

FY 2015 SENATE Appropriations letter in support of the IMLS Office of Museum Services

**Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Moran,**

We are writing to thank you for your previous support for the Office of Museum Services (OMS) at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and to urge the Subcommittee to support robust funding for OMS in the FY 2015 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill. The Office of Museum Services is currently authorized to receive \$38.6 million annually.

Despite its small size, the IMLS Office of Museum Services is the largest dedicated source of investment in our nation's more than 17,500 museums, which employ over 400,000 Americans and directly contribute \$21 billion to the U.S. economy each year. OMS funding multiplies this economic impact by helping museums reach more visitors and spur community development. In addition to the economic benefits of this funding, 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 resources are strained and many families are struggling to make ends meet, museums are working overtime to fill the gaps. Every year, museums provide more than 18 million instructional hours to school children, 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 hosting supervised visits for the family court system, and from creating energy efficient public buildings to collecting food for needy families.

In 2010, the Institute of Museum and Library Services was unanimously reauthorized by both the House and Senate. The agency is highly accountable, and its competitive, peer-reviewed grants leverage significant private resources while supporting museums in every state. The re-authorization contained several provisions to further support museums, particularly at the state level, but many of the recently authorized activities cannot be accomplished without sustained funding.

We urge the Subcommittee to support robust funding for the IMLS Office of Museum Services for FY15 to support the important work museums are doing in our communities. 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,

Kirsten Gillibrand  
U.S. Senator