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Testimony of

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**to the House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, HHS and Education and Related Agencies**

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Dr. Bell will be testifying:

- in support of \$50 million for the Office of Museum Services (OMS) at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS);
- to ensure that zoos and aquariums are treated fairly in relation to jobs bills, stimulus bills, or other spending bills; and
- to express concerns about the proposed elimination and consolidation of certain programs at the U.S. Department of Education.

Chairman Obey, Ranking Member Tiahrt, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. I am here on behalf of the American Association of Museums to request your support for an increased investment in our nation's museums.

The American Association of Museums (AAM) is proud to represent the full range of our nation's museums – including 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, presidential libraries, science and technology centers, zoological parks, and other specialty museums – along with the professional staff and volunteers who work for and with museums. Our membership is as diverse as the collections contained in the museums we represent.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is the primary federal agency that supports the nation's 17,500+ museums, and its Office of Museum Services (OMS) awards grants to all types of museums to help museums digitize, enhance and preserve their collections; broaden their reach into schools and communities; provide educators with professional development; and create innovative, diverse, cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary programs and exhibits.

We urge your support for \$50 million – a \$15 million increase – for the Office of Museum Services at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). This independent federal agency is funded within the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill.

To be clear, museums are essential in our communities for a variety of reasons:

Each dollar that supports museums is an important economic investment. According to the 2009 Museum Financial Information Survey, museums contributed approximately \$20.7 billion to the American economy in 2008. Museums also serve as economic engines, bolstering local infrastructure, and spurring tourism. In fact, cultural and heritage activities account for more than 23% of all domestic tourism. Both the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National Governors Association agree that cultural assets such as museums are essential to attracting businesses, a skilled workforce, and local, regional, and international tourism, with the U.S. Conference of Mayors finding, "The arts, humanities, and museums are critical to the quality of life and livability of America's cities."

Museums create jobs. An estimated 500,000 people currently work for museums, but the more than \$20 billion pumped into the American economy by museums creates millions more jobs. Unfortunately, in the past year, many museums have had to lay off employees because, like so many other non-profits, museums are being forced to cut back on hours, educational programming, community services and, therefore, jobs.

Museums are key partners in education. The educational role of museums is at the core of their service to the public. They spend more than \$2.2 billion annually on K-12 educational programming and receive approximately 90 million visits each year from primary and

secondary school students. In fact, museums offer educational programs in math, science, art, literacy, language arts, history, civics and government, economics and financial literacy, geography, and social studies, in coordination with state and local curriculum standards. And they reach beyond the scope of instructional programming for schoolchildren by also providing professional development for educators.

Museum collections are at serious risk. According to the 2005 *Heritage Health Index*, at least 190 million artifacts are suffering from light damage and harmful and insecure storage conditions. OMS grant funding helps to ensure that museums and their collections can continue to play a vital role in the preservation and interpretation of our cultural and natural heritage.

Museums are struggling in this economy. At a time when many families cannot afford to travel and school resources are strained, museums are working overtime to fill the gaps – providing more than 18 million instructional hours to schoolchildren and offering free or reduced admission. But some are struggling just to keep their doors open, and others have shut down altogether. Museums are further being squeezed by state and local budget cuts, limiting public access to some of our nation’s treasured collections.

Digitization and the use of traveling exhibitions bring museum collections to underserved populations. Teachers, students, and researchers benefit when cultural institutions are able to increase access to trustworthy information through online collections and traveling exhibits. Most museums, however, need more help in digitizing collections to meet this need. This is especially important when geographical distance prevents travel to a wide range of museums.

