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April 22, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

I write to express my deep opposition to your Administration's blatant attack on libraries, museums, and the arts and humanities overall. In recent weeks, you have taken actions to functionally eliminate or undermine the ability of the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities which is comprised of National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). These organizations exist to promote the arts, to preserve our culture and history, and to increase access to critical services for communities across the country and already operate with extremely limited resources. I am extremely alarmed that your Administration is targeting and dismantling these organizations – likely in violation of the law – and I demand you immediately reinstate federal funding for these programs.

NEA and NEH were founded 60 years ago because Congress recognized that the arts and humanities should not only be accessible to all Americans, but also play a vital role in the overall health of our nation.[1] The NEA supports nonprofit and public arts agencies and organizations, including Creative Forces, an initiative created in partnership with the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to improve the health, wellbeing, and quality of life for military personnel, veterans, and their families who have been exposed to trauma.[2] The NEH supports grants for education, research, preservation, and public programs in all areas of humanities including history, philosophy, religion, languages, and more. The arts and humanities are essential for enriching the lives of individuals and ensuring that we have an accurate record of our history.

[1] "Blumenthal Slams Trump for Crippling Nation's Ability to Response to Public Health Crises." March. 20, 2025. https://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release/blumenthal-slams-trump-for-crippling-nations-ability-to-respond-to-public-health-crises
[2] "Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network." National Endowment for the Arts. Accessed April 17 2025. https://www.arts.gov/initiatives/creative-forces

You have continually devalued and disregarded the importance of the arts and humanities, consistently taking actions to undermine the ability of these organizations to serve the American people. In February 2025, at your direction, the NEA eliminated a grant program that supported projects for underserved communities, including those in rural areas, that have limited access to the arts.[3] You also directed Elon Musk's so called Department of Government Efficiency to reduce the NEH workforce by as much as 80 percent and claw-back millions of dollars of grant funding already obligated to organizations across the country.[4][5] Rescinding dollars that these organizations have won through lengthy and competitive grant processes is likely illegal and certainly harmful, damaging the trust the American people have in the federal government and the communities who rely on these taxpayer dollars.

You have also targeted the IMLS, which supports libraries and museums across the country. IMLS is the largest source of federal funding for museums and libraries, assisting them in providing a range of services to their communities. Despite the demonstrable public good of investing in museums and libraries, on March 14, 2025, you issued an executive order that proposes the elimination of IMLS.[6] Currently, IMLS makes up less than .01% of the federal budget[7], yet the American Alliance of Museums reports that museums and other nonprofit cultural organizations return more than $5 in tax revenue for every $1 they receive.[8] Museums alone contribute more than $50 billion to the U.S. economy each year and support over 726,000 jobs.[9] They also play a vital role in cultural preservation by collecting, safeguarding, and interpreting artifacts, artworks, and historical documents, ensuring that these tangible and intangible aspects of our past are accessible and understood by future generations.

Further, libraries offer essential services that help make communities stronger. This includes providing early literacy development and grade-level reading programs, free high-speed internet access, employment assistance for job seekers, veterans' telehealth spaces equipped with technology and staff support, training for workforce development, and small business support for budding entrepreneurs. Many libraries also maintain online databases and partner with school districts to ensure that students have access to materials necessary to be successful in their coursework as they prepare to enter the workforce or pursue higher education. Gutting funding for libraries directly impedes the ability to millions of students across the country to get a quality education.

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[3] Blair, Elizabeth. "Chilling effect: Arts organizations react to end of DEI initiatives from fed agency." NPR. February 11, 2025. https://www.npr.org/2025/02/11/nx-s1-5293082/trump-executive-orders-dei-nea-arts-organizations

[4] Blair, Elizabeth. "Cultural groups across U.S. told that federal humanities grants are terminated." NPR. April 3, 2025. https://www.npr.org/2025/04/03/nx-s1-5350994/neh-grants-cut-humanities-doge-trump

[5] Blake, Jessica. "Trump and Musk Set Their Sights on Humanities Cuts." Insider Higher Ed. April 3, 2025. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/politics-elections/2025/04/03/staff-and-funding-cuts-neh-loom

[6] "Continuing the reduction of the federal bureaucracy." The White House. March 14, 2025. https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/continuing-the-reduction-of-the-federal-bureaucracy/

[7] Guernsey, Lisa. "Federal funding for Libraries and Museums on the Chopping Block." New America. March 26, 2025. https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/federal-funding-for-libraries-and-museums-on-the-chopping-block/

[8] "Museum Facts & Data." American Alliance of Museums. Accessed April 17, 2025. ttps://www.aam-us.org/programs/about-museums/museum-facts-data/

[9] "Museum Facts & Data." American Alliance of Museums. Accessed April 17, 2025. https://www.aam-us.org/programs/about-museums/museum-facts-data/

Withdrawing federal support for the NEA, NEH, and IMLS severely threatens the role nonprofits, museums, and libraries play in education, the economy, and the community. Your open disdain for these organizations, which aim to promote education, expression, and the preservation of knowledge among the American people, is senseless. I urge you to rescind your executive order, release the obligated funding as required by law, and reinstate employees who have been placed on administrative leave in order to preserve the federal support that America's nonprofits, libraries, and museums deserve to thrive and serve the public.[10]

Sincerely



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

[10] Limbong, Andrew. "Entire staff at federal agency that funds libraries and museums put on leave." NPR. March 31, 2025. https://www.npr.org/2025/03/31/nx-s1-5334415/doge-institute-of-museum-and-library-services