

PRESS RELEASE

WWW.DEBORAH-RUTTER.COM



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 20, 2025

A STATEMENT BY DEBORAH F. RUTTER IN RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION REGARDING THE FINANCIAL HEALTH AND PAST STEWARDSHIP OF THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS:

"I am deeply troubled by the false allegations regarding the management of the Kennedy Center being made by people without the context or expertise to understand the complexities involved in nonprofit and arts management, which has been my professional experience for 47 years. Assembling and executing a successful performing arts season that delivers approximately 2,000 performances year after year as the nation's premier cultural center was my honor for the last ten of those 47 years, and I am proud of what we accomplished during my time.

"Each year during my tenure as president, the Kennedy Center adopted an operating budget for the upcoming fiscal year, which was approved by the Board. That budget served as a blueprint for our operations and programming - standard and responsible practice in arts management. In addition, in line with established management best practices, the Finance, Audit, and Executive Committees of the Board—composed of appointees from President Trump's first term—had full transparency into all financial transactions and decisions. Financial statements, as well as audit reports, were presented at every Board meeting, in fulfillment of the Board's fiduciary responsibilities.

"To ensure long-term sustainability from season to season, under my leadership we also established and maintained a reserve fund—the Sustainability Fund—which was designed to cover potential shortfalls in operating revenue that could result from any number of economic circumstances, including sustaining us through the protracted global pandemic. At the time of my departure last February, that fund held approximately \$10 million, available to support the current as well as future season's revenue fluctuations.

"Following my departure from the Kennedy Center three and a half months ago, I have had no access to, nor knowledge of, its current financial situation—nor as to how changes in management as well as donor and patron behavior is impacting this year's operating budget. Perhaps those now in charge are facing significant financial gaps and are seeking to attribute them to past management, which would include the Board of Trustees, some of whom were appointed by President Trump, in his previous term. This malicious attempt to distort the facts, which were consistently, transparently and readily available in professionally audited financial reports, recklessly disregards the truth.

"I stand by my assertion that at the time of my departure, the Kennedy Center was fiscally sound, on track to balance its budget for the year, and positioned to grow its endowment significantly while serving as a beacon for free artistic expression and a place where everyone could belong."

DEBORAH F. RUTTER

WWW.DEBORAH-RUTTER.COM

Contact: Gregory Tucker
greg@tuckercomms.com
667-262-3040