

5-MINUTE ORAL TESTIMONY

Laura H. Foster

**President and CEO, Please Touch Museum®, The Children's Museum of Philadelphia™
and Board Member, American Association of Museums, www.aam-us.org
to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education and Related
Agencies, March 29, 2012**

Thank you for inviting me to testify today. My name is Laura Foster and I am the President and CEO of Please Touch Museum®, the Children's Museum of Philadelphia™.

I am here today as a Board Member of the American Association of Museums (AAM) which represents museums of every discipline all over the US.

I am here to request that the Subcommittee support at least \$35 million in FY13 for the Office of Museum Services (OMS) at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

IMLS is the primary federal agency that supports the nation's museums. Grants help museums create innovative programs and exhibits for schools and the public. Grants also help museums digitize and preserve their collections. The IMLS grant-making process is rigorous and highly competitive and the grants leverage local funding.

Museums are important for many reasons, among them:

- Museums serve as economic engines, employ 400,000 people and pump \$20 billion annually into the American economy.
- Museums help communities attract businesses, a skilled workforce, and tourism.

In late 2010, Congress unanimously reauthorized the agency, calling for \$38.6 million for the IMLS Office of Museum Services. Current funding is 20% less than that amount, and many highly-rated grant applications go unfunded each year.

Many of you sit on this Subcommittee because you care deeply about education. Museums do, too.

Across the country, museums provide hands-on learning, STEM education, youth training, and job preparedness. Museums spend more than \$2 billion annually on K-12 educational programming in coordination with curriculum standards, and receive more than 90 million visits from students each year. We provide critical teacher training and work extensively with homeschoolers.

The growing consensus is that the future of education will be about helping children develop a core set of skills: critical thinking, the ability to synthesize information, creativity, collaboration, and the ability to innovate. Museums offer the perfect opportunity to develop these skills.

As the director of a metropolitan children's museum, I can attest that museums play an integral role in our communities. Here are just a few examples of what we are doing at our museum:

- Please Touch Museum has a unique Autism Access Program, which provides tools to make a museum visit more comfortable and enjoyable for children with Autism

Spectrum Disorders. Our staff is specially trained to help these families and we provide materials to assist families to prepare for their visit. At one of our special Autism Access nights a father with two children, one on the Autism Spectrum came up and thanked me and told me “,...this is the first time in three years that we have been able to go out together as a family and have a good time. “

- Please Touch Museum participates as a Blue Star Museum. We provide free admission to all active duty and reserve personnel and their families. Last summer I was waiting in line at our café behind a mom and little boy who mentioned that they were visiting as part of the Blue Star program. The mom told me that being welcomed by the Museum made her feel like she was part of the Philadelphia community.

Here are some examples of how Office of Museum Services grant funding is used:

- In Billings, Montana, the Yellowstone Art Museum was awarded \$110,000 to help the museum reach more grade levels and more remote parts of the state. The museum works with local Title I schools, Head Start programs, and the Crow Indian reservation. One of Chairman Rehberg’s constituents, who serves as the curriculum coordinator at St. Labre Indian Academy in Ashland, Montana reported, “I have been a member of the Yellowstone Art Museum for many years, but I don’t think I ever truly appreciated the education program. Seeing the impact this experience had on our students, I am now convinced that it is one of the most important things you do.”

- In New Haven, Connecticut, the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History received a \$148,000 grant to support an after-school science literacy program. This program reaches many minority public high school students that are traditionally underrepresented in the sciences. At a time when our nation is struggling to get kids hooked on science, a student said of the program, “It has made me think of science as a real thing that I might well do, rather than just read about.”

A final example of an IMLS Office of Museum Services grant is one that Please Touch Museum received last year. It was a small investment of just under \$23,000 to address unemployment and underemployment in West Philadelphia. Partnering with the Philadelphia Zoo, we’ve developed an innovative job training and retention program to improve the local economy.

In closing, I would like to share with you for the record a bipartisan letter to the Subcommittee – requesting at least \$35 million for OMS – signed by 86 of your House colleagues.

Once again, I appreciate the opportunity to testify. I encourage you to support the IMLS Office of Museum Services, and I encourage you to visit some of the wonderful museums you represent. Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

**Testimony of
Laura H. Foster
President and CEO, Please Touch Museum®, The Children's Museum of Philadelphia
Board Member, American Association of Museums**

**www.aam-us.org
to the House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, HHS and Education and Related Agencies
March 29, 2012**

Chairman Rehberg, Ranking Member DeLauro, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. My name is Laura Foster and I serve as President and CEO of Please Touch Museum®, the Children's Museum of Philadelphia™. I also serve as a Board Member of American Association of Museums (AAM) and am here to represent AAM and the larger museum community – including the American Association for State and Local History, the Association of Art Museum Directors, the Association of Children's Museums, the American Public Gardens Association, and Heritage Preservation – to request that the Subcommittee make a renewed investment in museums in FY13. We urge your support for at least \$35 million for the Office of Museum Services (OMS) at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

AAM 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. AAM is proud to work on behalf of the 17,500 museums that employ 400,000 people, spend more than \$2 billion annually on K-12 educational programming, receive more than 90 million visits each year from primary and secondary school students, and contribute more than \$20 billion to local economies.

