

**Statement of Christine Anagnos
Executive Director, Association of Art Museum Directors**

**for the record of the House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies**

**Regarding the FY 2022 Appropriations for the National Endowment for the Arts, the National
Endowment for the Humanities, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

The Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) is grateful to Congress for the increase in funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in FY 2021, as well as relief funding through the CARES Act and American Rescue Plan. Given the continuing pandemic and the extreme stresses it has inflicted on art museums, we ask for a substantial increase for the NEA for FY 2022, and we support the National Humanities Alliance request for an increase of \$57.5 million for the NEH. We ask further that both Endowments be allowed to provide funding for general operating support as well as for specific projects, and that the requirement for matching funds be suspended. Finally, we request that the Subcommittee recommend funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) necessary to staff and train personnel in order to avoid placing any impediments on American art museums that are importing works of art containing ivory for the purposes of accession into their collection.

In March 2020, nearly all American art museums closed due to the pandemic. As of late March 2021, 67 of AAMD's member museums remain closed to the public, although several plan on reopening in the near future. "Open," however, is not the same as it was a year ago. Many are open for fewer days and hours, operating under reduced capacity constraints, and requiring advance reservations and/or timed ticketing. Most have ceased offering in-person public programs such as tours, lectures and performances, and school field trips are for now, at least, a thing of the past. (Pre-pandemic, AAMD's 200-plus members typically served at least 40,000 schools annually.) Earned revenue from admissions, shops and restaurants has plummeted, while pandemic-related costs have soared. And while the Paycheck Protection Program helped many museums retain staff, some were unable or ineligible to access it, and many have since had to lay off or furlough valued workers.

Four bright spots stand out.

First, fundraising, on which most art museums rely for about a third of their budgets, has been helped by tax incentives enacted in the CARES Act, which have helped charities across the board.

Second, art museums successfully pivoted to on-line programming, as the Subcommittee heard from Museum of Glass director Deborah Lenk in her March 25 testimony.

Third, art museums have reached new audiences. Indeed, an extensive survey last year found that about half of people who were consuming museum programming, often with their home-bound children, had not visited an art museum in the previous year.

Fourth, art museums are among the safest indoor spaces. Their sophisticated HVAC systems may have been designed to keep art safe, but they turn out to keep people safe as well. For more information, see this [report](#) on a study conducted by the Berlin Institute of Technology.

AAMD salutes both NEA and NEH for their prompt and efficient disbursement of their CARES Act funding. Altogether, 55 AAMD member museums received nearly \$7 million in funding. As noted in our Witness Disclosure form, AAMD itself also received a CARES Act grant.

To give one detailed example: the NEA CARES Act grant allowed the Boise Art Museum to hire a Curator, a senior management position that had been vacated just before the pandemic forced the institution to close. At that time, the Curator responsibilities were being completed on a triage basis by the Executive Director with assistance from the Registrar, which could not have been continued long-term. Without this position, the mission and core work of the Museum would have been compromised and unsustainable. In addition, the grant is supporting wages for ArtReach instructors to adapt the museum's in-person outreach program for rural schools. Because this is a free program that does not generate revenue, it would have been at risk when difficult financial decisions were being made. Without the instructors, the Free ArtReach Program, that traditionally reaches more than 8,000 underserved students each year, would cease to exist, and BAM would be unable to deliver critical, first-hand visual arts education to students in rural Idaho.

Going forward, we expect that NEA and NEH will support art museums in figuring out and dealing with "the new normal." As many of our members have said, the museum that re-opens is not the one that closed, nor are its audience or community.

As part of that new normal, the NEA is restarting the Blue Star Museums initiative, a collaboration with Blue Star Families and the U.S. Department of Defense to provide free summer admission to active duty military and their families to museums across the nation. The Blue Star Museums program sends our military families a clear message —that our nation's museums recognize and honor their contributions and are opening their doors to them. The initiative will launch on May 15, Armed Forces Day, and we have encouraged all AAMD members to participate, as the great majority had done in past years.

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE: We also ask that the Subcommittee provide FWS with the funding necessary to staff and train personnel in order to avoid placing impediments on American art museums as they carry out their mission to be able to legally acquire works of antique ivory from abroad.

FWS staff have worked well with the art museum community on several important issues related to its mission and, as they continue to craft regulations that recognize the importance of maintaining historic works, we urge that they be given all necessary support and resources.

ABOUT AAMD: The purpose of the Association of Art Museum Directors is to support its members in increasing the contribution of art museums to society. The AAMD accomplishes this mission by establishing and maintaining the highest standards of professional practice, serving as forum for the exchange of information and ideas, acting as an advocate for its member art museums, and being a leader in shaping public discourse about the arts community and the role of art in society.

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