Grants to museums are highly competitive and decided through a rigorous, peer-reviewed process. But because the Office of Museum Services has been essentially level-funded in recent years, only a small fraction of the nation’s museums are currently being reached, and many highly rated grant applications go unfunded each year. For example, in 2009:

- Only 11 of the 34 African American History and Culture grant applications were funded.
- Only 22 of the 35 Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services grant applications were funded.
- Only 7 of the 59 21st Century Museum Professionals grant applications were funded.
- Only 167 of the 433 Museums for America grant applications were funded.
- Only 80 of the 193 National Leadership grant applications were funded.
- Only 35 of the 129 Conservation Project Support grant applications were funded.

Conservation Project Support is especially important as more and more museums struggle to protect and preserve their collections. According to the 2005 *Heritage Health Index*, 59% of museums have collections damaged by light; 56% have insufficient security to protect their collections; 80% do not have an emergency plan that includes collections; 71% need additional training and expertise for staff caring for collections; and only 13% have access to endowment funds for preservation.

Funding for the Office of Museum Services has benefits far beyond that of simply serving museums; these grants help teach the local school curriculum, create jobs, promote cultural

diversity, preserve our national heritage, educate our communities, promote cultural tourism, and bolster the local economy. This is particularly important at a time when individual, corporate, and foundation giving has declined considerably. Here are a few examples from your Congressional districts:

- In Wisconsin's 7th district, the New Visions Gallery received a grant to create a permanent exhibition using objects of African art. The Lac Court Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians has received IMLS grants in support of its Migizi Cultural Resources Center to both create public programs and partner with the local schools to develop curriculum around the region's history. The Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum received an IMLS grant to evaluate the condition of more than 1,300 works in the museum's permanent collection. The Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa Indians has also received IMLS grants to develop the historical context of the tribe, including the Town of Odanah, and to establish a cultural center.
- In Kansas' 4th district, an IMLS grant supported the Water Center, Wichita's interactive water education museum which incorporates interactive panels and graphics to explain the science behind water and the causes of pollution.
- In Alabama's 1st district, the Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center received a grant in support of FUNdamental Physics, an innovative program designed to introduce science to underserved target audiences. At a time when science education is key to our global competitiveness, this program will inspire curiosity about basic science that is encountered every day. Also in Alabama, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians have received grants in support of the Calvin McGhee Cultural Center, which is preserving and digitizing its collections and ensuring that its staff has the necessary expertise to handle the sacred objects and historical documents housed at the Center.
- In California's 9th district, the Habitot Children's Museum created an interactive outdoor space and natural environment for exploring nature and science. The Children's Hospital and Research Center at Oakland created a "Hall of Health" to facilitate a Medical Mystery Festival and a multicultural health fair, along with "The Brainiacs," a science discovery theater. The Peralta Hacienda Historical Park demonstrates how museums of all kinds are helping to teach the state curriculum. Its IMLS grant supported three important yet very diverse programs: the Fourth Grade School Field Trips Program for classes studying the state-mandated California history curriculum; the Community Docent Program in which elders - many from Asia, Latin America, or the American South - tell their stories as tour guides; and the Community Leaders Stewardship Program, in which local youth learn about history and cultures as they grow, cook, and share produce. The Oakland Museum of California received a grant to help integrate cultural diversity more fully into the long-range plans. The University of California Botanical Garden's "Crops of the World" garden is educating elementary school students, in both English and Spanish, about sustaining soil fertility through composting and crop rotation.

