

**C. Christine Wheeler, PhD
New York, New York**

March 26, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to submit this letter in support of American Dance Institute Inc. dba LUMBERYARD's application for funding for its Broadway pilot program, SEATS ON THE SPECTRUM. SEATS ON THE SPECTRUM aims to improve access to mainstream theatrical productions for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).


As a board member, I am well-acquainted with LUMBERYARD's ability to identify and address critical gaps in the performing arts field and develop industry-wide solutions. LUMBERYARD's neurodiversity initiative – with its focus on individuals with ASD – reflects its commitment to advancing artistic innovation for artists as well as for audiences.

Access to cultural experiences, including dignity of access, is crucial for individuals with ASD and their families. New York City is the cultural epicenter of our nation, but we have fallen behind other nations in serving those with different cognitive abilities. In theatrical terms, one might say this is a tragedy.

As a psychotherapist and clinical practitioner, I am committed to working with LUMBERYARD to identify and activate a committee of medical and therapeutic specialists, including Dr. Sumit Parikh, MD Psychiatrist Center for Pediatric Neurosciences Cleveland Clinic; Dr. Jeffrey Daly, MD Child & Adolescent Psychiatry New York City; Dr. Barry Kosofsky, MD Pediatric Neurology New York- Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center; Dr. Srishti Nangia, MD Pediatric Neurology New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center; Michael P. Milham, MD, PhD, Psychiatrist, Vice President and Director of Research, Center for the Developing Brain; the Child Mind Institute, among others. LUMBERYARD has a proven reputation for coalition building and I am confident that it will bring together ASD experts alongside innovators from the cultural and technology sectors to define and advance a national model for audience inclusion.

I have known LUMBERYARD's Artistic and Executive Director, Adrienne Willis, for more than 20 years. I can attest to her passion for creating new programs that serve our city and state and her ability to achieve scalable solutions. She brings professional experience in the performing arts, as well as a mother's love, to this issue. I urge you to support this application for funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Christine Wheeler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and "W".

C. Christine Wheeler, PhD