

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 15, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services and Education
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services and Education
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Cochran,

We are writing to thank you for your support for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)'s Office of Museum Services (OMS) and to urge the Subcommittee to support \$50 million for OMS in the FY 2011 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill.

The demand for museum services is greater than ever. At a time when school resources are strained and many families cannot afford to travel or make ends meet, museums are working overtime to fill the gaps – providing more than 18 million instructional hours to schoolchildren, bringing art and cultural heritage, dynamic exhibitions and living specimens into local communities, partnering with other nonprofits to encourage national service and volunteerism, and offering free or reduced admission. Museums are part of a robust nonprofit community working to address our nation's greatest challenges, from creating energy efficient public buildings to collecting food, funding and other resources for needy families and individuals.

Unfortunately, museums are struggling significantly in these difficult economic times. They are being forced to cut back on hours, educational programming, community services and jobs. According to the 2005 *Heritage Health Index*, at least 190 million artifacts are at risk, suffering from light damage and harmful and insecure storage conditions. Many museums also rely heavily on philanthropic donations to keep admission rates low and provide new exhibitions for their communities. A 2009 report by the Giving USA Foundation, museums and other cultural organizations saw their charitable donations fall by nearly 10% in 2008.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is the primary federal agency responsible for supporting the nation's 17,500+ museums, and its Office of Museum Services has been essentially flat funded over the past several years. Although the agency has been successful in creating and supporting advancements in areas such as technology, lifelong community learning and conservation and preservation efforts, only a small fraction of the nation's museums are currently being reached, and many highly rated grant applications go unfunded each year.

Investments in our nation's museums to support the important work they are doing in our communities is especially critical in these difficult economic times. That is why we urge the Subcommittee to support \$50 million for IMLS' Office of Museum Services for FY11. This vital funding will aid museums of all types – aquariums, arboretums, archaeological museums, art museums, botanical gardens, children's museums, culturally specific museums, historic sites, history museums, maritime museums, military museums, natural history museums, nature centers, planetariums, science and technology centers, zoological parks, and other specialty museums – and enable them to continue serving our schools and communities and preserving our cultural heritage for future generations.

Again, we appreciate the Subcommittee's prior support for OMS and request this robust new investment to strengthen and sustain the work of our nation's museums.

Sincerely,

Kirsten E. Gillibrand

Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator

Carl Levin

Carl Levin
United States Senator

Chris Dodd

Chris Dodd
United States Senator

Dick Durbin

Dick Durbin
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Tom Udall

Tom Udall
United States Senator

Edward E. Kaufman

Edward E. Kaufman
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

Frank R. Lautenberg

Frank R. Lautenberg
United States Senator

Joseph I. Lieberman

Joseph I. Lieberman
United States Senator

Blanche Lincoln

Blanche Lincoln
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Robert Menendez

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Roland W. Burris

Roland Burris
United States Senator