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To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to you as a graduate of the CYCNY Youth Orchestra in hopes that you can continue to support the program. Since joining this community in seventh grade, I have been witness to the intimate spaces that only music can reveal, through passion, determination, guidance, and hours upon hours of practice. At CYCNY, as first a reluctant participant, then a peer, and now a mentor, I slowly began to understand the significance of music in our lives.

Our orchestra is composed of students from all across Long Island and Queens, ranging from 10 to 18 years old, all attending different schools and with different interests outside of music. Yet every Saturday afternoon, we gather at MS 158 to bring our shared passion to life. In orchestra, we are each part of a whole, and we move together as one. We listen to each other, make way for other instruments, and carry the melody when we must. Our eyes glance between our music and the conductor's baton to make sure we're on beat, and we trust each other to each play our part.

This trust that is built within the orchestra was what first allowed me to feel comfortable when I initially joined. When faced with high school seniors who had been playing since they were nine, I was shaking even as I stood from the back of the second violins when I was first introduced to the orchestra. I'd only been playing solo violin up to that point, and I couldn't even understand orchestral scores. I got lost within the first twenty measures of the very first piece, and was overwhelmed by the talent I faced.

Still, the orchestra is forgiving. I quickly realized that despite my skill level not quite being high enough for the pieces we were playing, I had different points of reference that could guide me whenever I got lost. I relied on the second violin section leader for when to change my bow, I relied on the concertmaster for when to start the melody, and I relied on the conductor for the contrasts between the fortissimos and pianissimos. Through this guidance, I was able to enjoy being a part of something larger than myself, even if I felt that I wasn't personally skilled enough yet. With time, as I grew familiar with the motions of watching others, listening to others, and moving with others, I'd grown into a player that would've had seventh-grade-me in awe.

At CYCNY, even those who are unconfident and inexperienced feel welcome to give their best towards their passion, because they know they will be supported. As I eclipsed my role as a frightened newcomer to become a mentor that others look up to, many have come forth to me about how Saturdays have become their favorite day of the week, when they can see their friends from other schools and create art together. They want to continue practicing until they can play every note in the repertoire and continue improving our concerts.

Through CYCNY, students have gotten chances to perform at places they never would've been able to otherwise. Along with our three annual concerts at MS 158, Taiwan Center, and Lincoln Center, we've also had various chamber groups organized for different events like Councilwoman Sandra Ung's Memorial Day Services and even a dinner banquet for the Taiwanese president. Our repertoire is unlike any other, as our music ranges anywhere from our cultural identity through Taiwanese folk songs, to Broadway musical hits, to brassy jazz numbers. Each time we finish a performance, our students rise to the sound of applause and the pride of fulfilling what we worked so hard on.

I sincerely hope that you could extend your support as well in continuing our orchestra's long history of a welcoming community where young students can learn confidence, connection, and creativity. Thank you so much for considering my endorsement of the CYCNY Youth Orchestra and please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Kind regards,
Celise Lin

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Celise Lin', with a stylized, cursive script.