

The Cultural Institutions Group Announces the Election of Stephanie Hill Wilchfort as Chair and Atiba T. Edwards as Executive Vice Chair

Press Contact: Chris Gorman: pressoffice@mcny.org & 917.492.3482

(New York, New York) — December 10, 2025 — **Stephanie Hill Wilchfort**, Ronay Menschel Director and President of the Museum of the City of New York and a leading advocate for citywide cultural access, has been elected **Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)**. **Atiba T. Edwards**, President & CEO of Brooklyn Children's Museum, and member of Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani's Arts & Culture Transition Committee, was elected as **CIG Executive Vice Chair**.

In a vote held at the Studio Museum on December 9, Wilchfort, who previously served as Executive Vice Chair, and Edwards, who previously served as an At-Large member of the CIG Steering Committee, were elected alongside incoming members of the CIG leadership team.

As Chair, Wilchfort will lead the CIG—founded in 1869 and now comprising 39 organizations on City-owned property that together represent the breadth of New York's cultural landscape, including museums, botanical gardens, zoos, performing arts centers, and historical societies across all five boroughs.

A born-and-raised New Yorker from Brooklyn, Wilchfort has long championed the cultural sector as the city's heartbeat, central to education, economic vitality, and community resilience. Through senior leadership and executive roles at the Tenement Museum, Brooklyn Children's Museum, New York Public Radio, and the Museum of the City of New York, she has driven initiatives that broaden access, deepen community engagement, expand civic participation, and fortify the citywide cultural ecosystem.

Edwards, a native of St. Vincent and the Grenadines who grew up in Brownsville, Brooklyn, is a passionate advocate for the sector. Prior to his role as President, he was Executive Vice President at Brooklyn Children's Museum and previously served as the Director of Operations at Brooklyn East Collegiate, an Uncommon Schools middle school, and Investment Bank Analyst at J.P. Moran Chase and Nomura Securities. He also co-founded FOKUS, a non-profit organization dedicated to connecting and building communities through the arts.

Wilchfort succeeds **Coco Killingsworth**, Chief Experience and Impact Officer at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Aziz Isham, Executive Director of the Museum of the Moving Image, and **Frances Escano**, Associate Vice President of Government Affairs at the New York Hall of Science, **were elected as members-at-large**. The 2026 Vice-Chairs represent all five New York City boroughs: **Raymond Codrington**, Weeksville Heritage Center (Brooklyn); **Aaron Bouska**, New York Botanical Garden (Bronx); **Norah Yahya**, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Manhattan); **Evie Hantzopoulos**, Queens Botanical Garden (Queens); and **Jessica Baker Vodoor**, Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden (Staten Island).

“I am deeply honored to take on the role of Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group,” said Wilchfort. “I extend my sincere gratitude to Coco Killingsworth for her exemplary leadership and stewardship of the CIG, which resulted in historic gains for the arts and culture sector. New York City’s cultural institutions are essential to the vibrancy, resilience, and imagination of our communities, and I look forward to working closely with my colleagues across the CIG and with City leadership to continue building a cultural sector that is accessible, inclusive, and reflective of the extraordinary diversity of our city.”

“It’s a profound honor to step into the role of Vice Chair at this pivotal moment for the Cultural Institutions Group,” said Edwards. “As New Yorkers, we know that culture is not a luxury — it is a lifeline that connects communities, sparks curiosity, and strengthens our city’s future. I look forward to working alongside Stephanie and our CIG partners to champion equity, expand access, and ensure that every child, family, and neighborhood sees themselves reflected in the cultural landscape of New York City.”

“New York City’s cultural institutions are special because of their ability to uplift and reflect the history, culture, and communities that make up the five boroughs,” said **Speaker Adrienne Adams**. “I’m thrilled at the appointments of Stephanie Hill Wilchfort as Chair and Atiba Edwards as Vice Chair of the CIGs. As leaders of the Museum of the City of New York and the Brooklyn Children’s Museum, respectively, they have provided New Yorkers with access to two of our city’s great cultural institutions, while fighting for the health of the entire sector. I know they will build on this work, partnering with communities and government to strengthen cultural institutions across our city. I thank outgoing chair, Coco Killingsworth, for her stewardship and partnership over the years, and look forward to seeing arts and culture in our city flourish.”

