

File #170043  
Received in Committee  
3/9/17

Community Music Center Older Adult Choir Program – María Cora

\* See file for  
additional materials.

Sup. [REDACTED] Yee hearing – March 9, 2017

My name is María Cora and I am the Coordinator of the Community Music Center's Older Adult Choir Program. The Community Music Center (CMC) is one of the oldest and largest community arts organizations on the West Coast making high quality music accessible to all people, regardless of financial means since 1921. I am here to share information about a vital program serving the seniors of San Francisco. The CMC Older Adult Choir Program manages 12 choirs (soon to be 13 choirs) located in partner senior centers and institutions all over San Francisco.

The choir program serves over 350 older adults who sing in English, Spanish and Tagalog depending on the community. The choirs are free, they meet for rehearsals once per week for 36 weeks per year, and no prior singing experience is required to participate. This program was conceived in 2011 as a way to reach out to older adults and provide them the many personal, social, artistic and quality of life benefits that musical activity can bring.

The choir program has grown as choirs have cycled out of the Community of Voices research study, a three way partnership between UCSF, Community Music Center and the Department of Aging and Adult Services supported by a grant from the National Institute on Aging. This study, now in its last year, [REDACTED] is researching whether singing in a community choir is a cost-effective way to promote health and well-being among culturally diverse older adults.

Our program is unparalleled in San Francisco and deserving of public and private support. We look forward to working with the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors to find ways to sustain this unique program serving multiple needs of our diverse senior population.



# COMMUNITY MUSIC CENTER

MUSIC FOR EVERYONE SINCE 1921

## Collaborative Statement in Support of Community Music Center Older Adult Choir Program

We write on behalf of the multiple agencies that participate in CMC's Older Adult Choir Program. We have witnessed the transformative power of singing in older adults at our Senior Centers. We believe that music benefits older adults and offers personal, social, artistic, and quality of life benefits.

Nearly 25% of San Francisco's citizenry are older adults or people living with disabilities. Providing affordable, accessible and life enriching services to low-income adults from diverse backgrounds is critical to our City.

Over 350 older adults are served collectively through our programs. CMC's Older Adult Choir Program started in 2011 and has grown as choirs have cycled out of the Community of Voices research study, a three-way partnership between UCSF, Community Music Center, and the Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) supported by a grant from the National Institute on Aging.

Choirs are free for older adults (ages 55 and up) to join.

A significant investment has been made to sustain the choirs once their one-year participation in the Community of Voices study finished. New members have joined the choirs, and they continue to be a vital part of each host site and CMC's musical community. We are looking for new partners to invest in this program as initial transition funding offered largely by a generous award from the Bay Area Google Impact Challenge grant, comes to a close.

### Number of Participants

354 people, from districts throughout SF, enrolled in Older Adult Choirs at 12 San Francisco senior centers in Fall 2016. (List of locations below).

### Program Impact

According to observation and anecdotal reports, participation brings significant benefits; for many it is transformative. (Research data of measurable health benefits will be available in 2017). Participants describe the uplifting power of singing, increased socialization, and feelings of well-being.

In Spring 2016, 87% of choir members surveyed strongly agreed that singing in a choir lifted their spirits. Participants cite that breathing and relaxation and refreshing the mind, in addition to developing singing skills are important to them. One singer wrote:

*When I began singing in the choir I was very depressed. I didn't even want to get up and dressed in the morning. I had only been in the country for two years and did not have many connections here. After joining the choir I started to come back to life. I loved singing with the choir, made several friends, and even started dancing again. I helped to organize a folk dance to perform with the choir. It has been a wonderful experience for me. (translated from Spanish.)*

Short Documentary on Older Adult Choir Program: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znMIQARyW80>

### Program Structure

Sessions: Each choir meets 1x/week for 36 weeks (90-120 min. each) per year at a DAAS Senior Center.

**Participation:** Choirs have 10-50 participants each, creating over 350 total participants in the program.

**Performances:** Each choir performs 3-4 times/year. Regular performances are given at community centers throughout the city, including prestigious arts venues and neighborhood festivals, allowing choirs to share their accomplishments and act as cultural ambassadors.

**Approach:** Rehearsal routines are tailored to older adults and include physical and vocal warm ups, breathing, and vocal technique. CMC has hired professional choir directors and accompanists who are deeply rooted in the local community and cultural traditions. Activities, language (English/Spanish/Tagalog) and repertoire (ranging from Latin American songs to Gospel) are tailored to meet participant interests and needs at each senior center. Such attention is made possible through close partnership with each senior center, ensuring that the program links strongly with the community.

**Locations of Choirs**

30<sup>th</sup> Street Senior Center  
 Centro Latino de San Francisco  
 Mission Neighborhood Center  
 Western Addition Senior Center  
 Dr. George W. Davis Senior Center  
 Richmond Senior Center

Aquatic Park Senior Center  
 OMI Senior Center  
 Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center  
 Castro Senior Center  
 IT Bookman Senior Center  
 Veterans Equity Center

**Contact Info:** Sylvia Sherman, Program Director ssherman@sfcmc.org 415-647-6015 x 72

**Collaborating Partners** (*Because of multiple scans, the list of collaborating partners and signatures is blurry. A list of organizations and signatories are below the signatures.*)

**Collaborating Partners**

Christopher Borg, Community Music Center  
 Valorie Villela, 30<sup>th</sup> Street Senior Center  
 Sue Horst, Aquatic Park Senior Center  
 Gina Dacus, Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center  
 Patrick Larkin, Castro Senior Center  
 Gloria Bonilla, Centro Latino de San Francisco  
 Cathy Davis, Dr. George W. Davis Senior Center  
 Kristin Rosboro, IT Bookman Senior Center  
 Maria Bermudez, Mission Neighborhood Center  
 Patty Clement-Cihak, Catholic Charities-OMI Senior Center  
 Kaleda Walling, Richmond Senior Center  
 Cathy Davis, Western Addition Senior Center  
 Luisa M. Antonia, Veterans Equity Center

Christopher Borg, Community Music Center  
 Valorie Villela, 30<sup>th</sup> Street Senior Center  
 Sue Horst, Aquatic Park Senior Center  
 Gina Dacus, Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center  
 Patrick Larkin, Castro Senior Center  
 Gloria Bonilla, Centro Latino de San Francisco  
 Cathy Davis, Dr. George W. Davis Senior Center  
 Kristin Rosboro, IT Bookman Senior Center

Maria Bermudez, Mission Neighborhood Center  
 Patty Clement-Cihak, Catholic Charities-OMI Senior Center  
 Kaleda Walling, Richmond Senior Center  
 SCathy Davis, Western Addition Senior Center  
 Luisa M. Antonia, Veterans Equity Center