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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS OF COLOR
URGE GOVERNOR PATERSON TO RESTORE \$190 MILLION.
Emergency Press Conference and Public Hearing **This Wednesday: Oct. 20****

October 18, 2010 (New York, NY) - - - The **Cultural Equity Groups** (CEG), a network of New York based community arts, cultural, and multi-disciplinarian organizations, today announces an **emergency press conference** in support of the public hearing called by NY State Senators **Ruth Hassell-Thompson, Kevin Parker, and Bill Perkins** (members of the New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus; see official statement below). The press conference will be held **WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2010** on the steps of City Hall in Manhattan at 9:00am. The public hearing will follow immediately afterward from 10:00am to 1:00pm (across the street at 250 Broadway). Media inquiries regarding the press conference are directed to AKILA WORKSONGS, Inc. 718.756.8501 or at pr@akilaworksongs.com.

The purpose of the public hearing is for community-based arts, cultural, advocacy, and social service leaders to present their concerns about the impact of *member item funding cuts* to their organizations and the people they service. Both the hearing and press conference are open to the public. For general inquiries about the public hearing, contact **Joan P. Gibbs, Esq.** at 718.804.8893 or via email at jgibbs@mec.cuny.edu

Led by **Dr. Marta Moreno Vega**, founder and executive director of The Caribbean Cultural Center / African Diaspora Institute; **Esmeralda Simmons**, founder and executive director of the Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College; and **Laurie Cumbo**, founder and executive director of MoCADA, CEG urges artists, activists, advocates, entrepreneurs, and those concerned to take action *today* so that funds may be restored. Dr. Vega reveals, “Not-for-profit institutions of color in New York—be they arts or social justice related—play a vital role in people’s personal and professional lives. They help alleviate distress in underserved populations and they contribute to the economic development of neglected communities. For the governor to freeze funds from organizations that are, in many cases, the life blood of their communities actually contributes to the disenfranchisement of those communities.”

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CEG leaders maintain that they are not enemies of the governor, but are compelled, nonetheless, to create awareness about the negative effect of frozen funds. Community-based organizations, those that service the artistic, social, economic, and/or advocacy needs of people of color communities, are being crippled by this veto and may not recover, CEG leaders affirm. What is known as “member-item reductions” in the state budget amounts to \$190 million dollars and such a reduction “would cause colossal harm for a relatively little bit of money,” Simmons declares. “The Black, Latino, and Asian communities are, from the onset, receiving less funding than other communities in New York. To reduce the already small budget allotment even further is adding salt to the wound. We must have our voices heard and we encourage everyone to attend the public hearing.”

Dr. Moreno Vega adds: “We must write letters, make phone calls, and diligently press the Governor to restore the funds. We must make it clear that a decrease in services and jobs in under-served communities further decreases access to cultural and economic rights.”

CEG urges all concerned to contact the Governor at this postal address and phone number:

Governor David A. Paterson
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224
(518) 474.8390

Additional CEG leaders and/or supporters include the Center for Black Literature at Medgar Evers College, CUNY; the Harlem Arts Alliance; Harlem Film Museum; the Bronx Council on the Arts; AMERINDA, and others.

About The Cultural Equity Groups (CEGs)

Emerging from the Civil Rights Movement, the Cultural Equity Groups are a network of community arts organizations and artists of color who came together in the spirit that all people and organizations of designated "minority groups" who make up the majority of New York City citizenry and a significant segment of the State have equal access to information, financial resources, and opportunities presented in the arts policies and the funding distribution processes available at the municipal and state levels. CEG was founded to address, at all levels of society, the inequity in funding and policies that negatively impact the preservation, continuity and growth of our cultures, art, and communities.

[Official Statement]

From: Senator **Ruth Hassell-Thompson**, Chairwoman, and Senator **Kevin Parker** (of the NYS Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus)
To: Caucus Members
Re: Public Hearing on the “Member-Item” Reduction Impact on Small and Mid-Size Not-for-Profit Community-Based Organizations

During the extended budget negotiations, Governor Paterson vetoed last year's member-item allotment of about \$190 million, as a way to reduce the deficit and pressure lawmakers to complete a budget deal. For many not-for-profit organizations that serve low-income families, the grants are tangible resources that provide resources for case management, transportation, and purchase of various goods and services.

It is important that representatives from small and mid-size not for profit organizations, in our most high needs communities have an opportunity to provide critical data on the impact of the funding cuts to already under-resourced communities. The primary goal of this public hearing is to have comprehensive presentations from Community Based Organizations that will provide information on the immediate and long-range impact of member item funding cuts to their organizations and their consumers. The hearing is scheduled for 10:00 am on October 20, 2010, at 250 Broadway, New York City.

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