

## TO MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE LHHS APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEES

Dear Member of Congress:

The undersigned leading cultural organizations write to urge your strong support for continued and expanded federal funding for museums and libraries through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in your FY 2027 LHHS Appropriations. Museums, libraries, and archives form the bedrock of our nation and communities, long serving as gateways to knowledge, literacy, workforce skills, culture, and civic life in uniquely American ways. As we commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States, we should in turn celebrate and embrace the enduring, intrinsic contributions of these institutions to American history, society, and our economy.

Libraries, museums, and archives provide the essential infrastructure of the American experience, improving local communities through service to individuals and families of every age, income level, and background. Libraries provide free internet access, literacy programs, job training, artificial intelligence upskilling, veterans support, research assistance, and safe gathering spaces for families and students. Museums preserve our shared history, promote tourism, strengthen local economies, and offer educational programming that inspires curiosity and lifelong learning. Archives, many of which are housed within museums and libraries, document and preserve our shared history and provide access to public records. In rural and underserved communities especially, these institutions often function as vital community centers and educational, technological, and economic lifelines.

According to IMLS, more than [170 million Americans](#) hold library cards, and public libraries collectively receive over 1.3 billion visits annually – surpassing attendance at all major professional sporting events combined. Likewise, according to the American Alliance of Museums, museums welcome approximately [850 million visits](#) each year, serving students, researchers, tourists, and lifelong learners. These institutions stand at the heart of nearly every American community, both rural and urban, large and small.

Federal funding for libraries and museums represents only a tiny fraction of the federal budget yet produces outsized and sustained educational, economic, and public benefits. Analyses in multiple states have found that with every \$1 spent, public libraries return approximately [\\$3 to \\$6 in direct and indirect benefits](#) for the community – a significant return on investment that pays dividends in literacy, employment, and business growth. Museums and other nonprofit cultural organizations return more than [\\$5 in tax revenues](#) for every \$1 they receive in funding from all levels of government.

For example, in communities across the country libraries, museums, and archives:

- **Provide essential services and connection in rural America:** In Burnsville, West Virginia (population 300), the public library provides public computers, printing services, and the *only* place with free broadband within a 15-20 mile radius. The library's entire digital infrastructure – from its high-speed internet connection to its online catalog and popular e-book platform – is paid for by IMLS funds. If IMLS funding disappeared, this rural community would lose its only source of free Wi-Fi, its access to more than 50,000 e-books and journals, and its main literacy program for children.
- **Make taxpayer dollars go further with economies of scale:** In Arkansas, a federal block grant from IMLS provides residents, libraries, schools, and universities statewide with access to 50

research databases to support student learning, workforce skills development, and personal enrichment for a total of just \$850,000. Individually, institutions in the state would have to pay \$53 million in taxpayer funds for the same resources.

- **Foster innovation and entrepreneurship:** IMLS grants support technology innovation work in libraries to create new business opportunities, such as in Nebraska. Programs there have included equipping small libraries that could never afford high-tech equipment on their own with shared mobile “innovation studios” – including 3D printers, laser cutters, and video production tools – along with expert instruction. This program helps small business owners find new opportunities for growth.
- **Educate students and preserve cultural heritage:** The Chickasaw Nation partnered with the First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma to develop a publicly accessible, centralized resource for educational curriculum informed by Oklahoman Tribal nations, available for K-12 educators.
- **Document and celebrate local American history:** In South Carolina, IMLS funded a project at the Bart Garrison Agricultural Museum of South Carolina and the Archives at Hunter’s Store to digitize over 30,000 photographs and 1,000 historical documents to enhance public access. These resources help visitors understand the local heritage of the region and explore broader themes in American history, such as industrialization and the transformation of rural communities.
- **Advance the future while ensuring continued value:** Through its competitive grants, IMLS is at the heart of how libraries, museums, and archives adopt best practices and emerging technology. Thanks to a modest investment by IMLS, the digital navigators program piloted at Salt Lake City Public Library in Utah was adopted nationally. This program employs young adults to advance digital skills in communities of all sizes.

Every federal dollar invested in libraries, museums, and archives leverages additional support from state governments, private philanthropy, foundations, and local communities, creating a force multiplier effect. Reductions in federal funding would disproportionately harm small towns, rural communities, and low-income areas that depend heavily on public cultural institutions as essential hubs and economic drivers, as well as threaten future professionals and research.

We respectfully ask you to continue to support robust appropriations for IMLS, including all aspects of its proven grant programs, as demonstrated by their impacts above. Continued investment in museums and libraries is an investment in education, economic opportunity, civic engagement, and the preservation of our nation’s shared heritage as we honor 250 years of American independence and embark on the next 250 years.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your service to our country and your attention to this important issue. We hope you will stand with educators, students, librarians, historians, and communities nationwide in supporting strong FY 2027 federal funding for museums, libraries, and archives through IMLS.

Sincerely,

American Alliance of Museums

American Library Association

Association of Research Libraries

Association for Rural & Small Libraries

Chief Officers of State Library Agencies

EBSCO Information Services

EveryLibrary

Society of American Archivists

Urban Libraries Council