

March 16, 2023

Rep. Fue Lee, Chair
Minnesota House Capital Investment Committee

Re: Playwrights' Center, HF 812

Dear Representative Lee,

I write today to ask you to support the funding of Playwrights' Center's second phase bonding request. After over 50 years of sustaining, developing and advocating for playwrights and their work, we have outgrown our facility in Minneapolis, and are now approaching the largest transformational moment in our history – a move to the Creative Enterprise Zone in St. Paul.

As a playwright myself, this moment is particularly meaningful, because it not only signals an exciting turning point in the life of this one-of-a-kind organization, but it is a pronouncement to playwrights everywhere that we matter, that our stories matter, that there is immeasurable value in narrative.

Almost nine years ago I received a call from Jeremy Cohen, the Center's Producing Artistic Director. I had applied for a fellowship at Playwrights' Center, not really knowing what it was and not really thinking that I had any chance of receiving it. But my cell phone rang and when I picked up Jeremy said "we want you." And let me tell you, playwrights don't hear those words very often.

On the strength of those words, I moved here, thinking I'd give Minnesota nine months – the length of the fellowship – and then hightail it back to New York City. But I never left. Playwrights' Center changed my life. Literally. I have a career because of the people there. I am a better writer and a better human being because of the people there.

And there are thousands of similar stories: of artists who are, or have been, supported by Playwrights' Center. It is a game-changing organization. Its intensely personal approach to artistic development – putting playwrights at the center of the process – is quietly (or not so quietly) changing America's theatrical landscape, deepening and diversifying our stages one playwright and one play at a time. In the past year alone, 78% of playwrights the Center engaged with most deeply were female playwrights, playwrights of color, and Indigenous playwrights.

Our new building will dramatically expand our ability to serve playwrights and theaters across the country. It will help us do what we do – better. A creative revolution is happening from right here in the Twin Cities. I hope that you, and the State of Minnesota, will join us in making it possible.

Sincerely,
Harrison David Rivers
Playwright & Television Writer
President, Playwrights' Center Board of Directors



755 PRIOR AVE N, #107
SAINT PAUL, MN 55104
THEATERMU.ORG

Representative Fue Lee
MN House Capital Investment Committee
485 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 15, 2023

Representative Lee,

I write in support of HF812 authored by Representative Kaohly Her. The Twin Cities are home to the second largest number of theaters in the United States. Our theaters provide a great opportunity for our communities to view plays, and for artists to produce art. The Twin Cities, is unique compared to other theater towns. The Minnesota spirit of community and collaboration is evident in our theater community. The Playwrights Center can probably list amongst their list of core writers who they've supported and nurtured a large list of Twin Cities theater companies where their playwrights have had works performed. But the support goes beyond that.

At Theater Mu, we count the Playwrights Center among one of our closest theater partners. As a theater without our own physical performance space, we rely on our partnerships with theaters such as the Playwrights Center to be able to present our work. This season, the Playwrights Center not only hosted a workshop reading of our Lao play, Kung Fu Zombies Saga but they also committed funds to help us pay our artists to develop the play in advance of the world premiere on our mainstage this summer. A new center for the Playwright Center to St. Paul puts them right in our backyard, making collaboration even easier for us and our artists.

In 2015 a survey by the Dramatists Guild of America reported that just 12% of works produced by regional theaters between 2011 and 2014 were authored by playwrights of color. In the last couple of years with the health pandemic and racial unrest resulting unrest, including the rise in anti-Asian hate (the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism revealed that the anti-Asian hate crimes increased 339% in 2021) has many theaters, including Theater Mu examine what kinds of plays we are producing.

The current social climate highlights the need for more stories from all of our communities to be written and told. The Playwrights Center is an important home for storytellers. Many of Theater Mu's Asian American playwrights have had the support of the Playwrights Center.

On behalf of Theater Mu and our artistic community, I hope that you will consider supporting this bond request.

