



**Testimony of Laura L. Lott,
President and CEO, American Alliance of Museums,
www.aam-us.org
to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies
in support of the IMLS Office of Museum Services
June 2, 2017**

Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony on behalf of our members and the nation's larger museum community. My name is Laura L. Lott and I serve as President and CEO of the American Alliance of Museums. I respectfully request that the Subcommittee make a renewed investment in museums in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018. I urge you to fully fund the Office of Museum Services (OMS) at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) at its most recent authorized level of \$38.6 million.

Before explaining this request, I want to express my gratitude for the \$372,000 increase to the Office of Museum Services enacted in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017, Public Law 115-31. Even this miniscule increase will help a few more museums enrich their communities and preserve our many heritages. We were even more grateful for the larger increase recommended by this Subcommittee's initial FY 2017 draft legislation. That it chose to make these investments despite a very limited 302(b) allocation speaks volumes about the Subcommittee's commitment to our nation's cultural institutions. The American Alliance of Museums is deeply troubled by the Trump Administration's proposal to eliminate this essential program, and we look forward to working with you—our bipartisan allies—to defeat that proposal. While the Subcommittee will once again have to make very difficult decisions this year, I contend that this program is critical to protecting our nation's cultural treasures and provides a tremendous economic benefit.

The Alliance is proud to represent the full range of our nation's 33,000 museums—including aquariums, art museums, botanic gardens, children's museums, culturally specific museums, historic sites, history museums, maritime museums, military museums, natural history museums, planetariums, presidential libraries, science and technology centers, and zoos, among others—along with the professional staff and volunteers who work for and with museums.

Museums are economic engines and job creators. We are proud to report that U.S. museums employ 400,000 people and directly contribute \$21 billion to their local economies every year. Museums and other nonprofit arts institutions form a national cultural infrastructure that annually generates \$22 billion in local, state, and federal tax revenues, far more than it receives from government sources.

This subcommittee in particular may also be interested in the ways museums are providing educational programming and the results of this investment:

- Museums spend more than \$2 billion each year on education activities; the typical museum devotes three-quarters of its education budget to K-12 students, and museums receive approximately 55 million visits each year from students in school groups.
- Children who visited a museum during kindergarten had higher achievement scores in reading, mathematics and science in third grade than children who did not. This benefit is also seen in the subgroup of children who are most at risk for deficits and delays in achievement.
- According to a recent study by researchers at the University of Arkansas, students who attended a half-day field trip to an art museum experienced an increase in critical thinking skills, historical empathy and tolerance. For students from rural or high-poverty regions, the increase was even more significant.
- Museums help teach the state and local curriculum, adapting their programs in math, science, art, literacy, language arts, history, civics and government, economics and financial literacy, geography and social studies.
- Museums have long served as a vital resource to homeschool learners. For the approximately 1.8 million students who are homeschooled—a population that has increased by roughly 60 percent in the past decade—museums are often quite literally the classroom.

IMLS is the primary federal agency that supports the museum field, and OMS awards grants in every state to help museums digitize, enhance and preserve their collections; provide teacher professional development; and create innovative, cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary programs and exhibits for schools and the public. It is currently due for reauthorization, and has been regularly reauthorized in the past with broad bipartisan support. The most recent reauthorization (Public Law 111-340) cleared Congress unanimously in 2010, authorizing \$38.6 million annually for the IMLS Office of Museum Services to meet the growing demand for museum programs and services. The Fiscal Year 2017 appropriation of \$31.7 million still falls well below its recent high of \$35.2 million in FY 2010.

We applaud the 37 bipartisan Senators who recently wrote to you in support of FY 2018 OMS funding, including Senators Gillibrand and Sullivan as well as every Democratic member of the Subcommittee other than the Ranking Member. We also understand that at least two other Senators included support for the Office of Museum Services in their own letters.

Here are a few examples, just from 2016, of how IMLS Office of Museum Services funding is supporting museums' work in your communities:

Workforce Development Partnerships—Springfield Art Museum (Springfield, MO) was awarded \$14,670 to create and evaluate the Art@Work program in collaboration with the Missouri Job Center and Springfield Public Schools. Classroom activities, followed by field trips to the museum, the job center, and other sites, will lead students through exercises designed to cultivate communication and organizational skills, as well as skills related to conflict resolution and teamwork. This innovative partnership will result in the development of workforce skills in elementary schools and the identification of strategies for partnerships between art museums and workforce preparation organizations.

Increasing Access to High-Quality Early Education—Children's Museum of Tacoma (Tacoma, WA) was awarded \$141,012 to address young children's need for better access to high-quality early learning experiences and to better prepare parents and caregivers to support early learning. This project will underscore the museum's position as a community anchor, increasing its capacity to engage and serve Pierce County families by bringing this school readiness program to scale across the county. The museum will deepen programmatic partnerships with Pierce County Library and other community partners to develop a partnership model for joint program delivery at more than a dozen locations in the area.

Collections Care and Safety Improvement—Nashville Zoo (Nashville, TN) was awarded \$148,050 to purchase and install medical treatment and healthcare equipment for its large animals. The current lack of space, equipment, and technology impacts the existing collection as well as the potential to add new animals and species. These needed upgrades will benefit the animals, care providers who will operate in a safer and more effective environment, the Middle Tennessee community, and the veterinary field through a state-of-the-art teaching environment. Nashville Zoo will measure long-term results of the grant by tracking animals treated, routine healthcare provided and health outcomes.

Early Science Learning—ECHO (Burlington, VT) was awarded \$148,559 to address the need for an improved early science learning program for youth across the state of Vermont. According to a 2014 statewide assessment, less than half of Vermont's students are proficient in science. ECHO—an aquarium and science center—will partner with three local early learning providers to build school science readiness by connecting young children and preschool educators to high-quality science training materials and learning experiences. Project staff will work with educators from partner preschools to strengthen classroom curricula, implement professional development workshops, and provide partner preschools the opportunity to attend classes and family science festivals at ECHO.

IMLS grants to museums are highly competitive and decided through a rigorous peer-review process. Even the most ardent deficit hawks ought to view the IMLS grant-

making process as a model for the nation. It should be noted that each time a museum grant is awarded, additional local and private funds are also leveraged. In addition to the dollar-for-dollar match generally required of museums, grants often spur additional giving by private foundations and individual donors. Two-thirds of Museums for America grantees report that their grant positioned the museum to receive additional private funding.

Due to the large number of grant applications and the limited funds available, many highly-rated grant proposals go unfunded each year. In 2016, the Office of Museum Services received 755 applications requesting \$115.5 million, but was only able to meet 27 percent of this need. These figures do not take into account the fact that many museums may not even apply for grants due to the unlikelihood of being funded.

Again, I know the Subcommittee faces difficult decisions and the museum community is grateful for your previous support. I hope you will consider this modest request in the context of the essential role that museums play in communities nationwide, as well as their immense economic and educational impact. If I can provide any additional information about museums in your community, I would be delighted to do so. Thank you once again for the opportunity to submit this testimony today.