- In California's 15th district, the City of Gilroy received a very small grant, just \$2,256, to preserve two important portraits that will hang in the museum's main gallery to illustrate the overall needs of the collection and show how preserving these artifacts will help preserve the stories of Gilroy. The de Saisset Museum at Santa Clara University received a grant to conduct a detailed conservation survey of more than 5,000 works of art, including Renaissance and Baroque prints.
- In California's 34th district, the Japanese American National Museum used IMLS grants to develop and implement an oral histories project with 5 neighboring states - Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah. This project actively engaged teachers, scholars, community members and education/cultural institutions in developing K-12 education curricula tailored to each state's needs.
- In Rhode Island's 1st district, IMLS grants have supported the John Brown House, the Little Compton Historical Society, the Preservation Society of Newport County, the Newport Art Museum, and the Rhode Island Historical Society. The Newport Art Museum grant supports the expansion of MUSE, a school-to-career program that teaches high school students about the day-to-day operations of museums and cultural institutions through mentoring, hands-on and classroom learning, and site visits.
- In Connecticut's 3rd district, the Peabody Museum of Natural History received an IMLS grant to engage New Haven students in grades 8-12 (many from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in the sciences) in a science literacy program combining hands-on projects, field trips, and college preparation. The Connecticut Children's Museum received an IMLS grant to infuse the museum with a layer of inclusive elements to broaden access for children with special needs.
- In Minnesota's 4th district, the Tamarack Nature Center, the Science Museum of Minnesota, the Minnesota Children's Museum, and the Minnesota Historical Society have all received IMLS grants. One of the Science Museum of Minnesota's projects involves digitizing its Ojibwe and Dakota collections.
- In Montana, the Museum of the Rockies will host "Dinosaurs Under the Big Sky" through live webcasts and other educational programming. Through the new Mesozoic Media Center, this multi-partner project will bring sciences to whole new audiences. The Holter Museum of Art received a grant to preserve a number of works through the purchase of new storage materials. The Yellowstone Gateway Museum of Park County is using a grant to catalog, duplicate, and archive the museum's extensive collection of photographs, which covers 100 years of regional history. The Yellowstone Art Museum, through an IMLS grant, will continue its role as a leading provider of art education services in the community, which has had a direct impact on the regional school curriculum. The People's Center Museum, the tribal museum of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, also received an IMLS grant to create a traveling exhibit of photographs and narratives.

- In New York's 18th district, the Lower Hudson Conference of Historical Agencies created a professional training program for museum professionals at the 165 historic house museums in the Hudson Valley region. The Historical Society of Rockland County received a small grant, just \$3,000, to improve the way its collection is stored to both preserve the artifacts and make them more easily accessible.
- In Oklahoma's 4th district, the Sam Noble Museum of Natural History received an IMLS grant to improve its storage of the museum's late 19th century specimens. The Comanche Nation of Oklahoma also received an IMLS grant to promote the development of Native American museum workers from southwest Oklahoma. The Greater Southwest Historical Museum also received an IMLS grant to hire and maintain full-time curatorial staff members who are charged with cataloging, protecting, identifying, and preparing objects for inclusion in an online exhibit.

It is important to note that zoos and aquariums are critical members of the museum family. They are leaders in environmental education, they are saving endangered species, and they too are economic engines, creating thousands of jobs and spurring local tourism dollars. I raise this issue today because just one year ago, zoos and aquariums were unfairly excluded from competing for stimulus funds, and are currently excluded from some proposed jobs bills.

I understand difficult choices must be made in this economic climate, but I strongly believe that supporting zoos and aquariums is a wise investment in our future. Museums are significant job creators and zoos and aquariums, in particular, create green jobs. They are science education jobs that keep us competitive globally, and they are investments in community infrastructure we cannot afford to ignore. I urge the subcommittee to consider the vital role that zoos and aquariums play as any further stimulus bills, jobs bills, or any appropriations bill are considered.

I also want to express my concerns about the proposed elimination and consolidation of certain programs within the U.S. Department of Education. In an effort to enhance accountability and effectiveness, the Administration has proposed consolidating a number of programs authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The Administration's proposed \$265 million for its Effective Teaching and Learning for a Well-Rounded Education would consolidate several programs of critical importance to schools and the museum field - Arts in Education, Foreign Language Assistance, Teaching American History, and Civics Education.

The American Association of Museums wholeheartedly supports a well-rounded education and is proud to have museums partnering with schools nationwide to teach the local curriculum, but we must ensure that any efforts to alter support for these vital areas of study – no matter how well-intentioned – does not compromise the integrity of programs related to arts, foreign language, history, civics, and economics.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.