**"Art is Essential Initiative"**
**The Art Is Essential Initiative, inspired by our recent fundraising campaign, to make art more accessible to students during COVID19**

(PITTSBURGH, PA) OCTOBER 1: **For immediate release:** Level Up Studios is excited to announce our new programming known as the "Art Is Essential" initiative, which will be geared toward BIPOC youths in Pittsburgh. Our goal is to continue our work in offering dance classes, visual arts workshops and music recording sessions & classes to youths living in disadvantaged circumstances, while adding a new level of support and access.

Starting in the fall, we plan to implement 4 major programs that are designed to enrich the artistic & academic experience for youths during the 20-21 school year. In the spirit of our recent on-line campaign, **#ArtIsEssential which raised close to $20,000** thanks to generous supporters like you; this new initiative will augment our existing programming to provide greater support to parents, students and teaching artists during this difficult period. These programs will be provided **free of charge** to underprivileged youths, as we realize that the economic circumstances of their families have become much more fragile than was the case prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. We also know that access to alternative learning experiences under normal conditions would be slim for most. The initiative will expand our reach into the larger community with our programming and increase affordability of these programs for families.

The programs will include **weekly studio recording sessions** & **classes** for youth grades 6-12; **monthly meetups** and **workshops** where youths will be engaged in discussion topics, and art projects around pop culture, visual & performing arts, and the music industry. Additional programming will include **weekly online tutorials and virtual classes**, where students can learn step- by-step dance combinations from our teaching artists in the comfort of their own home.

We also plan to implement an **online support program** to assist public and charter school students with online learning challenges during the 2020-21 academic year. We plan to work directly with our network at Pittsburgh Public Schools to implement this supplemental program. The goal of this initiative, and the programs comprising it, is to not only **improve access to the arts** for this segment of the community, but also to better **support our teaching staff** with opportunities for earned income. Moreover, this initiative will be evaluated on a semi-monthly basis to gauge its success and intended impact and allow for changes as needed.

Level Up Studios "Art is Essential" campaign is looking for dedicated artists. Your artwork will be featured on tee-shirts and hoodies and any money that is made from sales will be split 50/50. If you would like to submit your artwork for this campaign please click the link below and send us a jpeg, pdf, or png image that is 150 resolution.

***For more information, visit www.leveluppgh.com/artisessential.***
***Contact:*** *Mario Quinn Lyles, Executive Director* ***levelupdancepgh@gmail.com & contact@marioquinn.com***

LEVELUP