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### **FirstWorks Elects Next Board President, Adds Member**

*Catherine Terry Taylor Named Board President; Tomás Ávila appointed to the Board*

**PROVIDENCE, RI** – FirstWorks, a Rhode Island non-profit dedicated to building community through world-class arts, is pleased to announce Catherine Terry Taylor of Providence as its new President of the Board. Taylor is Senior Advisor at the George and Anne Ryan Institute for Neuroscience and the Rhode Island Geriatric Education Center at the University of Rhode Island. Taylor succeeds outgoing Board President Normand G. Benoit, a former partner at Partridge Snow & Hahn who served as Board President for the past nine years. Community leader and activist Tomás Ávila, also of Providence, has joined the FirstWorks Board.

“As we enter this next phase in FirstWorks’ evolution, I am honored to embrace Catherine’s leadership as FirstWorks President and excited to welcome Tomás to the Board,” said Kathleen Pletcher, FirstWorks Founder and Executive Artistic Director. “Their commitment to the organization will go a long way in our mission to bring arts performances to even more audiences. Our shared vision in the power of the arts to lift up audiences across Rhode Island are personally inspired by FirstWorks performances. We also are indebted to Norm for his years of leadership during a tremendous time of growth for FirstWorks.”

Taylor brings years of state agency and small business experience to the leadership position. Taylor has worked in public affairs and government for more than three decades. She is the former director of the Rhode Island Division of Elderly Affairs, and the former owner

of the strategic consulting firm LangTaylor. Taylor started her career as legislative aid and speechwriter for Senator John Chafee, and later, Senator Lincoln Chafee. She is an active community volunteer, a member of the Governor's Commission on Disabilities and trustee of the Church of Saint Sebastian. A graduate of Yale University, Taylor lives in Providence with her husband and their four children.

"I'm grateful to be entrusted with the leadership of the FirstWorks board of directors after many years of Norm Benoit's wise and steady stewardship," said Taylor. "This is an exciting time for the organization, as it celebrates its 15th year of connecting live performances with an ever-growing audience across all ages and interests. I have been a passionate audience member of FirstWorks' thrilling offerings since its inception, and now look forward to leading the Board's work to ensure that FirstWorks enlivens our city and state's performing arts scene for many years to come."

Normand Benoit joined the FirstWorks board in 2004 as a founding board member. During his tenure, Benoit guided the organization through the implementation of three strategic plans, and established FirstWorks' role as a Founding Partner of PVDfest. He recently retired from Partridge Snow & Hahn after a legal career that spanned more than 40 years.

The FirstWorks Board also welcomed Tomás Ávila to its ranks. A business consultant and real-estate broker with 30 years of experience, Ávila comes to the Board with a long history of promoting and developing the Latino Business community in Rhode Island. He was the co-founder and past President of the multi-ethnic, multipartisan Rhode Island Latino Political Action Committee (RILPAC) and served on the Governor's Commission on Hispanic Affairs.

FirstWorks recently kicked off its 15th season with a performance by awe-inspiring movement illusionists, Pilobolus. The upcoming season promises shows ranging from puppetry to international music and celebration to contemporary classical violin music and contemporary ballet.

### **About FirstWorks**

FirstWorks is a non-profit based in Providence, Rhode Island whose purpose is to build the cultural, educational and economic vitality of its community by engaging audiences with world-class performing arts and education programs. Since 2004, FirstWorks festivals,

performances and programs have attracted more than 500,000 participants. The FirstWorks Arts Learning Program reaches more than 4,000 students from public and charter schools across Rhode Island with transformative, arts-based learning experiences. FirstWorks is Founding Partner for PVDFest, collaborating with the City of Providence to produce an international arts celebration held each June that in 2018 drew 100,000 visitors to Providence to experience music, art and spectacular performances. Visit [first-works.org](http://first-works.org) to learn more.

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