



Name: Lauren Sivak

Transition Committee: Arts and Culture

Prompt: Ensure all Chicagoans can participate in and enjoy the arts, regardless of zip code or economic status.

There should be increased opportunities for Chicagoans to have access to the arts. I would like to sharpen my focus on the imperative need of diversifying the artistic workforce. In order for Chicagoans to have the same access to existing artistic opportunities and see themselves as having a career in the arts, we must eliminate unpaid internship and apprenticeship programs at major cultural institutions across Chicago. For the purpose of this memo, major institutions are those with operating budgets in surplus of \$5 million dollars.

Today, there are internship and apprenticeship programs available at many of our major cultural institutions. These programs open doors to career and graduate school opportunities that would otherwise seem impossible. We need to keep these opportunities. However, because many of these programs are offered without monetary compensation, the question of whether or not it's financially sustainable for a candidate to even apply becomes the primary issue, regardless of their qualifications.

An unpaid internship is inequitable and is an issue of accessibility, privilege, and inclusion. How can we ensure that all Chicagoans are able to participate in what are often considered essential career milestones if these are not paid opportunities? We continue to create a culture of "working for experience" that is unsustainable.

In the next 100 days, we need to conduct an artistic audit on those major cultural institutions that have existing internship and apprenticeship programs. We need to examine each institution's compensation philosophy and identify all barriers to financial compensation. If they are not investing capital in people, then how and where are investing? No major institution, regardless of merit or notoriety, should benefit from free labor.

As outlined in the "Advancing Arts and Culture in Chicago" position paper, we need to continue to leverage the philanthropic interests and assets available. We recognize the economic impact that arts organizations have on Chicago and within their local communities. As identified by the Chicago Community Trust, "These arts organizations in smaller communities support hyper local economies, respond to neighborhood needs, and champion a vision for their community's futures." We know that this impact is invaluable, but we need to take it several steps further. As stated above, we need to invest in people. In order to do this, we will need to encourage and convince funders and foundations to be builders of innovative



programming rather than buyers of existing programming. We need to encourage and convince these same funders and foundations to invest in those organizations outside of Chicago's wealthiest neighborhoods and beyond its biggest institutions.

In addition to establishing paid internship and apprenticeship opportunities at major institutions, we need to build more paid internship and apprenticeship opportunities across Chicago's 77 neighborhoods. By doing so, we get one step closer to ensuring that every Chicagoan has an opportunity for a robust career in the arts. The Joyce Foundation recognizes how imperative this issue is for Chicago, as outlined in their "Culture Priorities for Chicago's Next Mayor" statement: "The Foundation seeks to ensure equitable access to decision-making and economic mobility by supporting career opportunities and professional development for racially underrepresented arts leaders and workers in Chicago."

The biggest challenge, as it often is in the arts, is related to money, infrastructure, and investment. If there was a mandate that all internship and apprenticeship programs at major cultural institutions must have monetary compensation, there is a concern that many of these institutions would stop offering these opportunities. However, if Chicago aims to be a leader in the arts, and seeks to retain its artists, Chicago must continue to create as many paying opportunities as possible. This is for both the visible artists and those in the administrative offices. We must convince our donors, funders, and artistic leaders that paying people is just as important as the art that they witness and the art that they create, whether it be in galleries, on stages, or in halls across the city.

We must invest in people.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lauren Sivak'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'L' being particularly large and stylized.

Lauren Sivak
Managing Director
2nd Story