

# MLK STATEMENT

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Dear friends, colleagues, and the entire performing arts industry,

Last week was a particularly frightening time to live in DC. The events of January 6, 2021 will stay with us and with our city for a very long time.

As we processed the impact of the attack on our Capitol with our staff, DC Native Kristen Jackson reminded us of the proximity to Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and how much Dr. King advocated on behalf of DC residents, speaking out against the lack of freedom and democracy in the District of Columbia.

Prior to moving to Washington, DC, we were unaware of the struggles residents here face. Not being recognized as a state has real impacts on our governmental representation, financial independence, and safety. Our learnings include:

- Our population exceeds that of the states of Wyoming and Vermont, yet we are not able to elect voting representatives to Congress. DC residents do pay federal taxes, which led the populace to re-adopt a slogan that originated during the American Revolution: "End taxation without representation." It is also worth noting that a majority of the DC population identifies as Black.
- DC does not have true local self-government. The Constitution gives Congress exclusive legislative authority over DC. They have the power to review and modify DC's local budget and annul any law they do not agree with.
- State governors have the power to mobilize national guards, a power denied to the Mayor of DC, who must make that request of the President.
- DC functions as a state, including administering driver licensure, workers' and unemployment compensation, food and drug inspection, operating a District police force, and a District school system. DC is treated as a state in over 500 federal laws but those responsibilities do not come with the rights of a state.

These are just a few of the examples that are specific to DC. Many more inequities exist for the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Please know that this is about more than adding two Senators and voting representation in the House of Representatives. This is about equal representation for over 705,749 U.S. Citizens\*. This is about the ability to feel safe in our home.

We ask you to join us in the movement for DC Statehood.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION, CHECK OUT:**

[DC Statehood Coalition – Home](#)

[Neighbors United for DC Statehood](#)

[Stand Up! For Democracy in DC \(Free DC\)](#)

In solidarity,

Maria & Emika

*\*From the Census as of July 2019*