



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

October 16, 2024

Ms. Rachel D. Graham, Chief Executive Officer
Mr. Andrew Chaveas, Board Chair
Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts, Inc.
7 St. Paul Street, Suite 100
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Ms. Graham and Mr. Chaveas:

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to inform you of a significant decision regarding the future of the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts, Inc. (“BOPA”) and its relationship with the City of Baltimore.

After careful consideration and extensive review of BOPA's current financial situation and operational challenges, the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore, acting by and through the Mayor’s Office (“City”) has decided to seek approval from the Board of Estimates of Baltimore City (“BOE”) to terminate the contract (“Agreement”) with BOPA for convenience, pursuant to Section J.1., Termination for Convenience, of the Agreement. This Agreement was approved by the BOE on June 26, 2024, for BOPA to provide specific cultural and art-related services to the City. Contingent on the approval of the BOE, the termination of this Agreement is effective as of January 20, 2025. The Mayor’s Office will recommend to the BOE at its November 6, 2024, meeting that the BOE approve termination of this Agreement.

Upon the effective date of termination, BOPA shall cease all work under the terms of this Agreement. The last scheduled activity under this Agreement shall be the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Parade. BOPA is entitled to payment for services rendered up to the effective date of termination of this Agreement and reasonable transfer costs during the transition of services pursuant to Section J of the Agreement.

This decision has not been made lightly. We recognize and deeply appreciate BOPA's long-standing contributions to Baltimore's vibrant arts and cultural scene. For over two decades, BOPA has played a pivotal role in shaping our city's cultural landscape, organizing beloved events like Artscape, managing vital cultural spaces, and supporting countless local artists and organizations.

However, the persistent financial difficulties that have come to light in recent months have led us to conclude that this is the best course of action to ensure the long-term sustainability of our city's arts and cultural programming. The financial instability has raised serious concerns about BOPA's ability to continue fulfilling its obligations to the City and its arts community.

Our intention is to execute this transition in a manner that:

1. Smoothly transitions all current BOPA programming to ensure continuity of services for our community. This includes major events like Artscape, the Baltimore Book Festival, and the New Year's Eve and Fourth of July celebrations.
2. Provides BOPA employees the option to transition to employment with the City of Baltimore, where appropriate. We value the expertise and dedication of BOPA's staff and want to retain this talent within our city's cultural sector.
3. Explores other arrangements on a case-by-case basis to retain valuable expertise and minimize disruption to ongoing projects and events. This may include partnerships with other local organizations or the creation of new entities to manage specific programs or facilities.
4. Ensures the continued operation and maintenance of important cultural assets such as School 33 Art Center, the Bromo Seltzer Arts Tower, and The Cloisters.
5. Maintains the integrity and continuity of grant programs and support services for local artists and arts organizations.

We are committed to working closely with you throughout this process. In the coming days, representatives from the Mayor's Office, including Tonya Miller Hall, Senior Advisor of Arts & Culture, will reach out to schedule meetings to discuss the details of this transition and to address any immediate concerns you may have.

We want to assure you, the BOPA board, staff, and the entire Baltimore arts community that our commitment to Baltimore's arts and cultural sector remains steadfast. We further desire this transition to strengthen and stabilize the support and services provided to our City's creatives and cultural institutions. We believe that by defining a new path forward, we can ensure greater financial stability, transparency, and accountability.

During this transition period, we kindly request your cooperation in several key areas:

1. Providing comprehensive financial reports and records to facilitate a smooth transfer of fiscal responsibilities.
2. Assisting in the identification and transfer of any intellectual property, trademarks, or other assets that may be crucial for the continuity of programs and events.
3. Collaborating with City officials to develop a detailed transition plan for each program and facility currently under BOPA's management.
4. Communicating openly with BOPA staff about this transition and the potential opportunities for continued employment in service of Baltimore's arts and culture sector.

We recognize that this change may cause concern among BOPA's staff, partnering organizations, and the broader arts community. Please be assured that we are committed to maintaining open lines of communication throughout this process and will work diligently to address concerns and minimize any disruptions to Baltimore's cultural programming.

We appreciate your cooperation during this challenging time and look forward to working together to ensure a smooth transition that best serves the interests of Baltimore's residents and its vibrant arts community. The creativity, resilience, and spirit of our City's artists and cultural institutions are invaluable assets, and we are dedicated to nurturing and supporting them through this transition and beyond.

If you have any immediate questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my office. We will be in touch shortly to begin the detailed planning of this transition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marvin James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marvin James
Chief of Staff, City of Baltimore

cc: Board of Directors, Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts, Inc.
Brandon M. Scott, Mayor, City of Baltimore
Faith Leach, City Administrator, City of Baltimore
Justin Williams, Deputy Mayor of Economic and Community Development
Tonya Miller Hall, Senior Advisor of Arts & Culture
Calvin Young, Senior Advisor to the Mayor