible outcome for the organization and the arts community it serves.

One of the most important aspects of Aaron's candidacy for this position is his deep understanding of both the arts community and the inner workings of DC government. Far too often, individuals are appointed to governing positions with little to no experience in the industries they oversee. This can lead to a lack of understanding and empathy for the needs of those being governed. Aaron's background in the arts community, combined with his extensive knowledge of government operations, will allow him to serve as a strong advocate for the arts and humanities while also navigating the complex bureaucratic processes that are necessary to achieve meaningful change.

In addition to his expertise and experience, Aaron is a leader who understands the importance of collaboration and community engagement. He has a proven track record of bringing people together to solve problems and find shared solutions. This will be invaluable in his role as Executive Director of CAH, where he will need to work closely with artists, arts organizations, and government agencies to support and promote the arts and humanities in the DC community.

I have no doubt that as Executive Director, Aaron Myers will lead CAH to new heights. He brings a wealth of experience, knowledge, and passion to the role, and I look forward to all he will accomplish with CAH as the effective and visionary leader that he is.

All the best,

Sandra Basanti
Owner, Pie Shop

--



PieShopDC.com
1339 H st. N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMISSION ON THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

**PUBLIC HEARING ON PR25-0135
THE COMMISSION ON THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES
AARON MYERS CONFIRMATION RESOLUTION OF 2023**

STATEMENT OF

REGGIE VAN LEE
CHAIRPERSON
COMMISSION ON THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE HONORABLE PHIL MENDELSON, CHAIRMAN

MARCH 30, 2023

JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC

DEAR CHAIRMAN MENDELSON AND COUNCILMEMBERS, GOOD AFTERNOON. MY NAME IS REGGIE VAN LEE (SELF-IDENTIFY) AND I SERVE AS THE CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION ON THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES.

THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO INTRODUCE THE COMMISSION'S NOMINEE FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AARON MYERS. BUT FIRST, I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO RECOGNIZE INTERIM DIRECTOR DAVID MARKEY FOR HIS DEDICATION AND SERVICE TO THIS AGENCY AND OUR CONSTITUENTS DURING THIS TRANSITION PERIOD. AFTER PULLING DOUBLE-DUTY SINCE EARLY FALL, I'M SURE HE'S LOOKING FORWARD TO RETURNING TO HIS POSITION AS DEPUTY DIRECTOR FULL-TIME. THANK YOU, DAVID. AND THANK YOU TO THE STAFF FOR YOUR CONTINUING EFFORTS.

AS CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION, I AM PROUD TO OFFER THIS TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE PASSAGE OF PR25-0135, THE "COMMISSION ON THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES AARON MYERS CONFIRMATION RESOLUTION OF 2023".

TO HELP FACILITATE THE SEARCH FOR A NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WE HIRED POLIHIRE, A DC-BASED SEARCH FIRM WITH VAST EXPERIENCE IN EXECUTIVE-LEVEL RECRUITING, ESPECIALLY FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES. WE HAD MUCH PUBLICITY AND MANY APPLICANTS.

POLIHIRE SCRUBBED THE LIST, BROUGHT US FINALISTS, HAD IN-DEPTH TELEPHONE AND PAPER INTERVIEWS AND FINALLY WE HAD FOUR CANDIDATES. AARON MYERS WAS THE WINNING CHOICE, NOMINATED BY A MAJORITY VOTE OF THE COMMISSIONERS AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE FULL COMMISSION ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2023.

WE CHOSE AARON FOR MANY REASONS, BUT CERTAINLY HIS EXPERIENCE AS AN ENTREPRENEUR, ARTIST, CREATIVE ACTIVIST AND POLICY WOKN WERE KEY FACTORS IN OUR DECISION MAKING. IN THEIR CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT,

POLIHIRE NOTED THAT MR. MYERS IS AN EXECUTIVE LEADER WHO HAS A KEEN MULTI-DIMENSIONAL VIEWPOINT RESULTING FROM HIS EXPANSIVE PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES.

HE SERVES AS AN INTERNATIONAL TOURING JAZZ ARTIST AND THE MINISTER OF MUSIC FOR COVENANT BAPTIST UCC, VICE-CHAIR OF THE LGBTQIA COMMITTEE FOR THE NAACP DC, MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS WITH THE RECORDING ACADEMY, DC CHAPTER, FOUNDING BOARD CHAIR OF THE CAPITOL HILL JAZZ FOUNDATION, AND A VETERAN OF THE US ARMY.

