

November 2nd 2021

Members of The Council of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington DC 20004

CC: Councilmember Kenyon McDuffie, Councilmember Charles Allen, Councilmember Brianne Nadeau, Councilmember Christina Henderson, Councilmember Anita Bonds, Councilmember Janeese Lewis-George, Councilmember Robert White, Councilmember Mary Cheh, Councilmember Trayon White, Councilmember Elissa Silverman, Councilmember Vincent Gray

**Requesting Approval of the Nominations of Commissioners Natalie Hopkinson and Cora Masters Barry to the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities**

Greetings, members of The Council of the District of Columbia,

The undersigned representatives of the DMV Music Stakeholders coalition join Don't Mute DC, NAACP, and National Council of Black Women in urging your support of Councilmember Robert White's emergency legislation supporting the re-appointment of 4 Black Women Commissioners to the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities (CAH), including Cora Masters Barry, Dr. Natalie Hopkinson, Gretchen Wharton and Kymber Menkiti. Two emergency bills and an emergency resolution have been drafted and will be introduced to the Council for a vote on Tuesday November 2nd 2021; we urge every member of council to support these bills and resolutions that will allow CAH Commissioners Cora Masters Barry and Nathalie Hopkinson to serve their full terms as DCCAHA Commissioners.

The DMV Music Stakeholder Group is an advocacy collective of over 300 individual members including musicians, music nonprofits, festival producers, managers, venue owners and promoters that make up DC's vibrant music community. This group supported the taskforce that resulted in the recent appointment of Reginald Van Lee and yielded significant productivity and operational efficiency on the Commission. We stand with the commissioners that were appointed by the Mayor and ask the Council to reappoint all four Commissioners to ensure strong voices are represented to advocate for resource and racial equity in the arts community.

For years, the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities (CAH) has failed to properly invest in Black artists and Black communities East of the River. These ongoing systemic challenges were pointed out by former CAH Chair Charles C. Stephenson Jr. in a recent Washington Post op-ed, as well in a distressing Washington Post article that exposed racism and cronyism in the agency's current staff. The CAH executes a \$34 million budget supporting the arts and humanities, which is critical to sustaining working artists and art organizations across the District. The CAH has an ongoing responsibility to equitably invest in artists and arts institutions across all 8 wards of the District.

Reappointing and maintaining strong voices on the CAH are critical to transforming this organization and ensuring resources reach more Black artists in the District's most vulnerable communities. Each nominee brings a record of service in the arts which is critical at this historic moment.

Thank you for your consideration. Given the time-sensitivity of this emergency legislation, we are sending this general letter of support on behalf of our broader stakeholder group representing the music community. We will follow up tomorrow with a letter that includes additional individual signatories.

Respectfully yours,

Members of the DMV Music Stakeholder Coalition

Aaron Myers - (Musician/ DC Chapter of the Recording Academy Board Member/ Capitol Hill Jazz Foundation)

Chris Naoum (Listen Local First DC/ Down in the Reeds Festival)

Jamie Sandel (CapitalBop)

Sheldon Scott (Artist Ward 1, Eaton Workshop)

Sandra Basanti (Pie Shop)

Chris Grasso (musician/music presenter)

Erin Frisby (Musician/Artist/This Could Go Boom!)

Travis Gardner (Musician, Manager, Co-Owner The Experience Band & Show, LLC)

Charlie Gardner (Manager, Co-Owner The Experience Band & Show, LLC)

Angela Byrd ( MadInTheDMV)

Ariel Davis (Save The Music Foundation)

Caroline Phillips (National Cannabis Festival)

Dior Ashley Brown (Musician, DC Music Summit, DC Chapter of the Recording Academy)

Jackson Sinnenberg (CapitalBop, Home Rule Music and Film Preservation Foundation)

Herb Scott-Saxophonist, (Executive Director of the Capitol Hill Jazz Foundation)

Jeremy Castillo, (Director of Performance, Contemporary Music Chair, Levine Music)

Jennifer Langer (EastCoast Entertainment, Moonshine Society)

Amy K Bormet (Washington Women in Jazz)

Graham Smith-White (Musician Ward 4, The Infinite Goodness, Awesome Foundation DC)

Elin Melgarejo (singer, award-winning composer, Thievery Corporation)

Brent Gossett (DuPont Brass)

Rev. Dr. Sandra Butler Truesdale (DC Legendary Musicians)