



April 14, 2020

SUBMITTED VIA MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL ONLINE TESTIMONY SUBMISSION FORM

To Members of the Montgomery County Council,

I am the President & CEO of the CityDance School & Conservatory, a nonprofit arts education organization with two Montgomery County, MD locations. I am writing to testify on the critical need for FY21 Capital Improvement Grants to remain a County budget priority during these extraordinary times.

The **CityDance School & Conservatory** has been a pillar in Montgomery County's arts education landscape since opening in 2005 as a founding resident partner at the Music Center at Strathmore. For 15 years, we have provided world-class dance training and performances to thousands of Montgomery County residents. Today, we offer over 150 classes per week, summer camps, and pre-professional training to more than 1,000 students, ages 5-adult each year. Graduates of our pre-professional **Conservatory** program have been accepted to the country's most prestigious dance schools, including two to the fall 2019 freshman Julliard class. Our alumni are dancing with professional companies around the world. With a \$3.6 million annual budget, we employ 28 full-time staff members and 60 contracted faculty. We also bring world-renowned national and international guest artists to teach and perform in Montgomery County. We award over \$300,000 annually in financial aid and merit scholarships.

As we navigate the ever-changing landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must ensure that we remain on-track and positioned to continue delivering the highest quality arts experiences to our constituents and full employment to our faculty, artists and staff after the crisis has ended. **For CityDance, and many other Montgomery County nonprofits, access to capital through the County Grants program is critical to our post-COVID strength and stability.**

THE PROJECT

In January 2020, CityDance submitted an FY21 Montgomery County Capital Grant request for \$282,963 to support the move to and buildout of a newly leased facility at 11910 Parklawn Drive. This site will replace our location at 1570 East Jefferson Street when our current lease expires on June 30, 2020 and will be responsible for generating \$1.5 million of revenue annually. The 13,925 square foot facility will be outfitted with six professional dance studios, admin offices, dressing rooms, and a parent/student lounge. With a long-term lease secured (10 years) and our continued residency at Strathmore, we will be able to deepen and grow our program; offer world-class dance training to more students; and continue to contribute to the well-earned reputation of Montgomery County as a leading destination and home for the arts. CityDance has secured a match of \$543,332 in private funds from the property landlord towards the total project cost of \$826,295.

In partnership with the landlord, CityDance has adjusted the timeline for this project due to COVID-19. Construction will now occur during fall 2020, and our new open date is January 1, 2021. No other changes from our original application have been made.

COVID-19'S IMPACT TO THIS PROJECT

The global health pandemic makes this request and project more critical than ever. COVID-19 has forced the closure of our Montgomery County locations, requiring us to move all our dance classes to virtual platforms including Zoom and Google Classrooms. To date, CityDance has not implemented any layoffs or



furloughs of salaried staff; and all spring teaching contracts have been honored. We intend to keep 100% of our staff and faculty employed through this crisis. We are enlisting new fundraising and grant opportunities to secure contributed income to replace lost earned income due to the closures, as well as aid through the Federal Government's Payroll Protection Program. In addition to securing funds to meet these immediate needs, **it is just as critical that organizations do not stop planning for when we can return to a "new normal."** For CityDance, this means access to necessary capital funds so we can ensure delivery of our full program to our students and community, and fully support the economic well-being of our employees and faculty, now and once on-site programming can return.

Montgomery County youth will need institutions to return to after COVID-19. Securing normality for our youth through arts programming will be essential to their recovery from the pandemic. They will need institutions that provide stability and where they feel a sense of belonging and membership. They will need spaces to reconnect and sustain their friendships with other youth, as well as meaningful relationships with adults. Dance's promotion of self-expression, consistency, resilience, and collaborative work will be more critical than ever for our youth. Our new location will ensure we can reenroll all current students as well as new recruits.

CityDance enlists world-class directors, program managers, arts administrators, and faculty members that rely on us for their income. Our 28 full-time employees rely on CityDance for their salary and health insurance, and our 60 contractor faculty members rely on their hourly teaching fees throughout the school year and summer. We are also a hub for artists and choreographers in the County, providing over 1000 hours of free studio space to choreographers each year for rehearsals as well as access to our Studio Theater at Strathmore. Our ability to remain open and on-track for our move to our new campus is essential to our ability to retain our employees and faculty and continue to serve the County's artists, making this funding request critical.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,

Alexe Nowakowski
CityDance President & CEO