HE HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED FOR HIS ADVOCACY INVOLVEMENT BY THE JAZZ JOURNALIST ASSOCIATION AND AWARDED A WASHINGTON AREA MUSIC ASSOCIATION AWARD FOR HIS WASHINGTON, DC SERVICE.

IN POLIHIRE'S OVERALL ASSESSMENT, THEY ALSO NOTED THAT MR. MYERS WOULD BRING TO THIS POSITION RICH AND RELEVANT RELATIONSHIPS THAT HE HAS DEVELOPED AND CULTIVATED NOT ONLY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA BUT THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

HE UNDERSTANDS THE IMPORTANCE OF FORGING RELATIONSHIPS AND HIGHLIGHTED HIS PROFICIENCY IN THIS SKILL.

HE IS A VISIONARY AND EMPATHETIC LEADER WHO BELIEVES IN THE POWER OF LISTENING, RESPECT, AND CONSISTENCY.

HE IS A CHAMPION OF STRATEGY AND LEVERAGING DATA TO EFFECTUATE MONUMENTAL CHANGE. HE POSSESSES A VISION THAT DC IS UNIQUELY PRIMED TO HAVE THE STRONGEST ART SCENE IN THE COUNTRY.

AND WE ARE PARTICULARLY INSPIRED BY HIS DESIRE THAT ALL LOCAL ARTISTS ARE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHINE AND KNOW THEIR CITY STANDS BEHIND THEM.

I CAN SAY WITH FULL CONFIDENCE THAT THE NOMINATION OF AARON MYERS FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR THE COMMISSION WAS THE RIGHT CHOICE, AND I LOOK FORWARD TO HIS CONFIRMATION BY THE COUNCIL.

THANK YOU.

Good Afternoon, my name is Aaron Myers, nominee for Executive Director of the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities.

I would like to first thank Chairman Mendleson and members of this committee for the opportunity to testify before you today. To the members of the Commission, I want to offer my gratitude for your support and faith in my ability to serve the commission and this community well. To the staff at the commission, I thank you for your cooperation and patience as we've navigated this unique process. And to the community, I come to you as a humble servant, with the sole intent to serve you in a capacity that will uplift, encourage, empower and support all of those working to preserve, promote and persevere in the arts here in Washington DC.

I must say that I am grateful to live in a city that would adopt, nurture and support my art. My beginnings were not typical but also not terribly atypical. Raised by a single mother, in the remnants of a sharecropping community, I realized early in my life the importance of looking beyond oneself towards the greater good of the community. My grandmother, when she was in good health, would often walk and visit with those who were sick & shut-in. I watched as those who were in the throws of their own sickness or challenges, how they would be encouraged by a simple token of selflessness. From my grandparents living room I discovered an instrument that became an extension of my being...the piano. While sitting on the porch, my grand-parents were my first faithful audience members for better and for worse. On a small salary my mother bought a piano for our home...but because of our circumstances, I remember the evening when the movers came to take back the piano, leaving me to practice on a simple paper diagram in the back of my piano lesson book. And while there were no sounds being emitted from the keys on the paper, each note rang clearly in my head. My aunt Barbara worked with my mother to get a permanent piano in our home, and from that moment on, I was provided the tools needed to learn about myself, express myself, and push myself through the music.

I experienced the true meaning of this selflessness when members of my community provided me with platforms to perform my craft. Whether it was in the church, or in the music room in our elementary school, in the band hall or auditorium, I found myself using my craft to entertain, commemorate events, walk couples down the aisle...or to console as final goodbyes were being said. My life has been filled with the opportunities to do what I love to do, regardless of location, and regardless of circumstance...Art equals Life.

It's because of this, I am excited to be given the opportunity to serve this community, in this capacity, at this moment. Make no mistake, I am not ignorant of the challenges that the commission has faced over the years. I have sat in this seat and offered both praise and critique, holding this very commission to a standard that the music has held me to for many years...a standard of authenticity, being authentic to the task of funding, promoting, empowering, and uplifting the creative community in Washington DC. As we sit here today, we sit here with a choice that looms over all of us. Will we, after the intense trauma we faced over the last few years and after seeing what life is like when circumstances try to extinguish the fire art creates, will we after seeing venues, galleries, and theaters close their doors, will we after being denied the opportunity to gather together in person to experience creativity in a corporate

setting, will we after seeing the resilience and true ingenuity of creatives to get their art to a starving community, will we return to the “Status quo” practices that left creatives on the margins fighting through racist policies and problematic procedures to be seen and or heard, art nonprofits financially struggling to achieve their mission, venues faced with uncertainty about their futures, and communities not having the proper the tools to access the very art that will define who we are to future generations?

