From: Jena McRae
To: Dhaliwal, Manraj (ART)
Cc: Maria Jenson
Subject: Re: Written summary of comments
Date: Friday, September 5, 2025 1:21:34 PM

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Dear Commission Secretary,

I am unable to attend the Arts Commissioners meeting this afternoon, but had planned to give public comment after the update from the Community Investments Committee.

Please include these comments in the meeting minutes:

> My name is Jena McRae, Managing Director at SOMArts. I must share my concerns about the shift to a reimbursement-based grant structure and the ongoing delay in executing our FY25–26 grant agreement. SOMArts used its reserves to survive the pandemic, keeping staff employed with healthcare. A reimbursement model assumes liquidity we don't have—a dangerous assumption for small organizations serving communities most impacted by systemic inequity. **According to SMU DataArts, 4 in 10 arts orgs have three months or less of working capital.**
>
> We are now in Q2 and still waiting for our first FY26 disbursement, despite submitting documents on time with our Program Officer's support. These delays threaten our ability to pay staff, support artists, and keep our doors open.
>
> Please finalize our grant agreement and reconsider the reimbursement model. We want to work with you on policies that protect San Francisco's arts ecosystem—not policies that risk its collapse.
>
> Thank you for your time.

Jena McRae
Managing Director
SOMArts Cultural Center
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(Gender pronouns: she, her)
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On Tue, Jul 8, 2025 at 12:36 PM Jena McRae <jena@somarts.org> wrote:

> Dear Commission Secretary,

I'd like to share a 150-word summary of the comments I shared in yesterday's meeting of the Commissioners, in response to item #6 on the published agenda: Advance Payment Policy Update (which was moved to item #4):

My name is Jena McRae, I've worked at SOMArts for 8.5 years and currently serve as Managing Director. I understand the Arts Commission is working with the Controller to align grant policies with city standards. As mayor-appointed commissioners, I urge you to advocate for artists and small arts organizations. Reimbursable grant models requiring receipts would be devastating—adding administrative burdens and delaying funds we can't afford to front. Nonprofits in NYC are owed over $1 billion due to invoicing delays, not misuse, as reported in the *New York Times*. Similarly, SOMArts has faced delays working with MOHCD due to bureaucratic hurdles. During the pandemic, we exhausted reserves to retain staff and provide healthcare; we can't sustain additional financial strain. Unlike large contractors, we lack the capital to wait months for reimbursement. We already undergo annual compliance reviews—why multiply this burden? Please help ensure funding processes remain accessible and equitable for our community.

Thank you for including this in the minutes.

Jena McRae
Managing Director
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