Americans for the Arts is the leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education in America. With offices in Washington, D.C. and New York City, we have more than 55 years of service and are dedicated to representing and serving local communities, and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts.

I am pleased to submit written testimony supporting federal funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) at the level of $155 million for FY2018. Thank you to Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, and members for the opportunity to provide public comment on the budget request for the NEA, on behalf of arts and culture across the country.

I am deeply troubled by the Trump Administration’s proposed FY2018 budget calling for the elimination of the NEA. President Trump is the first and only American president who has made such a recommendation. Our nation’s parents, teachers, community leaders, arts advocates, government officials, and even economists will not accept this proposal. For more than 50 years, the NEA has expanded access to the arts for all Americans, awarding grants in every congressional district throughout all 50 states and U.S. territories, as well as placing arts therapists in military hospitals to help returning military heroes heal from physical and traumatic brain injuries. Republican and Democratic leaders alike deeply value the work of the NEA.

The Administration’s budget proposal shows a lack of understanding of the important role that the NEA plays in America today. With only a $150 million annual appropriation, the NEA’s investment in every congressional district in the country contributes to a $730 billion arts and culture industry in America, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis at the U.S. Department of Commerce, representing 4.2 percent of the annual U.S. GDP. This arts and culture industry supports 4.8 million jobs and yields a $26 billion trade surplus for our country.

Beyond those numbers, the NEA work is critical to America’s future, generating substantial economic, educational, and direct community impact. In fiscal year 2016, NEA grants resulted in $500 million in matching support. These are additional dollars investing in projects, services, and programming, like access to arts education, teacher training, and preservation of historic artifacts.
In total, throughout its 50 years, the NEA has made over 147,000 grants totaling more than $5 billion dollars, leveraging up to ten times that amount through private philanthropies and local municipalities.

By law, 40 percent of both the NEA’s grantmaking budget goes directly to states. States make the decisions on where these dollars go in their states.

This cost? Approximately 0.004 percent of the federal budget.

Here are some outcomes if the cultural agencies were terminated:

1. **States would lose funding.** There would be the immediate, direct loss, but also the leveraging loss. In Alabama, for example, the Alabama State Council on the Arts receives about $775,000 from the NEA annually. From that $775,000 that the NEA gives, the Alabama State Council on the Arts can typically leverage another $4.6 million in donations that wouldn’t otherwise occur.

2. **National initiatives would end.** Just to highlight a few:
   a. **Creative Forces:** Since 2011, the military healing arts partnership has supported creative arts therapies for service members with traumatic brain injury and associated psychological health issues. With your leadership and congressional support, in 2016, the initiative expanded to ten additional sites nationwide and increased access to therapeutic arts activities in local communities for military members, veterans, and their families.
   b. **Big Read:** Over the last decade, the NEA has funded more than 1,300 Big Read programs, providing more than $18 million in grants to organizations in every congressional district. In turn, these organizations have leveraged nearly $42 million in local funding to support their NEA Big Read programs. More than 4.8 million Americans have attended an NEA Big Read event, approximately 79,000 volunteers have participated at the local level, and over 37,000 community organizations have partnered to make Big Read activities possible.
   c. **Mayors’ Institute on City Design:** A leadership initiative in partnership with the United States Conference of Mayors. Since 1986, the Mayors’ Institute has helped transform communities through design by preparing mayors to be the chief urban designers of their cities.
   d. **Shakespeare in American Communities:** Since its inception, over 100 theater companies have taken part in the program, benefitting more than 2.8 million individuals, including 2.3 million students in all 50 states.

3. **Improving access to the arts would be stymied.** Currently, 40 percent of NEA-supported activities take place in high-poverty neighborhoods; 36 percent of NEA grants go to organizations that reach underserved populations such as people with disabilities, people in institutions, and veterans; and more than half of NEA-funded art events take place in locations where the median household income is less than $50,000. Moreover, a non-federal funding model will leave too many communities behind. **Philanthropic giving as a whole in the United States is geographically disproportional, with rural**
areas receiving only 5.5% of foundation grant dollars. Public funding for the arts plays an essential role in making sure all American communities may benefit.

The administration’s proposal also comes on the heels of recent passage of a funding increase of nearly $2 million for the agency, bringing its budget to nearly $150 million. **Thank you to Chairman Calvert and the members of the committee for supporting that funding request and matching that funding increase in your mark last year**—including its successful passage on the U.S. House floor last July by a vote of 231-196. As before and as always, we stand ready to assist and remain focused on getting the Endowments fully funded again in the coming months.

I thank you for your support and recognition of the valuable contributions of cultural institutions to every community across the nation, and the role that federal agencies such as the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the NEA, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) play in invigorating communities and promoting lifelong learning. **These are indeed core federal responsibilities.**

Thank you for your consideration and support of $155 million for the NEA in the FY2018 budget, which I am proud to say is also **publicly supported by 154 members of Congress, including 11 Republican members, in the recent letter to your committee delivered on March 30, 2017, led by the Congressional Arts Caucus and its bipartisan co-chairs, Reps. Louise Slaughter and Leonard Lance.**