At this moment we have a choice to say, no...there is a better way. The way may be hard and a bit undefined, and it may be filled with challenges, but I am excited, if granted the opportunity, to provide the leadership, energy, and creative solutions that can help us as a community meet the moment for our creatives, and to truly reinforce to the world that DC is the District of Creatives, the Creative Capital of this Country. It is my hope, that with the support of this community, council and administration, you all will grant the commission the opportunity to serve you in a better way, a way that will uplift and justly reflect the creative community of DC.

Just as with that diagram of a piano...I can hear clearly the progress that is before us.

Thank you

Aaron Myers DCCAH Executive Director's Confirmation Hearing Questions

2. Please provide the name of each business entity transacting any business with the District Government in which you have a beneficial interest valued in excess of \$1,000, including publicly traded stock.

None

3. Please provide the name of each business entity transacting any business (including consulting) with the District Government from which you or your immediate family have received (or are receiving) income for services rendered in excess of \$200 during the past two years.

Crittenton Services of Greater Washington: I serve as their Interim CEO and I've met with BEGA to ensure the overlap would not interfere with my tour of duty to the District of Columbia.

4. Please provide the name of each business entity transacting business with the District Government in which you or any member of your immediate family serves as an officer, director, partner, or agent. Also list the position(s) held, a brief description of the entity, and any other pertinent details.

Crittenton Services of Greater Washington: I serve as their Interim CEO and I've met with BEGA to ensure the overlap would not interfere with my tour of duty to the District of Columbia.

5. Please provide the name of any lender and the amount of liability for each outstanding liability borrowed by you or any member of your immediate family in excess of \$1,000. Do not include loans from a federal or state insured or regulated financial institution, or from any business enterprise regularly engaged in the business of providing revolving credit or installment accounts.

None

6. Please list the location of all real property located in the District of Columbia in which you have an interest with a fair market value in excess of \$1,000. Aaron Myers, II

None

7. Please list all professional and occupational licenses held by you. 2 March Page 23, of 2023

None

8. Please list any professional organizations of which you are currently a member.

NAACP - Recording Academy - ASCAP

9. Please list all boards and commissions connected with the District government on which you are or have been a member and include the term of service for each.

None

10. Please list any other boards (e.g., Board of Directors of a non-profit) on which you are currently a member.

Covenant Full Potential Development Center
CTE Vision Foundation
Crittenton Services of Greater Washington
DC Chapter of the Recording Academy (Governor)
DC Branch of the NAACP (Executive Committee)

11. Do you have any outstanding liability for taxes, fees, or other payments to the District, federal, or other state or local governments, either contested or uncontested? If so, please provide documentation of attempts to pay the amount owed or to resolve the disputed claim.

I do not have any outstanding liabilities for Taxes

12. Do you or any member of your immediate family have any interest, financial or otherwise, that may directly or indirectly pose a conflict of interest for you in the performance of your duties as Director?

No conflicts exist.

13. Please describe any local political activity (i.e. the District of Columbia local elections or campaigns) that you have engaged in over the past five years, including all campaign contributions to a D.C. candidate or political committee.

I have supported and endorsed political candidates (some now on the current council others who are no longer serving) including both the current Mayor and Mayoral Candidates using my various platforms and also financially. In the 2022 primary I maxed out my giving to then candidate Robert White. I am a member of the Democratic Party. I've signed petitions for candidates to get on the ballot in every election. The DC Election's political contribution page is not up to date.

Federally, all that is on their contribution site is a donation to Act Blue for \$50, but I was a monthly contributor to Kamala Harris's campaign (and subsequently Joe Biden's campaign).

14. Why have you agreed to serve, and how do you plan to help the Commission fulfill its role and mission? Include in your answer what you believe should be the priorities of the agency and specific challenges you see for the agency.

