

September 14, 2021

Dear Seattle Arts Commissioners:

We, select members of the ARTS Director Search Advisory Committee, are writing with significant unease surrounding the surprise appointment of Royal Alley-Barnes as the acting Director of ARTS.

Members of this Committee include both ARTS staff and arts community members who convened early in 2021 to create a community-informed and engaged process that would best guide the selection of a new Director for the Office of Arts and Culture (ARTS), and to present this process to the new administration in January. The work of this Committee was initiated and overseen by Deputy Director Calandra Childers who was serving as acting Director of ARTS since February. Her deep commitment and wide-ranging expertise in directing the ARTS office throughout this challenging time, while also guiding the work of this committee, is to be respected, protected, supported, and even modeled—not discarded without a conversation or any thoughtful process.

This lack of process, acknowledgement, and consultation in appointing a new acting Director with little more than 100 days left in the current administration is not only disrespectful to Deputy Childers but to the ARTS staff, to the Seattle Arts Commission, to the members of this Committee, and ultimately to all of the Seattle residents served by the works of these agents.

The community-based members of this Committee respectfully ask that you consider the following requests:

1. We ask that the Seattle Arts Commission work more closely with our ad hoc committee, doubling the efforts to help create a fair, transparent, and inclusive search process for ARTS' new and permanent director which will be presented to the next administration and ready for implementation in the new year.
2. We urge the Seattle Arts Commission to look further into the rash and uninformed appointment of the acting director—an action that is clearly misaligned to the known and documented ARTS' values for a community driven, inclusive search process.
 - a. If a community driven, inclusive process was not found to be conducted, we ask that the Seattle Arts Commission champion the request of the Mayor's office to un-assign the acting director and reinstate Deputy Childers as acting director until a community driven, inclusive search process is able to take place; and if time does not permit such to occur before the next administration takes office, then the acting director Childers shall remain through the duration of the current administration so as not to disrupt the good work and initiatives-driven outcomes being accomplished at the ARTS Office as a result of her leadership.

Calandra Childers has been called “a shining star” by the current administration and is being lauded for her leadership during these unprecedented times. We hope that you will reflect upon those thoughts, along with the multitude of accolades and achievements that she has amassed

throughout her ARTS tenure and move to activate our requests with the full weight and influence of the Seattle Arts Commission.

Respectfully,

Tom Bardwell
Terri Hiroshima
Jasmine Mahmoud, PhD
Catherine Nueva España
Daniel Pak
Tracy Rector
Mikhael Mei Williams
Sharon Nyree Williams