April 17, 2013

The Honorable Jack Kingston
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States Congress
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States Congress
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kingston and Ranking Member DeLauro,

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 2014 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill. The Office of Museum Services is currently authorized to receive $38.6 million annually.

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 schoolchildren, bring art and cultural heritage into local communities, and partner with other nonprofits to encourage national service and volunteerism. 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.

Unfortunately, museums are struggling significantly in these difficult economic times. They are being forced to cut back on hours, educational programming, community services and new hiring. In addition, 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. Funding for OMS is especially critical at this time as many museums rely heavily on philanthropic donations that have been difficult to secure in the current economic environment.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary federal agency that serves the nation’s more than 17,500 museums, and funding for its Office of Museum Services has decreased in recent 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 was unanimously reauthorized by both the House and Senate. The agency is highly accountable, and its competitive, peer-reviewed grants support 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 FY14 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 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
Louise Slaughter
Robert Brady
Jim Langevin
David N. Cicilline
Kathy Castor

Leonard Lance
Michael Grimm
Donald Payne, Jr.
Jim Himes
Lloyd Doggett
Frederica Wilson
Earl Blumenauer
Bobby Scott
Rush Holt
Sander Levin
Zoe Lofgren
Matt Cartwright
Raúl Grijalva
Dave Loebsack
Niki Tsongas
Loretta Sanchez
Pedro Pierluisi
Xavier Becerra
Chellie Pingree
Michael E. Capuano
Mark Takano
Judy Chu
Carol Shea-Porter
Gary Peters
Bruce Braley

Peter Welch

John Dingell

Yvette Clarke

Charles B. Rangel

Diana DeGette

Steve Cohen

William Lacy Clay

Doris Matsui

Chaka Fattah

Carolyn Maloney

Joe Courtney

Alcee L. Hastings

Jan Schakowsky

Bill Pascrell, Jr.

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger

John Conyers

Madeleine Bordallo