

DALLAS BLACK
DANCE THEATRE
RELENTLESS EXCELLENCE

October 22, 2024

Dallas City Council
Dallas City Hall
1500 Marilla Street
Dallas, TX 75201

Dear Council Members,

As members of the Board of Directors of Dallas Black Dance Theatre (DBDT), we are writing to ensure the Council has a full and accurate understanding of the recent contract rescissions of nine former dancers (and related issues) as it considers funding allocations. We respectfully request that the Council allow the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) process to proceed as the appropriate venue for resolving this dispute. Put simply, the NLRB will decide whether there was any violation of labor law, and what, if any, remedies should be imposed. There is no need for the Council to do so prematurely at this time.

The Office of Arts and Culture has already made a recommendation to the City Council for funding allocation based on objective criteria and a non-partisan review process. Under this process, the Office of Arts and Culture scored DBDT among its highest ranked organizations in the city and recommended a continuation of funding. It is imperative that the City Council follow procedural due process requirements, including allowing both sides to be heard and preventing outside parties from bypassing this procedure.

DBDT remains deeply committed to the highest standards of integrity, professionalism, and artistic excellence, which have guided the organization since its founding. These principles are essential not only to our work but also to the example we set for our students and the broader community. As such, the decision to rescind the contracts of these dancers was not taken lightly but was necessary to protect these values and uphold our policies.

In July 2024, DBDT discovered a video posted by the dancers on social media that involved unauthorized use of the company's brand, logo, and copyrighted material on an Instagram account that appeared to be affiliated with DBDT. The video also contained unprofessional content that was inconsistent with DBDT's values and educational mission. These actions are akin to an employee at any organization using the company's branding and resources to promote a personal product, which would constitute a serious policy violation and grounds for termination. The dancers' conduct was a clear breach of DBDT's established code of conduct and branding policies, which had been reinforced in February 2024 in preparation for a major partnership announcement with the NBA Foundation. Our policies explicitly state that any violations will result in immediate termination, and we were compelled to act accordingly to protect the integrity and reputation of the organization.

The decision to rescind these contracts had no connection to the dancers' vote to unionize. DBDT has been and remains committed to working with the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA). In fact, DBDT and AGMA, along with a representative from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, are meeting next week to bargain. To be clear, DBDT's 11 new dancers are part of the bargaining unit that is represented by AGMA. Further demonstrating DBDT's lack of union animus, DBDT issued its letters of intent to the dancers in question *after* they voted to unionize. DBDT is not engaged in union-busting activities.

Ann M. Williams
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AGMA has filed unfair labor practice charges with the NLRB, and DBDT has been cooperating with the NLRB and providing it with the information and documents requested. DBDT has also filed a charge against AGMA for its conduct towards the current dancers. The NLRB is the appropriate authority to review and adjudicate these issues, and we urge the City Council to allow this process to unfold. Preemptively withholding funding would be premature and could have unintended consequences for the company's operations, the students we engage in arts, our fundraising and larger community impact, and the opportunities we provide to aspiring dancers and artists. Such a decision would also have a potential negative impact on the City's reputation as a business-friendly community.

DBDT remains fully transparent and cooperative. We are eager to continue our work in collaboration with the City, our community, and AGMA to reach a positive resolution.

We ask the City Council to continue its support of DBDT and refrain from preemptive actions that could compromise the organization's ability to serve the community. We are committed to the fair and respectful treatment of all employees and to upholding the highest standards of conduct and performance.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your ongoing support of the arts in Dallas. We would be happy to meet with Council Members to provide further information and answer any questions.

Sincerely,



Georgia Scaife
Board President
On Behalf of the Dallas Black Dance Theatre Board of Directors

DBDT Board of Directors

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