



CITY OF NEW YORK
**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD
FOUR**

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JEFFREY LEFRANCOIS
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

January 19, 2023

Laurie Cumbo
Commissioner
Department of Cultural Affairs CLA
31 Chambers Street 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Mark Levine
Manhattan Borough President
1 Centre Street, 19th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Erik Bottcher
City Council
224 West 30th Street, Suite 1206
New York, NY 10001

Re: Support for New Federal Theatre Relocation

Dear Commissioner Cumbo, Borough President Levine, and Council Member Bottcher,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) at its regularly scheduled meeting on January 4, 2023 voted 44 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote, in support of a subsidized theater and office space for New Federal Theatre formerly located at 543 W. 42nd Street until the sale of the commercial spaces last month. MCB4 appreciates the presentation given by Woodie King Jr., Founder of New Federal Theatre, Elizabeth Van Dyke, Producing Artistic Director at New Federal Theatre, and Randi Berry at Indie Space alerting the Arts, Culture, Education & Street Life (ACES) Committee to this urgent need at its meeting on December 12, 2022.

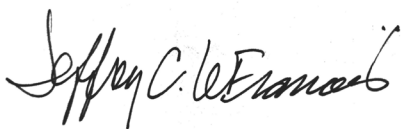
Since 1970, New Federal Theatre has integrated “artist of color and women into the

mainstream of American theater by training artist for the profession, and by presenting plays by writers of color and women to integrated, multicultural audiences.” New Federal Theatre continues to focus on the production of new works often by first time playwrights who go on to have highly successful established careers. NFT’s early successes include *Black Girl* by J.e. Franklin, that won a Drama Desk Award, *The Taking of Miss Janie* by Ed Bullins that won the Drama Critics Circle Award and *For Colored Girls Who Consider Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf* by Ntozake Shange nominated for the Tony Award. Many performers have also benefited from NFT including the late Chadwick Boseman, Debbie Allen, Morgan Freeman, Issa Rae, and Denzel Washington to name a few. Woodie King Jr., a trailblazer in Black Theater credited for bringing over 400 plays to life, received a special Tony Honor in 2021 for Excellence in Theater award.

In December 2022, the commercial spaces at 543 W. 42nd owned by All Stars Project were sold displacing New Federal Theatre (NFT) from its home in MCB4 since 2006. It is important for NFT to remain in or near the theater district to continue to fulfill its mission to integrate artist of color and women into mainstream American theater. NFT would appreciate a lease on a space that will accommodate its entire operations including spaces for: workshops, rehearsals, productions, and offices. As a priceless asset to organizations in which they previously resided including Henry Street Settlement and All Starts Project, by bringing in major programming, artists of color, women, and multi-cultural audiences into the premises, NFT would welcome a 50-year lease at a subsidized amount of \$1.00 a year.

MCB4 understands the importance of equity in American theater and is supportive of New Federal Theatre’s efforts to find a long-term, subsidized home in the community it has served by bringing culturally relevant works to audiences from around the world. We are hopeful that our local elected officials and the Department of Cultural Affairs will work together to find a home for NFT so that it may continue to create opportunities for playwrights, directors, and producers traditionally underrepresented in American theater.

Sincerely,



Jeffery LeFrancois
Chair
Community Board 4



Allen Oster
Co-Chair
ACES Committee



Kit Tollerson
Co-Chair
ACES Committee

CC: New Federal Theatre