



**Testimony of Dr. Ford W. Bell,
President of the American Alliance of Museums,
www.aam-us.org
to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies
in support of the IMLS Office of Museum Services
April 3, 2015**

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 Ford Bell and I serve as President of the American Alliance of Museums. I respectfully request that the Subcommittee make a renewed investment in museums in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016. 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.

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 a 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.
- Students who attend a field trip to an art museum experience 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, local or core curriculum, tailoring 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 2015 appropriation of \$30.1 million represents a nearly 15% decrease from the FY 2010 appropriation of \$35.2 million.

We applaud the Administration's Fiscal Year 2016 budget for requesting a significant increase—to \$35.1 million—for the Office of Museum Services. It would help museums make an impact in several priority areas identified by the agency, such as STEM education and makerspaces, a comprehensive collections care survey, and early learning. We also applaud the 30 Senators who wrote to you in support of FY 2016 OMS funding, including subcommittee members Durbin, Reed, Shaheen, Schatz, and Baldwin.

Here are a few examples, just from 2014, of how IMLS Office of Museum Services funding is used:

STEM Education—The Missouri Botanical Garden (St. Louis, MO) was awarded \$140,605 to work with six urban schools in creating new STEM educational opportunities for teachers and students. Students will focus on garden research themes such as the medicinal uses of plants, their ecological value, or their role as a food source. Multiple experiences at garden sites, follow-up programming, and teacher professional development are all designed in alignment with state standards to increase STEM proficiency.

Improving Life for People with Dementia—Frye Art Museum (Seattle, WA) was awarded \$121,824 to expand its arts engagement program for people living with dementia and their care partners to serve participants at later stages of the disease. The museum will offer gallery tours, art-making classes, and an interactive film program; convene a professional development conference on art, creativity and dementia; establish a student internship in creative aging with a local university; publish a report and present the results of the program pilot at conferences; and present an education workshop for caregivers and health providers on techniques for incorporating art into dementia care. Participants in the program will develop connections with care partners to reduce feelings of isolation and depression and to enhance quality of life for people living with dementia.

Farming Education—Rice County Historical Society (Lyons, KS) was awarded \$34,545 to create "Agricultural Options," an exhibit on farming that explores the values associated with the land and farming practices that are profitable yet sustainable. The exhibit will identify trends in farming, make connections with environmental issues linked to the land, and enhance the visitor's experience through educational activities. The exhibit's educational activities will include lessons for three grade levels, a driving tour, and interactive sites.

Collecting Veterans' Stories—National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum (Chicago, IL) was awarded \$20,050 to develop "Sound Off," a living oral history archive that uses innovative technology to place the learner at the center and engage audiences—especially veterans and their families as well as students—in the arts, history, and civics. The museum will develop and install an onsite recording booth where veterans can record oral histories of their time in service; develop a new mobile app to record and archive interviews with veterans unable to visit the museum in person; and create a curriculum for high school students to learn about art, history, and civics based on the museum's collection and these oral histories.

Healthy Kids—Children's Museum of Oak Ridge (Oak Ridge, TN) was awarded \$137,108 to plan, develop, and construct "Kids in Action," a healthy living exhibit and accompanying educational programs to support healthy nutrition, healthy activity, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education, and community wellness. Through partnerships with East Tennessee Children's Hospital, Oak Ridge Associated Universities, and the University of Tennessee Agriculture Extension the "Kids in Action" initiative will use fun and engaging activities, including a human body exhibit, to raise awareness in the community about healthy nutrition and exercise.

Collections Care and Access—Redwood Library and Athenaeum (Newport, RI) was awarded \$19,455 to inventory, catalog, and update records of its collection of approximately 1,600 paintings, works on paper, sculptures, furniture, and decorative arts. The museum will publish the records and images on its website and on Newportal, a collaborative website of five cultural institutions in Newport County, Rhode Island.

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 IMLS grantees report that their Museums for America grant positioned the museum to receive additional private funding.

IMLS grants to museums are highly competitive and decided through a rigorous, peer-reviewed process. Even the most ardent deficit hawks 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 2014:

- Only 35% of Museums for America/Conservation Project Support project proposals were funded;
- Only 22% of National Leadership project proposals were funded;

- Only 17% of Sparks Ignition Grants for Museums project proposals were funded;
- Only 64% of Native American/Hawaiian Museum Services project proposals were funded;
and
- Only 37% of African American History and Culture project proposals were funded.

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.