

**Public Policy Committee**  
**2023 Policy Slate Overview**

*Approved by Committee and Board as of 3/30/23*

**Introduction**

Philanthropy New York believes that achieving impact requires strategic investments and work to create the conditions in which those investments can thrive. PNY's public policy work engages diverse stakeholders to create the policy conditions that allow our members and their grantees to create a stronger and more equitable New York. PNY believes that through participation in public policy and collaboration with the government, the sector can maximize its impact and foster an environment aimed at improving conditions for the region's foundations and nonprofits.

Philanthropy New York's public policy efforts are guided by the belief that local, state, and federal laws and policies should:

- Promote a just and equitable society
- Strengthen nonprofits and
- Support a healthy and sustainable philanthropic sector.

Philanthropy New York's public policy efforts focus on three main areas of interest to the philanthropic sector. Through this work, PNY:

- Advocates for tax and fiscal policies that support philanthropic giving
- Supports policies and practices that create and sustain a thriving nonprofit sector and
- Champions public policies that have systemic effects on issues and marginalized communities our members serve

As we evaluate position, PNY's values inform and guide decision making processes. They are:

- **Community** - PNY fosters an interdependent community that respects diverse voices, contributions and participation. We are a community that learns from each other and actively contributes to one another's learning. We believe that our missions are best achieved by leveraging our collective strengths.
- **Leadership** - PNY believes philanthropic leadership is nurtured through community and in relationship with others. We break down barriers and provide pathways for individual members, member institutions, and PNY to exercise influence and become agents of change.
- **Learning** - PNY embraces learning as an exploration of different perspectives, inclusive of a full range of expertise and experience. We test assumptions and challenge the sector's conventional wisdom in order to adapt and evolve practice over time.



- **Equity** - PNY embeds equity in all of our work. We acknowledge that institutional philanthropy stems from systems rooted in inequity. We have both the opportunity and responsibility to engage the sector's power and privilege to dismantle these systems.

### **About this Document**

This document identifies and summarizes current public policy issues and updates for PNY's collective membership and the Public Policy Committee of the Board. PNY staff conducted research on key partners' public policy priorities and slates, if available, to understand the issues our peers are tracking. This research was followed by in-depth interviews with peer organizations. The Philanthropy New York Public Policy Committee and staff then determined which issues are strongly aligned with PNY's values and vision and where PNY's public policy voice will be most supportive and impactful. The issues below represent issues that are aligned with our vision and values and where peers have identified the continued need for advocacy in the coming year.

This document is not intended to deliver comprehensive analyses of the issues affecting the sector, rather it identifies potential issues that may require PNY's voice or advocacy in the coming year. We rely on and often work in partnership with national and local organizations in the sector. These partners include:

- [Council on Foundations](#)
- [Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies](#) (FPWA)
- [Human Services Council](#) (HSC)
- [Independent Sector](#)
- [National Council of Nonprofits](#)
- [Nonprofit New York](#)
- [United Philanthropy Forum](#)

### **Our Public Policy Approach**

Over the past decade, Philanthropy New York has built a public policy approach that leverages the organization's strong convening power around the issues members care most about.

Philanthropy New York hosts regular meetings among funders concerned with Education/Youth, Health Policy, Arts and Culture, Justice Reform and the Environment. These funders have built relationships that allow them to collaborate, convene, educate and inform their peers.

Alongside this collaborative convening work, PNY has hosted policy forums, programs and roundtables with elected officials to discuss, debate, and collaborate around key structural



changes and policies that will impact the strategies they fund. New York City's Deputy Mayors and Commissioners, (as well as federal administration officials) have regularly been invited to speak with PNY members to both provide updates on policy issues and administration programs and to hear from our membership about lessons learned in the field, innovations that should be taken to scale and nonprofit voices that should be engaged on policy reforms. With our members, we have built connections across NYC's departments, from HRA to ACS, from DYCD to the DOE so that the flow of information and the ability to connect on timely issues is strong.

PNY's Policy staff frequently collaborate and serve as thought partners to New York City's nonprofit associations, including HSC, FPWA and Nonprofit New York on policy issues that create a more equitable, sustainable and democratic ecosystem for nonprofits and nonprofit workers.

In addition to local policy and collaborative work, Philanthropy New York engages in education and relationship building at the federal level on an annual and ongoing basis. Through [Foundations on the Hill](#), Philanthropy New York connects members of our funding community with elected officials representing New York City neighborhoods as well as our state Senators.

