Dear Chairman Merkley and Ranking Member Murkowski:

We write to express our steadfast support for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). For nearly 60 years, the NEA and NEH have put people to work and promoted educational and cultural experiences that generate tremendous economic returns for communities in every single state in the country. As you craft the Fiscal Year 2025 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriation Bill, we urge you to include at least $211 million each for the NEA and NEH.

Since its creation in 1965, the NEH has served every congressional district and territory in the country through its mandate to provide humanities access to all Americans. It has funded professional development for educators, documentaries, exhibitions, radio programs, podcasts, archaeological digs and other groundbreaking research, as well as preserved essential cultural resources. A partnership with the Library of Congress has digitized and made accessible more than 63 million pages of our nation’s historical newspapers. Annually, the state and jurisdictional humanities councils provide tens of thousands of free educational programs in urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Also established in 1965, the NEA supports art and education programs across the country. Access to the arts for all Americans is a core principle of the Endowment. The majority of NEA grants go to small- and medium-sized organizations, and a significant percentage of grants fund programs in high poverty communities throughout the country. A full 40 percent of NEA funds are distributed to all 50 states and six jurisdictional territories and districts with the remaining funds helping to reach all 435 congressional districts.

The Bureau of Economic Analysis calculated the arts and culture sector’s contributions to the gross domestic product (GDP). The total number of arts and cultural jobs was 5.2 million, with employment increasing in 45 states. In 2022, arts and culture added $1.1 trillion, or 4.3 percent, to national GDP. Between 2019 and 2020, the U.S. arts economy shrank at nearly twice the rate of the economy as a whole: arts and cultural production fell by 6.4 percent when adjusted for inflation, compared with a 3.4 percent decline in the overall economy. Today the sector is rebounding, which is why robust investment in NEA and NEH must remain a priority.
Thanks to your continued leadership, the NEA and NEH play a vital role in every state. We appreciate your attention to this matter, and we look forward to working with you on this and other important issues facing our nation.

Sincerely,

Jack Reed  
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator

Tina Smith  
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator

Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator

Tim Kaine  
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator
John Hickenlooper
United States Senator

Alex Padilla
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Raphael Warnock
United States Senator

Peter Welch
United States Senator
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen
U.S. Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator