

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 22, 2020

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

We write to request support for the humanities community during this time of crisis including targeted supplemental emergency funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

As the COVID-19 crisis forces Americans to stay at home, organizations that support humanities teaching, preservation, programming, and research are facing immediate consequences that threaten their ability to support the educational system and serve the broader American public. Museums and historic sites are losing over \$1 billion a month due to the loss of visitors, forcing institutions — many of which are nonprofit or public entities — to reduce staff. of the rapid hollowing out of these organizations undermines their ability to produce cultural and artistic content which remain in demand in digital format during this moment of crisis. These challenges will be compounded as philanthropic giving slows as a result of the impending economic recession.

Independent libraries and archives are similarly compromised, limiting their ability to support educational resources to help prevent major gaps in our nation's curricula. This is placing burdens on humanities educators, both in K-12 and higher education, as they work to educate students in unprecedented circumstances. In addition, professional development opportunities for educators have been largely curtailed due to travel restrictions. Educators depend on regular professional development opportunities to best serve their students, and the need is particularly acute as they transition to online education for the foreseeable future. Humanities-focused organizations that typically coordinate these opportunities are struggling to adapt to our new reality while maintaining services.

Relief through the National Endowment for the Humanities and state humanities councils:

We respectfully request \$500 million in emergency funding for NEH to alleviate this unprecedented situation through the following means:

- Providing direct emergency grants to humanities organizations (museums, libraries, historical societies, cultural organizations, and professional associations) that can be applied to operational expenses, including staff payroll, to sustain them in this time of crisis.

- Supplying state humanities councils with funding to distribute for emergency grants to organizations in their state. Funds channeled through the councils would provide relief and vital support to small cultural centers, history museums, and other institutions that are centers of community life in rural areas. The well-established relationships they have developed over their 50-year history would enable them to quickly identify the areas of greatest need and direct funding to those institutions. The state humanities councils serve the smallest and most vulnerable communities and institutions in their states and are able to reach into areas that receive few other cultural resources.
- Designating NEH funding lines to bolster humanities organizations, colleges, and universities in developing the digital content that is now necessary for classroom use and for the digital resources to sustain communities during this moment of crisis. With support for the digitization of their archives and collections, libraries, museum and historical societies can support faculty as they reinvent their curricula. Additional resources channeled through state humanities councils could also be used to strengthen the technology infrastructure that would support expansion into virtual programming, including streaming lectures, short documentary films, and online conversations about vital community issues. Such programming would connect people well after this immediate crisis has passed.
- Supporting virtual professional development opportunities to support K-12 teachers and higher education faculty in developing rich humanities curricula that can be delivered virtually.

We are confident that with swift action, emergency funding combined with the above measures will ensure our nation's wide array of institutions and programs devoted to our shared humanity and culture will be able to weather the current crisis. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


David E. Price
Co-Chair, Humanities Caucus


Chellie Pingree
Co-Chair, Arts Caucus