More recently, Philanthropy New York has aligned this work with the organizational value of equity, coupling our public policy efforts with allyship to the nonprofit sector. We believe that by focusing on supporting a strong nonprofit ecosystem, we can create conditions that allow for impactful returns on philanthropic investment. Therefore, we will take official stands on public policy issues directly affecting the philanthropic or nonprofit sector. Our analysis of these issues has included a line of inquiry designed to ensure alignment with our values. This includes questions such as:

- *Who does this policy build power for? Who does it block power from?*
- *Will this policy help increase access and opportunity for communities of color? If so, how?*
- *Does this policy counter racial discrimination in the issue area? How?*
- *Is our policy position sufficiently informed by the voices/community of those affected?*
- *Does this policy promote the structural changes needed to increase racial equity within the targeted institution?*

**This document serves to outline those policy issues that will require continued and ongoing engagement and new issues that may represent areas of engagement in the 2023 year.**

## **2023 Public Policy Slate**

### ***Issue #1: Reform Nonprofit Contracting Model [City & State]***

The city has been ineffective in its practice of registering contracts, oftentimes taking months to move contracts into the system or provide reimbursements for legitimate expenses. Contracting delays serve as a financial barrier to smaller nonprofits that do not have significant endowments or banking relationships, and payment delays can put services and staffing in jeopardy. This is especially true for grassroots and BIPOC-led organizations that lack the same financial balance sheet and banking connections as older, more established institutions. Delays force organizations to apply for costly loans and lines of credit, cut budgets and staff, underinvest in critical infrastructure such as IT and HR, and can drain resources to the point of organizations shuttering. PNY believes timely contract registration and payments are critical to an organization's success and a fundamental obligation of a government that outsources critical health and human services to nonprofits. Furthermore, government's lack of payment often means that philanthropic dollars serve as a backstop, rather than an investment in strengthening interventions, innovating community solutions, and building capacity for stronger organizations. Prioritizing on-time and in-full payments benefits not only nonprofits, but the communities they serve. Reforming the contracting and payment process provides the stability needed to ensure quality social services and ensures that BIPOC-led nonprofits, which have been historically and persistently underfunded, are able to sustainably serve their communities.

#### **Action:**

PNY released a [statement](#) in support of on-time and in-full nonprofit contracting payments. We held a [program](#) in the Summer of 2022 featuring key figures of the Mayor's Administration, including First Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright to receive status updates and offer feedback on the city's action plan.

#### **Future Actions:**

PNY is providing testimony to the City Council on this issue in early 2023. We anticipate continued asks of the administration for accountable reporting, continued contract improvements and changes to antiquated contracting rules and policies. We will continue to host meetings on the subject and work with our nonprofit allies to support their calls for system improvement. We will pursue opportunities that will unfold to support this work in collaboration with our partners.

## ***Issue #2: True Cost of Living Standard & Wage Equity (including JustPay Campaign) [City & State]***

The current minimum wage in New York City is \$15 an hour despite the continuous increase in cost of living. The [current living wage calculations in New York City](#) for a single adult start at \$25.42 an hour. Therefore, workers employed full-time at \$15 an hour earn insufficient income to meet minimum standards for food, housing, medical care, clothing, and transportation. According to the New York City Comptroller, nonprofits employ [18% of the New York City workforce](#). Almost 25% of all human services employees qualify for SNAP benefits. An analysis by the Center for New York City Affairs found that the human services contract workforce is staffed predominately by workers of color ([75 percent](#)) and women ([70 percent](#)). Therefore, the current wage floor not only limits these workers' access to basic needs such as housing and healthcare, it also perpetuates and exacerbates the [stark racial and gender wealth gap](#) in New York.

PNY's public policy work intends to create a stronger operating environment for nonprofit grantee partners and a more racially equitable, democratic, and sustainable New York. PNY believes a "true cost of living" measure that tracks the actual cost in New York City of meeting essential needs, including housing, food, childcare, transportation, and other necessary costs, without consideration of public, private, or informal assistance is necessary to inform critical programmatic, policy and contracting decisions. Ensuring that employed individuals, including those in the nonprofit sector, are able to maintain a basic standard of living would significantly increase the impact of Philanthropy New York members' grant-making strategies.

