

Testimony For FY 2007 Public Hearing April 6, 2026



My name is Heather Madison. I am a Board Member of BlackRock Center for the Arts, a parent in the upcounty community, and most importantly, a mother of two young girls.

BlackRock is not just a building or a program to my family, it is a lifeline. It is a place where my daughters are exposed to creativity, culture, and community in a way that feels welcoming, safe, and inspiring.

For my oldest daughter, who is on the autism spectrum, spaces like this are not easy to find. As a parent, you are constantly searching for environments where your child will not just be accommodated, but truly accepted and encouraged. At BlackRock, she is not different, she belongs. She is given the opportunity to express herself, to grow, and to build confidence in ways that are meaningful and lasting.



That kind of inclusion is not accidental. It is intentional. And it requires resources, commitment, and support.

That is why the omission of the \$125,000 in County funding is so deeply concerning. Those funds are not just numbers on a page, they represent programs, access, and opportunities for families like mine and so many others in this community. Without that support, we risk losing the very qualities that make BlackRock such a vital and inclusive cornerstone.

For my family, and for countless residents, BlackRock is a place where children discover who they are and who they can become. It is where differences are embraced, where creativity is nurtured, and where community is built.



I urge you to recognize what is at stake and to support the funding necessary to ensure BlackRock can continue to serve as this essential, inclusive space for our community.

Because for families like mine, this isn't just about the arts, it's about belonging.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Heather Madison