

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 4, 2023

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 today to express our steadfast support for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). For more than 55 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 2024 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriation Bill, we urge 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.

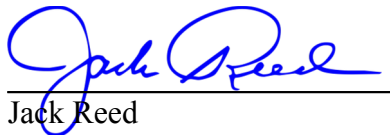
Also, established in 1965, the NEA supports art and education programs across the country. Access to the arts for all Americans is a core principle of the Endowment. The majority of NEA grants go to small- and medium-sized organizations, and a significant percentage of grants fund programs in high poverty 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). In 2020, arts and culture added \$876.7 billion, or 4.2 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. That is why robust investment in NEA and NEH must remain a priority.

As an example of the tremendous value NEA and NEH provide nationwide, both agencies offer healing programs for those who serve in our Armed Services and their families, as well as veterans reintegrating into civilian life. The NEH's Dialogues on the Experience of War brings together veterans and civilians to reflect on powerful literature and art. Across nine programs assessed from 2018-2020 by the National Humanities Alliance, 96 percent of respondents indicated that humanities materials helped them better understand their experiences. Seventy-nine percent of veteran respondents indicated that their program made them more likely to seek help if they need it. The NEA's Military Healing Arts Partnership provides art therapy for active-duty military patients and their families to improve communication, process traumatic events, and improve neurological and physical function. And the NEA's Creative Forces program, a collaboration with the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, supports military families, and addresses the unique needs of military patients and Veterans diagnosed with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and psychological health conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

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,



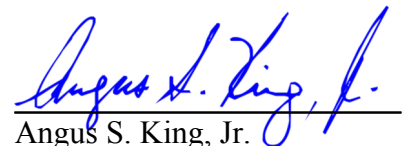
Jack Reed
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



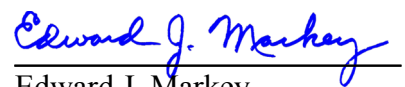
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



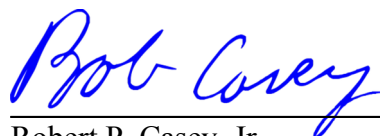
Richard Blumenthal
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Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator



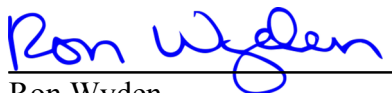
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



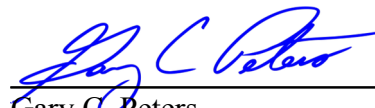
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



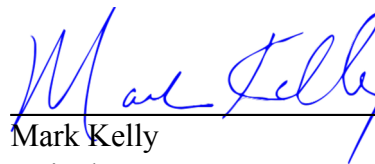
Tina Smith
United States Senator



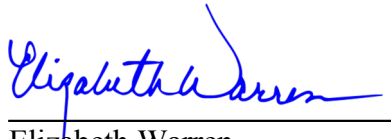
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



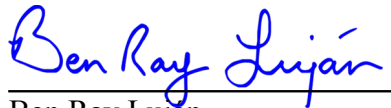
Mark Kelly
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Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
U.S. Senator



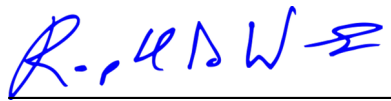
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



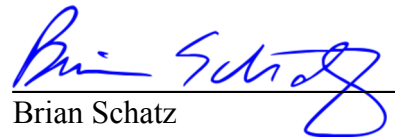
Tammy Baldwin
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Alex Padilla
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Raphael Warnock
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Martin Heinrich
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Debbie Stabenow
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