Julie Menin, New York City Council Member: “Our Cultural Institutions Group embodies New York City’s deep commitment to exceptional, world-class culture that spans from internationally renowned institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art to vibrant community centers across all five boroughs. With Stephanie Hill



Wilchfort becoming Chair and Atiba Edwards as Vice Chair, our CIGs will continue to strengthen cultural excellence and accessibility for all New Yorkers. I look forward to working with these institutions to ensure that New York City remains the global leader in culture and enriches the lives of millions every year.”

New York State Senator Jose Serrano commented: "As Chair of the New York State Senate Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation, I extend my congratulations to Stephanie Hill Wilchfort and Atiba Edwards on their election as Chair and Vice Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group. Their expertise as leaders in the art and cultural sector will bring invaluable insight to support cultural institutions across the five boroughs."

"Our Cultural Institutions Group embodies New York City's deep commitment to exceptional, world-class culture that spans from internationally renowned institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art to vibrant community centers across all five boroughs," said **Emma Pfohman, Chief Executive Officer at the Association for a Better New York (ABNY)**. "With Stephanie Hill Wilchfort becoming Chair and Atiba Edwards as Vice Chair, our CIGs will continue to strengthen cultural excellence and accessibility for all New Yorkers. I look forward to working with these institutions to ensure that New York City remains the global leader in culture and enriches the lives of millions every year."

"The Trust is thrilled to welcome Stephanie Hill Wilchfort as chair of the Cultural Institutions Group. She is a tireless champion of our city's most cherished institutions and brings the perfect combination of vision and experience to this role," said **Amy Freitag, President of The New York Community Trust**. "We share the goal of ensuring all New Yorkers have access to the vital cultural organizations that are the beating heart of our city."

"Stephanie Hill Wilchfort and Atiba T. Edwards are visionary, collaborative leaders whose work continues to strengthen the cultural sector and the communities it serves. They bring clarity, generosity, and strategic thinking to their work, building trust and alignment across institutions. Their leadership reflects a deep commitment to equity, access, and the power of culture to unite and inspire," said **Dr. Jocelynn Rainey, President and CEO, Brooklyn.org**

"The Cultural Institutions Group plays a critical role in ensuring that New York City's cultural infrastructure is optimized to serve residents, visitors, and communities across the five boroughs," said **Angela Pinsky, Head of Community Engagement for New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania at Amazon**. "Stephanie Hill Wilchfort's deep commitment to expanding access to the arts makes her an ideal Chair

for the Cultural Institutions Group. Her vision and integrity will strengthen the entire sector. Paired with Atiba Edwards as Executive Vice Chair—whose community focus and operational leadership are widely admired—the CIG will benefit from a powerful and complementary partnership. Together, Stephanie and Atiba bring the experience and energy needed to guide New York City’s cultural institutions into their next chapter.”

"Stephanie Hill Wilchfort and Atiba Edwards bring tremendous experience and vision to their new roles as CIG Chair and Vice Chair," said **John F. Calvelli, Executive Vice President of Public Affairs for the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and former CIG Chair**. "They have been strong partners with WCS and deeply involved in our shared work over the years. I look forward to continuing that collaboration. Together, we can advance the CIG mission and strengthen the impact that culture and arts have for all New Yorkers, including supporting meaningful opportunities for residents, expanding workforce development programs for young people, and reinforcing the essential role that our cultural institutions play as engines of community, education, and economic growth."

Lucy Sexton, Executive Director, New Yorkers for Culture and Arts: "I've had the privilege of working closely with Coco Killingsworth and have seen firsthand how powerfully she has helped unite the cultural sector through thoughtful, strategic advocacy, and inspired leadership. I've also been inspired by Stephanie Hill Wilchfort and Atiba Edwards as eloquent, visionary leaders and trusted builders of community. I'm truly excited to work alongside them, and I have great confidence in the strength and impact of a united cultural sector as we enter this new era in city government."