### **Action:**

PNY has been an active supporter of the Human Services Council's Just Pay Campaign whose goal is enact a wage floor of \$21 for health and human services workers. To demonstrate our support, PNY released a [policy statement](#) affirming a true cost of living standard and wage equity; PNY leadership published an op-ed titled "[Mismanagement at nonprofits? Think again](#)" and filmed a [PSA on the JustPay Campaign](#); and PNY has leveraged its relationship with the NYC Mayor's Office to [host a program with administration leaders to update our members on their contracting efforts](#).

### **Future Actions:**

We will continue to work with partners at HSC, FPWA and other partners to identify opportunities to elevate this issue and seek accountability in government funding and contracting.

***Issue #3: Increase Capacity for Nonprofits to Shape the Policies that Impact the Nonprofit Ecosystem (including Place at the Table) [City & State]***

The threshold for nonprofits to participate in lobbying currently stands is very limited, at \$5,000. While nonprofits know and have a deep understanding of issues facing the communities they serve, only 3% are able to conduct legislative advocacy. The rules surrounding legislative advocacy in the nonprofit field are complicated, burdensome, strictly regulated, and inequitable. In line with PNY's vision of an equitable, sustainable, and democratic society, PNY believes raising the lobbying the threshold is one strategy to, ultimately, increase access for nonprofits to participate and create equity in the policymaking process.

**Action:**

In March 2021, PNY published a [statement](#) affirming that nonprofit organization and their constituents must build community power through effective advocacy and lobbying. Through the [A Place at the Table Campaign](#), nonprofits are advocating to increase the lobbying threshold to \$10,000. This higher threshold will provide nonprofits the ability to bring the voices of the community to the table and participate in political advocacy with influential power.

**Future Actions:**

Additionally, PNY will be actively engaged in reviewing future actions, policy, and legislative proposals that affirmatively increase the capacity of the nonprofit sector to inform and shape the ecosystem that they work in.

***Issue #4: Promoting more equitable access to exercise democracy [State & Federal]***

Philanthropy New York's vision is one of philanthropic institutions working together to build an equitable, sustainable, and democratic society. Fundamental to a democratic society is the full ability of every citizen to exercise the right to vote. In 2022, multiple attempts were made to create barriers to voting which would disproportionately affect communities of color in large cities as well as rural and tribal communities such as limited access to voting sites and increased hurdles for proving voting eligibility. A ballot initiative in New York State was voted down in 2021. However, efforts to revive that initiative are ongoing. In addition, voting rights legislation is being proposed at the Federal level. The John Lewis Voting Rights Act, which would allow space to challenge laws that impede on the voting rights of BIPOC communities and require public notice to changes in voting laws, was stalled in the Senate. Furthermore, the For the People Act was stalled in the Senate. This legislation outlines a set of provisions to simplify



voting, including automatic voter registration, and the federal enforcement of standards related to mail-in/absentee voting.

**Action:**

PNY served on United Philanthropy Forums Policy Committee to support the safeguard of voting rights including the John Lewis Voting Rights Act. At the local level, we are tracking the advancement of companion legislation that effectively makes sure that every New Yorker has the ability to exercise their right to voter.

**Future Actions:**

PNY believes that there may be opportunities to support legislation and stand in partnership with local and national nonprofit associations seeking to secure and expand voting rights and the full democratic participation of communities that have historically been marginalized and disenfranchised from the vote. This may include taking a policy stand on a particular piece of legislation or signing on to campaigns with fellow PSO's and nonprofit associations.

***Issue #5: Regulate Taxes on Charitable Giving [Federal]***

Since 1917, the federal charitable tax deduction has provided a tax deduction for donations made to nonprofit organizations by taxpayers who itemize their tax returns, currently roughly one-third of all Americans. Philanthropy New York supports efforts to revise the tax code in ways that will further incentivize charitable giving and opposes efforts that would reduce charitable giving. Moreover, incentivizing charitable giving increases the philanthropic spend on nonprofits, which, in turn, enables them to serve and address community needs. However, in incentivizing giving, we must also ensure that philanthropic dollars go to BIPOC communities.

**Action:**

PNY has been actively engaged in discussion on the ACE legislation – providing insights and analysis to our members, the sector and other stakeholders through written pieces, panel participation, and consultations.

**Future Actions:**

We will continue to monitor these issues as they come up and provide real time analysis of future legislation. Through Foundations on the Hill advocacy, we will be soliciting congressmembers support in supporting the philanthropic sector and nonprofit partners that we fund.