

5-Minute Oral Testimony
Testimony of Lori Fogarty
Director and CEO, Oakland Museum of California
on behalf of the American Alliance of Museums (www.aam-us.org)
to the House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
in support of the IMLS Office of Museum Services
May 19, 2021

Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Cole, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Lori Fogarty, and I am Director and CEO of the Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) testifying on behalf of the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). I urge you to provide the Office of Museum Services (OMS) within the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) with \$80 million for fiscal year (FY) 2022, an increase of nearly \$40 million. IMLS is the primary federal agency responsible for helping museums connect people to information and ideas. Its Office of Museum Services (OMS) supports all types of museums—from art museums to zoos—by awarding grants that help them better serve their communities.

Museums are economic engines and job creators. According to *Museums as Economic Engines: A National Report*, **pre-pandemic** U.S. museums supported more than 726,000 jobs and contributed \$50 billion to the U.S. economy per year. For example, the total financial impact that museums have on the economy in the state of **Connecticut** is \$834 million, including 10,229 jobs. For **Oklahoma**, it is a \$405 million impact supporting 6,404 jobs. In FY 2020 OMS received 784 applications requesting nearly \$146 million, but current funding has allowed the agency to fund only a

small fraction of the highly rated grant applications it receives. \$80 million would allow OMS to double its grant capacity for museums, funds which museums will need to help recover from the pandemic and continue to serve their communities.

For OMCA, as with other museums, the COVID-19 health crisis and resulting closure have had a significant and very difficult impact. Despite these enormous challenges, museums, for months, have safely served as community centers for education and places of respite, inspiration, and even vaccines themselves. Our Museum closed its doors to staff and the public as of March 13th, 2020 and we remain closed, with a planned reopening date of June 11th. To date, OMCA has lost approximately \$3.8 million in gross earned revenue through the end of March 2021, and anticipates an additional approximately \$3.3 million in total revenue losses in the coming year. As a result, we have had to reduce our staffing by 15% and we know that recovery will be a multi-year process.

Despite the heavy economic toll, the Museum continued to serve our community, jumping into the digital realm like never before. We offered Virtual Field Trips for school children and virtual Community Celebrations online this year, including producing virtual versions of our beloved annual El Día de los Muertos and Lunar New Year celebrations.

Further, as a founding partner of the coalition known as “Art for the Movement,” we partnered with the Black Cultural Zone and Oakland Art Murmur to document, steward, and preserve the hundreds of street murals that were created during the racial justice protests of the summer of 2020.

Now, as we look forward to our reopening, we know that, more than ever, museums can and will be safe places for community gathering – places where people and communities can come together to rebuild trust, connection, and understanding. For OMCA, as with other museums, additional OMS funding at this time would provide essential and urgently needed support.

I want to express the museum field's gratitude for the \$40.5 million in funding for OMS in FY 2021, and we applaud the 151 bipartisan Representatives who recently wrote to you in support of FY 2022 OMS funding. This small program provides a vital investment.

In closing, I highlight recent national public opinion polling that shows that 95% of voters would approve of lawmakers who acted to support museums and 96% want federal funding for museums to be maintained or increased. Museums have a profound positive impact on society. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.