

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 7, 2020

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

We would like to thank you for your leadership in supporting emergency supplemental funding to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) as part of the CARES Act. That funding, which has been disbursed in part to respective state affiliates and will support further direct grantmaking in the coming months, will provide relief to struggling communities across the country.

Despite this assistance, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause profound harm to people who work in the arts and humanities and the cultural institutions that support them. For professionals in the sector, including arts and humanities educators working to educate students in unprecedented circumstances, immediate livelihoods are at stake. Those without a traditional employer relationship – including those who are temporarily employed and on contract, freelance, or self-employed -- are especially vulnerable. For community-based organizations that are dedicated to bringing people together – from museums, to libraries, to the performing arts – it is clear that, without significant continued federal support, this crisis will have devastating economic consequences that will last well beyond the public health emergency.

We urge you to include robust additional funding for the NEA and NEH in any future coronavirus relief package in order to support payroll and operating costs for as many potential grantees as possible. Further, we request that you consider added flexibility to ensure that existing and future grantees can use this funding to its greatest effect.

- Make relief grant opportunities fully available to all eligible organizations as defined in the Endowments' authorization statutes to avoid restricting eligibility to only grantees from the past four fiscal years (as NEA grant guidelines currently do). We support additional latitude for the agencies to disburse funding to as many organizations and individuals in the field as possible, with appropriate oversight and protections for workplace rights.
- Waive the matching funds requirement from grants made with any new supplemental funding, as was included for CARES Act funding. Additionally, the matching requirement should be waived for active grants from Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020, and grantees should be allowed to use funds to cover operational costs.

- Support educational and cultural institutions not just maintaining staff but also hiring new graduates to sustain employment and the talent pipeline. This will also ensure that these institutions have the capacity to promote individual wellbeing, connect communities, preserve the cultural heritage of this historic moment, and support the public and policymakers in understanding and addressing the challenges posed by the pandemic.

We also support broader efforts to fund and improve forgivable loan support programs.

- Dedicate funding for non-profits within the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and expand eligibility for non-profits with more than 500 employees. This cap has disadvantaged cultural organizations that employ many temporary employees over the course of a year, like live performing arts companies, or hire enough seasonal employees to skew the annual monthly average number of full-time employees. Adjust the Economic Stabilization Fund or other mid-size loan programs to support nonprofit employers with between 500 and 10,000 employees, including loan-forgiveness and other provisions.
- Raise or remove the arbitrary \$1,000 per employee cap for the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program to ensure that arts and humanities professionals – particularly those who are independent contractors or self-employed – can access meaningful relief.
- Finally, we ask that any future relief package incentivizes charitable giving by eliminating the \$300 cap on the above-the-line charitable deduction starting with the 2019 tax year. Nonprofit cultural institutions have long relied on donations of all sizes to stay afloat. As our economic crisis worsens, there is significant concern that these institutions will not be able to raise sufficient funds through charitable giving to remain operational.

The arts and humanities enrich each of our communities – and make substantial contributions to both the national economy and Main Streets across the United States. We urge you to provide continued support in future relief packages.

Sincerely,



Chellie Pingree
Co-Chair, Arts Caucus



David E. Price
Co-Chair, Humanities Caucus

Member of Congress

Additional Signers:

Rep. Adam Smith
Rep. A. Donald McEachin
Rep. Adriano Espaillat
Rep. Alan Lowenthal
Rep. Albio B. Sires
Rep. Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Rep. André Carson
Rep. Ann McLane Kuster
Rep. Ayanna Pressley
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