



**Testimony of Laura L. Lott,
President and CEO, American Alliance of Museums,
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to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
in support of the IMLS Office of Museum Services
April 15, 2016**

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) 2017. I urge you to fully fund the Office of Museum Services (OMS) at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) at its authorized level of \$38.6 million.

Before explaining this request, I want to express gratitude for the increase of roughly \$1.2 million for OMS that was enacted last year by the Subcommittee in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, Public Law 114-113. Your support for museums will help them make a bigger impact in communities nationwide. I know that the Subcommittee once again faces a very limited 302(b) allocation, and must make difficult decisions. In this context, however, I would posit that this extremely small program is a vital investment in protecting our nation's cultural treasures, educating students and lifelong learners, and bolstering local economies around the country.

The Alliance is proud to represent the full range of our nation's 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.

This Subcommittee may be especially 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 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.
- Many museums are tailoring programs to serve homeschooling families.

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 training; and create innovative, cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary programs and exhibits for schools and the public.

In late 2010, legislation to reauthorize IMLS for five years was enacted (by voice vote in the House and by unanimous consent in the Senate). The bipartisan reauthorization included several provisions proposed by the museum field, including enhanced support for conservation and preservation, emergency preparedness and response and statewide capacity building. The reauthorization also specifically supports efforts at the state level to leverage museum resources, including statewide needs assessments and the development of state plans to improve and maximize museum services throughout the state. That bill (Public Law 111-340) authorized \$38.6 million for the IMLS Office of Museum Services to meet the growing demand for museum programs and services. The Fiscal Year 2016 appropriation of \$31.3 million still falls well below its recent high of \$35.2 million in FY 2010.

While the funding increase proposed by the president's budget is extremely small, it reflects some priority areas in which museums could make a greater impact with more federal investment, such as STEM education, national digital infrastructure, and early childhood-family learning. The budget also sets out key strategic focuses on training for collections care, deepening museums' role as community-centered organizations, and serving veterans and military families.

We applaud the 33 Senators who wrote to you in support of FY 2017 OMS funding, including Subcommittee members Durbin, Reed, Shaheen, Schatz, and Baldwin, as well as Committee members Leahy, Feinstein, Tester, Coons, and Murphy.

Here are a few examples, just from 2015, of how IMLS Office of Museum Services funding is used:

Early Childhood STEM Engagement and Resources—The Magic House (Saint Louis, MO) was awarded \$150,000 to research, develop, fabricate, and assess a new early childhood STEM exhibit for children ages two through six. The 1,500-square-foot learning environment will engage children in self-directed activities that align with State educational standards for science and math. The museum will also create a new guided field trip program, a professional development workshop for educators in early childhood STEM education, and tools and resources for parents and caregivers.

Collections Access and Coordination—Tennessee Aquarium (Chattanooga, TN) was awarded \$112,078 to partner with Tennessee Technological University to develop the Freshwater Information Network, an interactive portal that combines museum records, recent survey data, and photo archives to provide biologists and resource managers with a platform for connecting and sharing the best scientific information on aquatic animals. This will enhance the conservation value of museum data by better connecting it to researchers, students, resource managers, conservation organizations, and others.

Place-based Education—Port Townsend Marine Science Center (Port Townsend, WA) was awarded \$148,346 to expand an existing initiative that integrates local resources with area schools in a place-based educational system. By orienting education around the community's maritime heritage, the Maritime Discovery Schools initiative is a comprehensive framework that increases student engagement. Through this grant, the museum will be able to bring in nationally recognized education leaders for both teacher professional development and student programs.

Community Anchors—Baltimore Museum of Art (Baltimore, MD) was awarded \$150,000 to create an exhibition and related programming that will use art to examine housing issues in the community. The project will include a traveling exhibit that will reach at least twenty-four neighborhoods throughout Baltimore, as well as hands-on, interactive workshops for Baltimore entities working to address homelessness, affordable housing, vacant properties, and other home-related issues. These organizations will gain knowledge, skills, and resources that enable them to integrate art-based activities into their service portfolio.

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 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.

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. Due to the large number of grant applications and the limited funds available, many highly-rated grant proposals go unfunded each year. In 2015:

- Only 39% of Museums for America project proposals were funded;

- Only 30% of National Leadership Grants for Museums project proposals were funded;
- Only 15% of Sparks! Ignition Grants for Museums project proposals were funded;
- Only 66% of Native American/Hawaiian Museum Services project proposals were funded; and
- Only 37% of African American History and Culture project proposals were funded.

Again, I know the subcommittee faces difficult decisions and am grateful for your previous support. If I can provide any additional information about the essential role of the museums in your community, I would be delighted to do so. Thank you once again for the opportunity to submit this testimony today.