Respectfully,

MOVING **ASIAN AMERICAN** THEATER FORWARD



755 PRIOR AVE N, #107
SAINT PAUL, MN 55104
THEATERMU.ORG

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aph", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Anh-Thu T. Pham
Managing Director

cc: Robert Chelimsky, Playwright's Center



March 14, 2023

Rep. Fue Lee, *Chair*
MN House Capital Investment Committee

Letter of Support for Playwrights' Center, HF 812

Dear Rep. Lee,

The Creative Enterprise Zone is located midway between Minneapolis and Saint Paul's downtowns along the Green Line in a recognized center of creative entrepreneurship. We are thrilled that the Playwrights' Center is officially relocating to the Creative Enterprise Zone as a prestigious, nationally recognized arts organization.

We envision the Creative Enterprise Zone as a livable, mixed-use neighborhood that provides economic and artistic contributions to our region. This is becoming increasingly visible via our annual mural festival – Chroma Zone - and environmental initiatives. We are putting down deep roots as we begin acquiring community owned real estate and cultivate major institutional stakeholders like the Playwrights' Center to make the Zone their permanent home.

The Playwrights' Center aligns beautifully with our vision for the community. They provide opportunities for working artists and an environment of mutual support that feeds virtually every performing arts venue and organization in Minnesota and beyond. They reached out to us early in their site selection process and we have been in dreaming together ever since. We look forward to opportunities to leverage their storytelling and performance skill sets to reinforce the community of dozens of other artists and makers already working here. Please support their important investment in our creative community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Renee Spillum".

Renee Spillum Board Chair

2171 University Avenue W.
Saint Paul, MN 55114
chair@creativeenterprisezone.org



Dual Citizen Brewing Company

March 14, 2023

Fue Lee, *Chairman*
Capital Investment Committee

Re: Playwrights' Center, HF812

Dear Chairman Lee,

Dual Citizen Brewing Company is a St. Paul Midway based brewery with a focus on celebrating community roots and developing local pride. Finding the right location was paramount to achieving the vision we had for a craft-brewery to engage with and contribute to community – enhancing existing assets and investing and partnering for maximum community collaboration.

Our decision to locate at 725 Raymond Avenue in St. Paul has met these expectations despite the pandemic. We are excited and anxiously await our soon-to-be neighbor, the Playwrights' Center. We are thrilled to have a dynamic partner like the Playwrights' Center in our community – bringing diverse groups to our neighborhood and building energy in the Creative Enterprise Zone. The possibilities for partnership truly are limitless!

The last 2 years have challenged us all, but at Dual Citizen we have great optimism for what the future brings – especially with the Playwrights' Center and our community at our side.

We have supported the PWC financially along with our other community organizations because all of us will directly benefit greatly from the opportunities PWC will provide.

We at Dual Citizen Brewing Company wholeheartedly and strongly support and endorse our new neighbor's request for Capital Investment support. Playwrights' Center will not only be a huge addition and an asset to our business but to our community centric and cross collaboration work.

Sincerely,

Dual Citizen Staff & Owners

725 Raymond Ave St. Paul, MN 55114
651-330-4750
Dcbc.com

Info@dcbc.com
Dualpurpose@dcbc.com

About PLAYWRIGHTS' CENTER

PLAYWRIGHTS' CENTER sustains, develops, and advocates for playwrights and their work to realize their full artistic potential.

Founded in **1971**
by six University
of Minnesota
students

Established a home
at the former Olivet
Lutheran church on
Franklin avenue in
Minneapolis in **1979**



50 YEARS OF GROWTH

1971
Playwrights' Center founded by six U of MN students of Dr. Charles Nolte

1970s
Playwrights' Center purchased current home at Olivet Church in Minneapolis; first Jerome fellowships; membership program begins

1980s
First PlayLabs festival; first McKnight fellowships; first Playwrights' Center play produced on Broadway

1990s
Development and growth of Many Voices fellowships

2000s
New Plays on Campus begins

2010s
Ruth Easton New Play Series begins as the Center launches its first public season; Playwrights' Center reaches its 20th International playwright residency

2015
Playwrights' Center launched The Regulars program, connecting playwrights with 100 producing theater partners across the country

2017
Playwrights' Center Membership exceeds 2,000 playwrights

2019
Playwrights' Center reaches purchase agreement for property in the Creative Enterprise Zone in Saint Paul

2020
Playwrights' Center takes possession of the new property at 710 Raymond Avenue

2022
50th Anniversary of Playwrights' Center

2023
Renovation of new Playwrights' Center begins

2024
Playwrights' Center's new home opens

OUR NEXT 50 YEARS

A new generation of equitable storytelling begins...

