

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, May 16, 2022

The First Lady of the United States Dr. Jill Biden Visits Students at The Washington Ballet at THEARC

Dr. Biden visits The Washington Ballet's Southeast campus in support of a new scholarship initiative designed to open access to ballet study.

Washington, D.C. – On the afternoon of Monday, May 16, 2022, the First Lady of the United States Dr. Jill Biden visited with students and delivered remarks at The Washington Ballet at THEARC in Southeast Washington, D.C. The visit supported The Washington Ballet's announcement of its new scholarship initiative designed to support pathways and pipelines into the study of ballet.

In prepared remarks, the First Lady stated:

I am so honored to be here with you for the launch of this new scholarship initiative. Dance is a universal language, one that teaches and transforms—and not just the audience. Students of dance learn discipline, perseverance, and confidence. They strengthen their bodies and their minds, and they find community and a sense of belonging.

And yet from training to live performances, the ability to be a part of this incredible community has often been out of reach for too many. That's why I'm so grateful that the Washington Ballet is committed to providing support to students from all backgrounds. With this scholarship, [The Washington Ballet and its school] are opening the studio doors wider, allowing more people to train, find their voice, and be a part of this unique community.

The poet Mary Oliver wrote, 'maybe the desire to make something beautiful is the piece of God that is inside each of us.' With world class performances, education, and mentorship, The Washington ballet brings beauty to our nation's capital every day. Thank you for your persistence and commitment, thank you for supporting the next generation of dancers, and thank you for connecting us to each other.

At the event, The Washington Ballet announced its renewed commitment to supporting young people from all backgrounds in pursuing ballet study. The company will award more than \$300,000 in scholarships each year to students who otherwise would not be able to afford ballet study, with an emphasis on people traditionally underrepresented in ballet, such as people of color and young men.

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THEARC (Town Hall Education Arts Recreation Campus) is a groundbreaking cultural center dedicated to providing best-in-class services and programs to historically under-served Washington, D.C. residents living east of the Anacostia River. As a founding member of the THEARC, The Washington Ballet has operated a school campus there for 17 years.

Students of The Washington Ballet at THEARC, many of whom receive free or substantively subsidized tuition, have gone on to dance professionally at major ballet companies, including The Washington Ballet, Alvin Ailey and Nashville Ballet. Other students go on to colleges and universities, maintaining their connection to the art form while pursuing other non-dance professional paths, such as law and medicine.

“Ballet teaches so many life skills, so whether a student chooses to pursue ballet as a professional or follows another career path, they carry with them the discipline, self-awareness, and growth mindset of a dance student,” remarked Julie Kent, Artistic Director of TWB. “The Washington Ballet is proud of the work we are doing here at THEARC and throughout the nation to open pathways to ballet.”

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