I have agreed to serve the commission because DC deserves both a commission and a director dedicated to leading in a capacity focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, innovation and wellness. It is my goal to bring stable, compassionate leadership to the commission, to be a bridge between working artists and the commission, and to restore trust with the community in the areas where that trust has been lost. It is my belief that the commission is in a position to gather the data necessary to show both our city leaders and the taxpayers what the full breadth of our creative community looks like, its diversity, the spaces in which additional support is needed, while continuing with those projects and strategies that are working well.

Understanding the true tax impact the creative portion of the creative economy has on the District will inform us on how to approach industries we want to move to our city, how to add more creative value to neighborhoods that may be creative deserts, and how to properly support those creatives who still reside in the city.

Prioritizing systems that impact our grantees will be my chief focus. Are these systems working at their optimum best? Are there places for improvement within these systems? Are there examples of other localities that are serving similar populations and operating systems that would improve our service to the community? How can we improve upon these systems without negatively disrupting the work, livelihoods and lives of our grantees, will be a focus. Collecting data to understand the full scope of our creative community will also be a priority. Right now, we (the commission and/or the city) do not have accurate data in which we could measure the success of our investment. With this data (similar to artist censuses done across the country) we will know exactly how we, as a city, could be properly supporting, marketing, and promoting the creative community, while also having the data to support that arguments of why DC is, and should be, a creative's destination (whether from an individual or a business standpoint).

Lastly, the wellness and mental health of both the staff and the creative community will remain a focus. The true toll upon the mental and emotional health of many government workers has not been quantified. Collectively, the government workers and citizenry have endured a massive amount of trauma together. We now must find a way forward that does not include adopting unhealthy behavior that did not serve either the workers or the citizens in a good way before the pandemic began. It is my goal that those who work in the agency are not filled with anxiety or angst when they have to come to work while at the same time, it is my desire that those who must call on and depend upon the commission are not filled with anxiety or angst when having to work in partnership with us.

I am grateful for DC adopting me, my art and affirming me as a whole person. My service to the commission and community is my way of displaying my gratitude to those who've made DC a welcoming place.

15. Please discuss any past and present experiences not already mentioned that you believe are relevant to support your appointment as Executive Director of the Commission?

Since my time in Washington DC I have been a working artist, and as an artist I've been a staunch advocate and critic of the Commission. I've been at ground level understanding what it is like to play gigs that didn't pay (or did not pay on time). Working with organizations that are doing vital work in the community, but were without champions to grant them the financial support they needed to maximize their reach. I've watched as the Commission has developed and produced helpful programs for the community, but I've also watched a community completely unaware of these programs or the support that was being offered. I've been in leadership of nonprofit organizations for over 20 years, and I've learned from a family of community activists that there is a role to play when fighting for your community, and one of those roles is at the table in government. I have played roles in small and large organizations during times of transition and most recently served as Interim-CEO of a nonprofit that is over 135 years old and now serving more participants than they've ever served before, with cleaner data to understand the true impact of the organization, and a path forward to extend their reach to more of those who are in need. As an artist, I bring creative solutions and creative energy to an agency this community desperately needs.

Anthropologists will tell you, in the future when our descendants are looking back to understand who we are as a people, they may look to our laws but it will be our art and culture that will explain our humanity. Who we are, and our success as a community, will rest upon the success of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities. I am proud to say, and if given the honor to serve, to prove, that I am invested wholeheartedly in its success.

1 **DRAFT COMMITTEE PRINT**
2 Committee of the Whole
3 May 2, 2023
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7 A PROPOSED RESOLUTION

8
9 25-135

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11 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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16 To confirm the appointment of Mr. Aaron L. Myers, II as Executive Director of the Commission
17 on the Arts and Humanities.

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19 RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this
20 resolution may be cited as the “Commission on the Arts and Humanities Aaron L. Myers, II
21 Confirmation Resolution of 2023”.

22 Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia confirms the appointment of:

23 Aaron L. Myers, II
24 18th Street, NW.
25 Washington, D.C. 20010
26 (Ward 1)
27

28 as Executive Director of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities, pursuant to section 6(a) of
29 the Commission on the Arts and Humanities Act, effective October 21, 1975 (D.C. Law 1-22;
30 D.C. Official Code § 39-205(a)) for the remainder of the unexpired 4-year term ending
31 September 30, 2024.

32 Sec. 3. The Council of the District of Columbia shall transmit a copy of this resolution,
33 upon its adoption, to the nominee and to the Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

34 Sec. 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.