PLAYWRIGHTS' CENTER

A DOZEN YEARS OF ACCELERATED GROWTH

The Playwrights' Center started in 1971 as a group of six writers coming together to support each other professionally. In the last twelve years, demand for the Center's work has exploded. The number of writers we support has grown by nearly 225%!



THEN AND NOW

	2009	2023
Members	700	2,400
New Plays On Campus Colleges and University Partners	8	55
Plays Developed Annually	45	75
Fellowship Applications	261	557

CAPACITY CAMPAIGN SOURCES

Fundraising To Date	Amount
Private Funding (Foundations, Corporations & Individuals)	\$4,250,000
Government	\$4,150,000
2020 Bond Allocation, State of Minnesota	\$850,000
Subtotal	\$9,250,000
To Be Secured	Amount
Private Funding (Foundations, Corporations & Individuals)	\$4,133,900
<i>2023 Bond Request, State of Minnesota</i>	\$5,650,000
Subtotal	\$9,783,900
TOTAL	\$19,033,900

CAPACITY CAMPAIGN USES

Building and Land	\$1,442,100
Construction	\$14,572,000
Project Development	\$3,019,800
TOTAL	\$19,033,900



- A multi-use 150-seat theater
- Adaptable writing rooms
- Flexible rehearsal studios
- Technology-enabled classrooms
- Community gathering spaces

Project highlights

710 Raymond



Greater equity for artists

A place where marginalized voices are heard and thrive

Broader change in the theater
Influence societal narratives to secure a more equitable future for all

A space centered in community offering resources for all regardless of economic status



How we've grown in the last ten years

From **500** to **2,400+** members

With Augsburg University,
launched a one-of-a-kind
partnership between a writing
center and a university

From **50** plays developed
each year to **75**

Built meaningful relationships
with **125** Producing Theaters
around the globe

Since the start of the pandemic, the Center responded swiftly to the needs of our community:

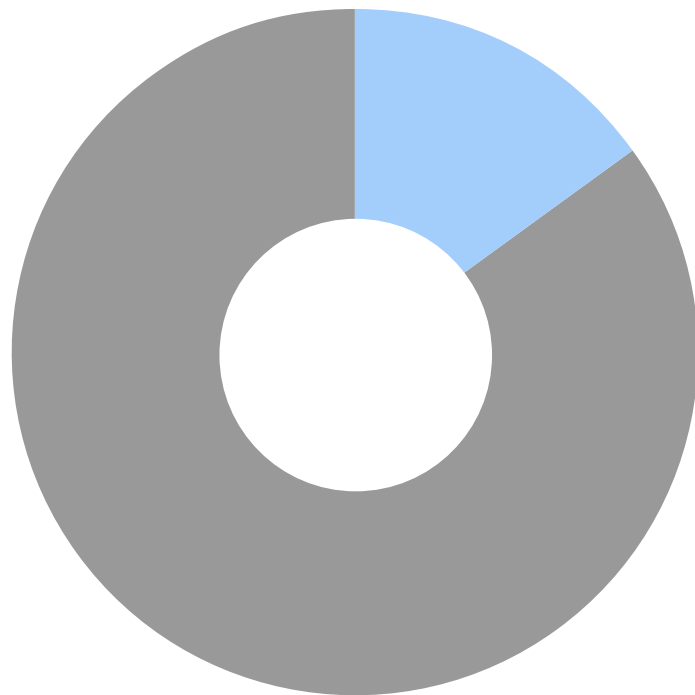
Responding to the **moment**

- Created 350 jobs
- Hosted more than 150 online events for artists and the public
- Commissioned 55 Black MN artists to share their stories as part of an online anthology
- Welcomed more than 5,000 audience members
- Increased access with an ongoing commitment to offering public programming in-person and virtually

