

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 15, 2024

The Honorable Jeffrey A. Merkley
Chairman, Subcommittee on the Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on the
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

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



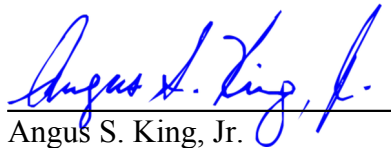
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



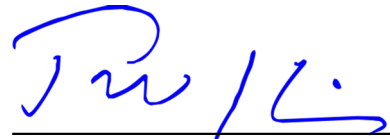
Tina Smith
United States Senator



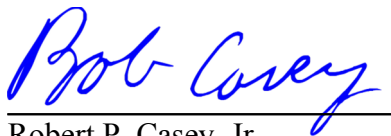
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



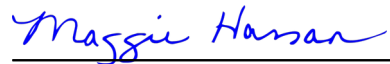
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator




Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



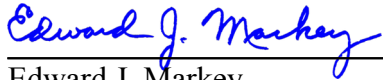
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



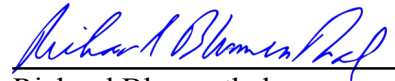
Edward J. Markey
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Debbie Stabenow
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Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



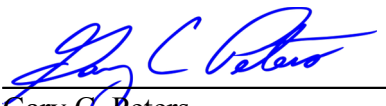
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



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



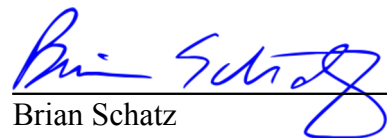
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



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



Laphonza Butler
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



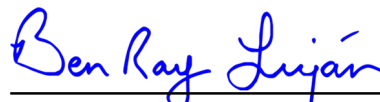
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



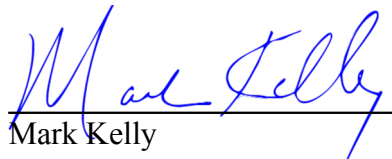
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



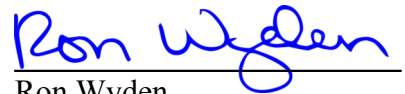
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



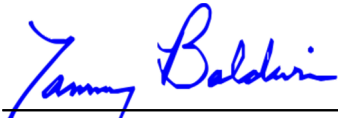
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



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