IMLS is the primary federal agency that supports the nation's museums, and OMS awards grants 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. The 2012-2016 IMLS Strategic Plan lists clear priorities: placing the learner at the center of the museum experience, promoting museums as strong community anchors, supporting museum stewardship of their collections, advising the President and Congress on how to sustain and increase public access to information and ideas, and serving as a model independent federal agency maximizing value for the American public. IMLS is indeed a model federal agency.

In late 2010, a bill to reauthorize IMLS for five years was enacted (by voice vote in the House and 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. The bill (now 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 FY12 appropriation of \$30,859,000 – equal to President Obama's FY13 budget request – represents a nearly 15% decrease from the FY10 appropriation of \$35,212,000. We urge the subcommittee to provide at least \$35 million for the IMLS Office of Museum Services.

To be clear, museums are essential in our communities for many reasons:

- Museums are key education providers. Museums already 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. Museums also provide experiential learning opportunities, STEM education, youth training, and job preparedness. They reach beyond the scope of instructional programming for schoolchildren by also providing critical teacher training. There is a growing consensus that whatever the new educational era looks like, it will focus on the development of a core set of skills: critical thinking, the ability to synthesize information, the ability to innovate, creativity, and collaboration. Museums are uniquely situated to help learners develop these core skills.
- Museums create jobs and support local economies. Museums serve as economic engines, bolster local infrastructure, and spur 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 and international tourism. Museums pump more than \$20 billion into the American economy, creating many jobs.
- Museums address community challenges. Many museums offer programs tailored to seniors, veterans, children with special needs, persons with disabilities, and more, greatly expanding their reach and impact. For example, some have programs designed specifically for children on the autism spectrum, some are teaching English as a Second Language, and some are serving as locations for supervised family visits through the family court system. In 2011, more than 1,500 museums participated in the Blue Star Museums initiative, offering free admission to all active duty and reserve personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day.
- Digitization and 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.

Grants to museums are highly competitive and decided through a rigorous, peer-reviewed process. Even the most ardent deficit hawks view the IMLS grantmaking process – the “regular process” – as a model for the nation. It would take approximately \$124.6 million to fund all the grant applications that IMLS received from museums in 2011. But given the significant budget cuts, many highly-rated grant applications go unfunded each year:

- Only 32% Museums for America/Conservation Project projects were funded;
- Only 15% National Leadership/21st Century Museum Professionals projects were funded;
- Only 64% Native American/Hawaiian Museum Services projects were funded; and
- Only 37% African American History and Culture projects were funded.

It should be noted that each time a museum grant is awarded, additional local and private funds are also leveraged. In addition to the required dollar-for-dollar match required of museums, grants often spur additional giving by private foundations and individual donors. A recent IMLS study found that 67% of museums that received Museums for America grants reported that their IMLS grant had positioned the museum to receive additional private funding.

Here are just two examples of how Office of Museum Services funding is used:

- The Yellowstone Art Museum (YAM) in Billings, Montana was awarded a \$110,000 Museums for America grant in 2011 to develop “Building on Solid Foundations.” Working with the Crow Indian reservation, Yellowstone County’s Title I schools, northern Wyoming schools, and area Head Start programs, this program will help the museum’s school programming reach more grade levels and extend YAM’s geographic

reach to a remote part of the country with few cultural resources. The curriculum coordinator at St. Labre Indian Academy in Ashland, Montana reported, “I have been a member of the Yellowstone Art Museum for many years, but I don’t think I ever truly appreciated the education program. Seeing the impact this experience had on our students, I am now convinced that it is one of the most important things you do.”

- The Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History in New Haven, Connecticut was awarded a \$148,015 Museums for America grant in 2011 to support “EVOLUTIONS,” an after-school science literacy program that engages New Haven Public School students in grades 9-12 from groups traditionally underrepresented in the sciences in a comprehensive, museum-based curriculum. Through hands-on projects, field trips, college preparation, career awareness, and transferable skills development, this program will engage teens and their teachers, parents, and community in science. When this grant was awarded, Peabody Museum Director Derek Briggs said, “The Museum is enormously grateful to IMLS whose support ensures the continuation of this vital program that has so successfully instilled the bug for learning and the sciences in scores of students and opened the door for careers they might not have dreamt possible.” Ranking Member DeLauro noted, “This is a great example of how public-private partnerships can help get young people excited about science and history while enhancing their learning experience with skills they will use in both their collegiate and professional careers.”

In closing, I would like to share with you for the record a bipartisan letter to the Subcommittee requesting at least \$35 million for OMS signed by 86 of your House colleagues. Thank you once again for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

PAUL TONKO
21ST DISTRICT, NEW YORK

COMMITTEE ON
THE BUDGET

COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY



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March 15, 2012

The Honorable Dennis Rehberg
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services
and Education
2358B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services
and Education
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rehberg and Ranking Member DeLauro,

We are writing to thank you for your support for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)'s Office of Museum Services (OMS) and to urge the Subcommittee to support at least \$35 million for OMS in the FY 2013 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill.