Playwrights Getting Produced in the U.S. by Race

National Breakout*

- Person of Color 15.1%
- White 84.9%



Playwrights' Center Breakout**

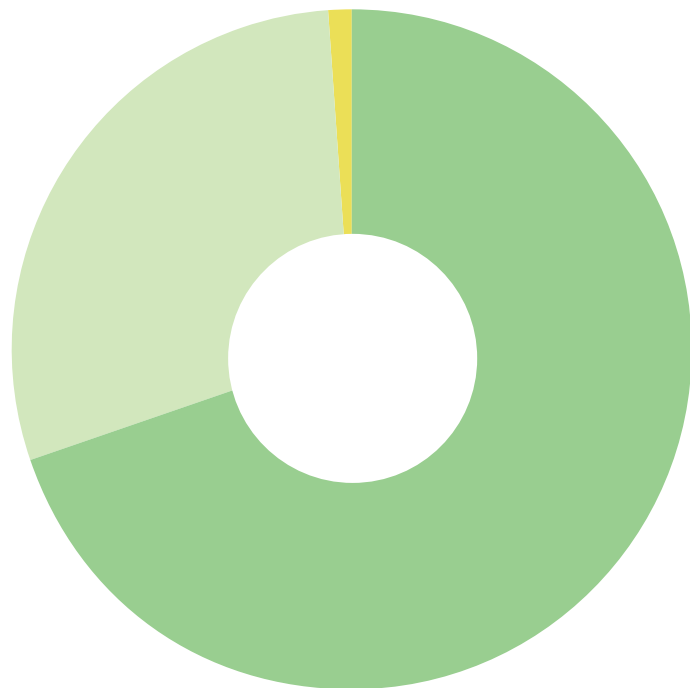
- Asian / Pacific Islander 6.3%
- Black 27.6%
- Latinx 12.5%
- Indigenous 2.0%
- White 52.1%



Playwrights Getting Produced in the U.S. by Gender

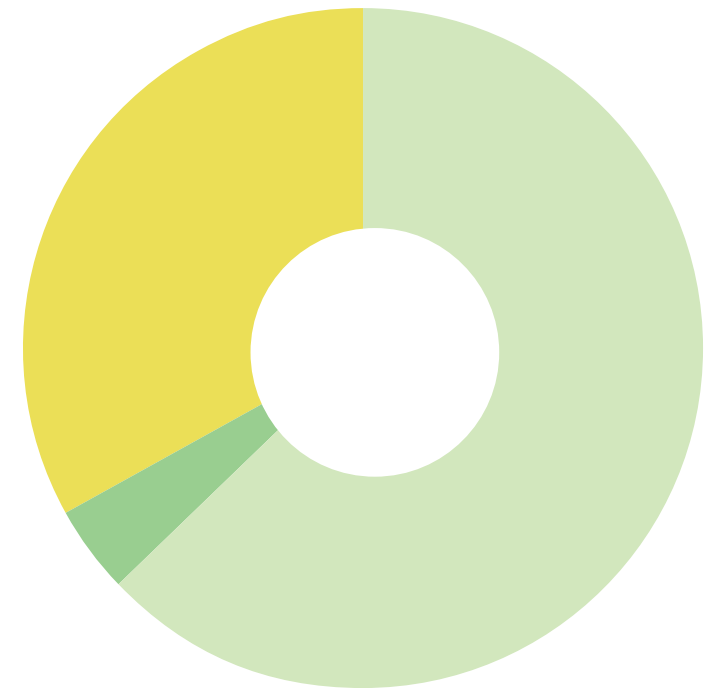
National Breakout*

- Female 28.8%
- Male 70.8%
- Other 0.8%



Playwrights' Center Breakout**

- Female 62.5%
- Male 33.3%
- Other 4.2%



*Statistical data from The Dramatist Guild's The Count 2.0 Report representing unique playwrights <https://www.dramatistsguild.com/advocacy/the-count>

**Representing unique playwrights receiving workshops/reading of plays during the 2019-20 season