Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole,

We write to thank the Subcommittee for its previous support, and to urge you to support robust funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services’ (IMLS) Office of Museum Services (OMS) in the FY 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill.

Despite its small size, the IMLS Office of Museum Services is the largest dedicated source of investment in our nation’s museums, which support over 700,000 jobs and contribute $50 billion annually to the U.S. economy. OMS funding plays a significant role in this economic impact by helping museums reach more visitors and spur community development. In addition to their economic benefits, OMS grants also support museums’ advancements in areas such as technology, lifelong community learning, and conservation and preservation. These successes notwithstanding, only a small fraction of the nation’s museums are currently being reached and many highly rated grant applications go unfunded.

The demand for museum services is greater than ever. At a time when school and community resources are strained, museums are working overtime to fill the gaps. Every year, they welcome more than 55 million schoolchildren, bring art, science and cultural heritage into communities, and partner with other nonprofits to meet the specific needs of their local population. In addition, our nation’s museums are opening their doors to more people than ever with over 850 million visits each year — with many of these visitors offered free or reduced admission. Museums are also part of a robust nonprofit community working to address a wide range of our nation’s greatest challenges, from conducting medical research to helping veterans heal physically and psychologically, and from creating energy efficient public buildings to collecting food for needy families.

Congress reauthorized IMLS in late 2018, by enacting the Museum and Library Services Act of 2018 (Public Law No: 115-410). This legislation was passed with widespread bipartisan support by unanimous consent in the Senate and by a vote of 331 to 28 in the House, showing Congress’ renewed bipartisan support for the agency’s programs and a renewed commitment to its funding. The agency is highly accountable, and its competitive, peer-reviewed grants leverage significant private resources while supporting museums in every state.

We urge the Subcommittee to support robust funding for the IMLS Office of Museum Services for FY 2020 to support the important work museums are doing in our districts. This vital funding
will aid museums of all types and enable them to continue bolstering the economy, 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 Tonko

Chellie Pingree

Barbara Lee

Dina Titus

Mike Quigley

Denny Heck

Alex X. Mooney

Andy Barr

David B. McKinley, P.E.

Jackie Speier

Brian Higgins

John Kalko

Ted Deutch

Tony Cárdenas
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Tulsi Gabbard
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