Senate Resolution No. 2312

BY: Senator PARKER

RECOGNIZING and commending the Brooklyn Arts Council upon the occasion of hosting its Brooklyn Arts Awards 2026

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize institutions that have shaped the cultural identity of our communities and invested in the artists, voices, and traditions that make Brooklyn one of the world's most celebrated creative centers; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to recognize and commend the Brooklyn Arts Council upon the occasion of hosting its Brooklyn Arts Awards in celebration of 60 years of extraordinary impact; and

WHEREAS, On May 19, 2026, the Brooklyn Arts Council hosted its Brooklyn Arts Awards at Powerhouse Arts in Brooklyn, bringing together artists, cultural leaders, and community members for live performances, a Blue Carpet and Artist Mixer, an awards ceremony, and an after-party commemorating six decades of artistic excellence and civic engagement; and

WHEREAS, Held under the theme Then. Now. Next., this milestone event honored the legacy of those who helped shape Brooklyn's cultural landscape, celebrated the voices transforming it today, and invested in the artists and leaders who will carry it into the future; and

WHEREAS, In 1966, a group of Brooklyn residents committed to sustaining the borough's artistic heritage convened in the Flatbush apartment of Charlene Victor and founded the organization then known as the Brooklyn Arts and Cultural Association, laying the foundation for what would become the Brooklyn Arts Council; and

WHEREAS, From its earliest years, the Brooklyn Arts Council demonstrated a deep commitment to nurturing emerging talent, including through its first Salute to Creative Youth program in 1968 at the Brooklyn Museum, which showcased artwork by Brooklyn schoolchildren alongside works from the museum's permanent collection; and

WHEREAS, Throughout its history, the Brooklyn Arts Council has recognized and supported artists whose work would go on to shape American culture, including honoring emerging filmmaker Danny DeVito in 1973 for his comedic short The Sound Sleeper and partially funding Spike Lee's graduate thesis film Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads in 1983; and

WHEREAS, During the 1980s, many influential artists found creative community at BACA Downtown, the organization's Willoughby Street performance space and gallery, including Suzan-Lori Parks, Holly Hughes, Mac Wellman, Glenn Ligon, and David Wojnarowicz; and

WHEREAS, In 1980, the Brooklyn Arts Council expanded its mission to include grant-making on behalf of the New York State Council on the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and in 1986 formally adopted the name Brooklyn Arts Council to better reflect the breadth of its advocacy, programming, and outreach; and

WHEREAS, In 2025, the Brooklyn Arts Council distributed more than $1.82 million to 378 Brooklyn-based artists, creatives, and cultural organizations, including support for teaching artists serving older adult centers and in-school residencies, demonstrating the organization's enduring investment in Brooklyn's creative economy and cultural vitality; and

WHEREAS, The Brooklyn Arts Council advances its mission through initiatives that empower artistic creation and learning, strengthen connections between artists and communities, and advocate for sustainable development strategies that recognize the arts as a driver of social innovation and civic engagement; and

WHEREAS, Among this year's honorees is photographer Laylah Amatullah Barrayn, whose work documents and preserves Black culture through photography that captures memory, community, labor, and identity, helping to safeguard stories and histories that might otherwise be overlooked or forgotten; and

WHEREAS, Through her powerful visual storytelling, Laylah Amatullah Barrayn has made significant contributions to the preservation of collective memory and the documentation of institutions, relationships, and neighborhoods, work that remains especially meaningful at a time of rapid cultural and technological change; and

WHEREAS, For six decades, the Brooklyn Arts Council has served as a cornerstone of Brooklyn's cultural life, uplifting generations of artists, preserving the borough's rich creative traditions, and ensuring that the arts remain accessible, inclusive, and transformative for communities across Brooklyn; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend and recognize the Brooklyn Arts Council upon the occasion of hosting its Brooklyn Arts Awards 2026, held on May 19, 2026, at Powerhouse Arts in Brooklyn, and to celebrate 60 years of extraordinary impact on the cultural, civic, and creative life of the Borough of Brooklyn; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body extends its deepest congratulations to all honorees of the Brooklyn Arts Awards - including photographer Laylah Amatullah Barrayn - whose contributions to Brooklyn's artistic legacy embody the spirit of Then. Now. Next.; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body further expresses its sincere appreciation to Executive Director Rasu Jilani, along with the staff, board members, grantees, teaching artists, and community partners whose

dedication continues to sustain and strengthen this vital institution; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Brooklyn Arts Council and this year's honoree, Laylah Amatullah Barrayn.