

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Emily Whitworth <info@email.actionnetwork.org>
Sent: Tuesday, April 26, 2022 5:34 PM
To: DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: My support for Dance Loft/Heleos development project — ZC Case No. 21-18

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All Members of the Zoning Commission Members of the Zoning Commission,

I am an actor, dancer, and writer who has lived and worked in Washington, DC for the last 20 years.

As an artist, I am writing to urge you to approve this development in order to safeguard essential arts space in a city where it has dwindled dangerously low. Too many dance studios and theaters have closed in the last decade - enough so that the area's ability to sustain a grassroots creative arts economy is in peril. Maintaining and expanding Dance Loft is vital to DC's creative economy. If the Zoning Commission fails to approve this PUD, Dance Loft will likely need to sell the building and close, which will directly impact the livelihoods of artists in this city, as well as negatively impact nearby public schools for whom Dance Loft offers free classes.

The District needs to preserve arts institutions and add affordable housing, and this project (Z.C. Case No. 21-18) does both and should be approved.

Up until Dance Loft on 14, Ward 4 had no performing arts center or theater outside of public school facilities. We currently have a chance to improve the art space crisis in DC with a single project. As someone that has found a creative hub, and home at Dance Loft on 14, I care about building long-term, broad sustainable change in the arts culture of DC. Arts engagement opportunities in close proximity to where I live to promote great accessibility for the arts community in not only Ward 4 but also the District of Columbia. On those two fronts alone, this project has tremendous benefits for our city.

As you know, the District is in dire need of more housing, particularly units that can be affordable for families. This project expects to set aside at least two-thirds of the proposed 101 units for affordable, mixed-income housing, including many deeply affordable units (at 30%, 50%, and 60% MFI) as well as a significant number of 3-bedroom units, which are rare and badly needed for artists wishing to stay in the District.

This project will also support neighborhood businesses by bringing appropriate residential density to this commercial corridor. This area will soon also be home to new retail at the redeveloped Northern Bus Garage across the street, and additional density will be crucial to the success of both current business and the expected new businesses. I also appreciate that this project adds some, but not too much parking for artists utilizing the Dance Loft on 14 space.

With all the recent closings of many dance and art spaces in the metropolitan area, this new building will become a permanent home for artists. I encourage the Zoning Commission to approve this request and support this project's potential to contribute to an artistic, inclusive, and thriving community.

Thank you for your work and service, as well as your consideration of this matter.

TO:

Commissioner Hood

Commissioner Miller

Commissioner Shapiro

Commissioner Imamura

Commissioner May

CC:

Dance Loft on 14

Emily Whitworth

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