"The city's relationship with the Cultural Institutions Group is one of New York's strongest and longest lasting public-private partnerships, creating institutions that - over generations of public investment and collaboration - have become indispensable anchors of our communities and key drivers of our economy," said **Cultural Affairs Commissioner Laurie Cumbo**. "Stephanie Wilchfort and Atiba Edwards are both deeply experienced cultural leaders with exciting, inclusive visions for the role institutions can play in our communities, and I applaud their appointment as chair and executive vice chair of the CIG. We look forward to continuing our work together to expand cultural access and opportunity for all New Yorkers."

"New York's cultural institutions are essential to the vibrancy and identity of our city, and their impact is deeply intertwined with the strength of our restaurants and nightlife," said **Andrew Rigie, Executive Director of the New York City Hospitality Alliance and CEO of the Impact Foundation**. "Stephanie Hill

Wilchfort is a terrific choice to serve as Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group as she understands how culture, hospitality, and community all reinforce one another. And thank you to Coco Killingsworth for her leadership and partnership, which continue to strengthen this vital ecosystem.”

“Our cultural institutions are woven into the daily life of New Yorkers. They bring people together, uplift neighborhoods, and create opportunities for small businesses to thrive,” said **Sandra Jaquez, President of the New York State Latino Restaurant, Bar & Lounge Association**. “Stephanie Hill Wilchfort is an inspired choice to lead the Cultural Institutions Group. She understands how culture and community reinforce one another.

“Culture is one of New York City’s greatest draws, and its influence on tourism and hospitality cannot be overstated,” said **Vijay Dandapani, President of the Hotel Association of New York**. “Stephanie Hill Wilchfort’s appointment as Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group is an excellent choice. She brings a clear understanding of how cultural experiences shape the way visitors engage with the city.”

About Stephanie Hill Wilchfort

Stephanie Hill Wilchfort is the Ronay Menschel Director and President of the Museum of the City of New York, appointed in 2023. Under her leadership, the Museum has seen a 20% increase in visitorship, with acclaimed exhibitions combining objects, art, and interactive storytelling receiving critical and public praise. Wilchfort has expanded accessibility through bilingual exhibitions and the requirement that all MCNY field trips be offered in both English and Spanish.

Before joining MCNY, she served as President & CEO of Brooklyn Children’s Museum. Wilchfort previously held senior roles at the Tenement Museum, Sesame Workshop, New York Public Radio/WNYC, and WNET. She began her career at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. She has been recognized as a Power Player and a Trailblazer in Arts and Culture by *City & State* and *AMNY* for her contributions to New York’s cultural landscape.

About Atiba Edwards

Atiba Edwards is President & CEO of Brooklyn Children’s Museum, the city’s largest children’s museum, serving 300,000 people annually.

Edwards was born in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, West Indies and grew up in Brownsville, Brooklyn. Prior to Brooklyn Children’s Museum, Edwards was the Director of Operations at Brooklyn East Collegiate, a middle school that is part of the Uncommon

Schools network. Additionally, he co-founded FOKUS, an arts not for profit organization that uses the arts to connect and create communities.

Previously, Edwards also worked as a Fixed Income Research Analyst within JPMorgan's Investment Bank where he covered the Automotive Sector and he also worked at Nomura Securities in their High Grade and High Yield Fixed Income Research divisions. He graduated from University of Michigan, where he obtained degrees in Industrial Operations and Engineering and Liberal Arts with a focus in Poetry and Musicology.

About The Cultural Institutions Group

The Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) is a longstanding public-private partnership between New York City and 39 cultural organizations across all five boroughs, originating in 1869 with the American Museum of Natural History. Today, the CIG includes museums, botanical gardens, zoos, performing arts centers, and historical societies on City-owned property, all of which provide world-class collections, programs, and public services. In partnership with the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, the CIG advances access to arts, culture, and science through free and low-cost admission, K-12 and STEAM education programs, community initiatives, and collaborations that serve all New Yorkers, particularly in under-resourced neighborhoods, enriching the city's civic, economic, and educational life.