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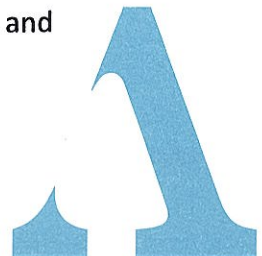
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Testimony for MN Senate Legacy Committee
Colleen Sheehy, Executive Director, Public Art Saint Paul
March 29, 2023

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Legacy Committee. My name is Colleen Sheehy and I'm Executive Director of Public Art Saint Paul, a private nonprofit arts organization based in Saint Paul.

I write today to respectfully request that you include a direct appropriation to Public Art Saint Paul in the Senate's Legacy Omnibus bill. The major initiative for which we have requested \$250,000 funds in the FY24 and \$250,000 in FY25, the Wakpa Triennial, is the first time we've approached the Legacy Committee directly. The ambitious scope and major impact of this new art event requires our seeking funding from every level of government and in amounts that are unavailable from agency grant programs.

Featuring 30 – 40 artists with new projects and commissions, the Wakpa Triennial will have an artistic, economic, and self-identity impact. The majority of artists being commissions are artists of color, reflecting the impressive strength of their work and abilities to carry out major art projects and the importance of their artistic expressions. With a focus on projects in Saint Paul and Minneapolis, the Wakpa Triennial will trumpet to our state, the Upper Midwest, and nation, that our major cities are back after the pandemic. We're creative communities that value equity and inclusion, and we have a fantastic art scene. Come visit! Rediscover the Twin Cities! Through promotions statewide and nationally, the Wakpa Festival will contribute to changing some negative perceptions and narratives about our major cities that have kept people from visiting.



The Wakpa Triennial is about much more than just Public Art Saint Paul. The event presents about 30 organizational partners, mostly small to medium sized arts organizations, and will bring attention and audiences to their sites and projects. The Triennial is a win-win-win all around for arts organizations and our communities.

The Wakpa Triennial Art Festival that will be presented for the first time this summer, with dates of June 24 to September 16, running for 12 weeks. Audiences will experience new art created by 30 – 40 artists, many presented in public spaces and at partner organizations and all will be free to audiences of all ages. In addition to attracting audiences across Saint Paul and Minneapolis, art projects at some satellite sites will engage audiences in Red Wing, Saint Anthony, and Bloomington. Through promotions throughout MN, people from all over the state will be welcomed to visit the Twin Cities and experience the art, people, and places of our cities and towns, a welcome gathering after our years restricted by the covid pandemic.

The Wakpa Triennial will have a strong impact on our state and is a good investment for Legacy funds:

- By bringing people to places all across the Metro and beyond, the Wakpa Triennial will have an economic impact on our cities, neighborhoods, towns, and our state as a whole. We are promoting this major new art event through Visit St. Paul, Meet Minneapolis, ExploreMN and other outlets to attract people throughout the Midwest and even nationally to visit our state this summer. In other cities, these kinds of festivals become destinations for tourism.
- The Triennial will provide jobs and support for 30-40 artists with the majority being artists of color, to create new work and to advance their careers. By working with 40 organizational partners, we are also bringing new audiences to a whole network of arts organizations.

- Public Art Saint Paul's budget relies on government funds for about 10% of our income, including funding from watershed districts. Our primary source of funds--about 70%--are private contributions from foundations, corporations, and individuals. Earned income through consulting contracts brings in about 15% of our annual income.

The Wakpa Triennial strives to help our communities recover from the last 3 years when the Covid pandemic brought isolation that we all felt. Through artists and the art they create, the performances that are presented, and the conversations that will be hosted, the first Wakpa Triennial will demonstrate the creativity and strengths of our arts community and tell new stories about who we are and what kind of future we're building together.

I can assure you that Public Art Saint Paul is an ethical organization that has proven its ability to work with public funds entrusted to us in responsible ways. We are very experienced managing funds continually from local governments, watershed districts, the state of MN, and the federal government. In our 36 years of operations, we have had audits every year and every year we've had clean audits. We can responsibly manage direct appropriations. We know how important the public trust is.

Therefore, I respectfully request that the Senate Legacy Committee include a direct appropriation to Public Art Saint Paul as part of this year's Omnibus Bill. Thank you for taking my testimony.