The demand for museum services is greater than ever. At a time when school resources are strained and many families cannot afford to travel or make ends meet, museums are working overtime to fill the gaps – providing more than 18 million instructional hours to schoolchildren, bringing art and cultural heritage, dynamic exhibitions and living specimens into local communities, partnering with other nonprofits to encourage national service and volunteerism, and offering free or reduced admission. Museums are part of a robust nonprofit community working to address our nation's greatest challenges, from creating energy efficient public buildings to collecting food, funding and other resources for needy families and individuals.

Unfortunately, museums are struggling significantly in these difficult economic times. They are being forced to cut back on hours, educational programming, community services and jobs. And according to the 2005 *Heritage Health Index*, at least 190 million artifacts are at risk, suffering from light damage and harmful and insecure storage conditions. Many museums also rely heavily on philanthropic donations to keep admission rates low and provide new exhibitions for their communities.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is the primary federal agency responsible for supporting the nation's more than 17,500 museums, and its Office of Museum Services' funding has decreased in the past few years. Although the agency has been successful in creating and supporting advancements in areas such as technology, lifelong community learning and conservation and preservation efforts, only a small fraction of the nation's museums are currently being reached, and many highly rated grant applications go unfunded each year.

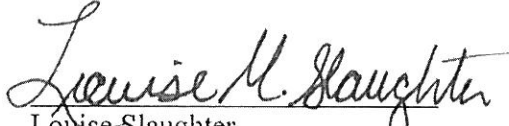
In 2010, the Institute of Museum and Library Services – the primary federal agency that supports our nation's 17,500 museums – was unanimously reauthorized by both the House and Senate. The agency is highly accountable, and its competitive, peer-reviewed grants serve every state. The re-authorization contained several provisions to further support museums, particularly at the state level, but much of the recently authorized activities cannot be accomplished without sustained funding.

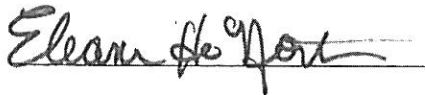
We urge the Subcommittee to support at least \$35 million (level funding with FY10) for the IMLS Office of Museum Services for FY13 to support the important work museums are doing in our communities, especially in these difficult economic times. This vital funding will aid museums of all types – aquariums, 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, science and technology centers, zoological parks, and other types of museums – and enable them to continue serving our schools and communities and preserving our cultural heritage for future generations.

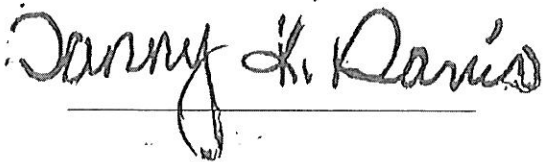
Again, we appreciate the Subcommittee's prior support for OMS and request this investment to strengthen and sustain the work of our nation's museums.

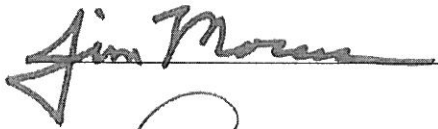
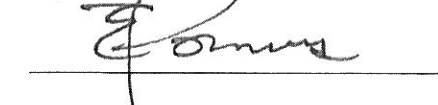
Sincerely,



Paul D. Tonko

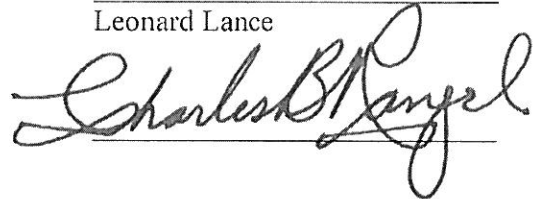

Louise Slaughter

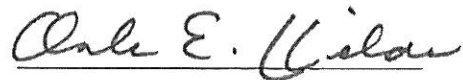


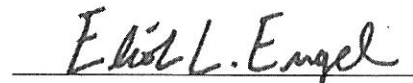


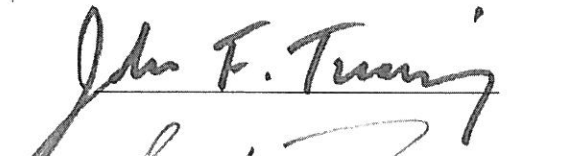
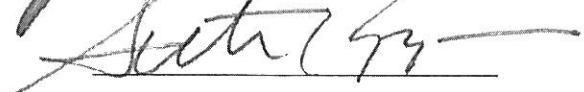




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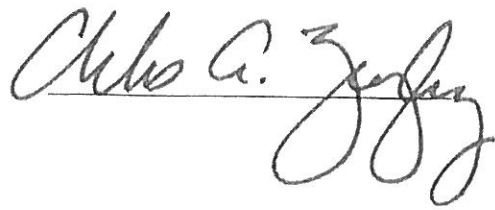
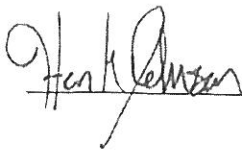
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IMLS Office of Museum Services Funding Request Letter, Total Signatories = 86

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