



**Testimony of Dr. Ford W. Bell,
President 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
April 23, 2015**

Chairman Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony on behalf of our members and the nation's larger museum community. My name is Ford Bell and I serve as President of the American Alliance of Museums. I respectfully request that the Subcommittee make a renewed investment in museums in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016. I urge you to fully fund the Office of Museum Services (OMS) at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) at its authorized level of \$38.6 million.

The Alliance is proud to represent the full range of our nation's museums—including aquariums, art museums, botanic gardens, children's museums, culturally specific museums, historic sites, history museums, maritime museums, military museums, natural history museums, planetariums, presidential libraries, science and technology centers, and zoos, among others—along with the professional staff and volunteers who work for and with museums.

Museums are economic engines and job creators: We are proud to report that U.S. museums employ 400,000 people and directly contribute \$21 billion to their local economies.

This Subcommittee may be especially interested in the ways museums are providing educational programming and the results of this investment:

- Museums spend more than \$2 billion each year on education activities; the typical museum devotes three-quarters of its education budget to K-12 students, and museums receive approximately 55 million visits each year from students in school groups.
- Children who visited a museum during kindergarten had higher achievement scores in reading, mathematics and science in third grade than children who did not. This benefit is also seen in the subgroup of children who are most at risk for deficits and delays in achievement.
- According to a recent study by researchers at the University of Arkansas, students who attended a field trip to an art museum experienced an increase in critical thinking skills, historical empathy and tolerance. For students from rural or high-poverty regions, the increase was even more significant.
- Museums help teach the state, local or core curriculum, tailoring their programs in math, science, art, literacy, language arts, history, civics and government, economics and financial literacy, geography and social studies.
- Many museums are tailoring programs to serve homeschooling families.

IMLS is the primary federal agency that supports the museum field, and OMS awards grants in every state to help museums digitize, enhance and preserve their collections; provide teacher training; and create innovative, cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary programs and exhibits for schools and the public.

In late 2010, legislation to reauthorize IMLS for five years was enacted (by voice vote in the House and by unanimous consent in the Senate). The bipartisan reauthorization included several

provisions proposed by the museum field, including enhanced support for conservation and preservation, emergency preparedness and response and statewide capacity building. The reauthorization also specifically supports efforts at the state level to leverage museum resources, including statewide needs assessments and the development of state plans to improve and maximize museum services throughout the state. That bill (Public Law 111-340) authorized \$38.6 million for the IMLS Office of Museum Services to meet the growing demand for museum programs and services. The Fiscal Year 2015 appropriation of \$30.1 million represents a nearly 15% decrease from the FY 2010 appropriation of \$35.2 million.

We applaud the Administration's Fiscal Year 2016 budget for requesting a significant increase—to \$35.1 million—for the Office of Museum Services. It would help museums make an impact in several priority areas identified by the agency, such as STEM education and makerspaces, a comprehensive collections care survey, and early learning. We also applaud the 132 Representatives who wrote to you in support of FY 2016 OMS funding, including subcommittee members Fattah and Lee.

Here are a few examples, just from 2014, of how IMLS Office of Museum Services funding is used:

Traveling Natural History Science and STEM Curriculum—Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History (Norman, OK) was awarded \$123,132 to develop traveling natural history science curricula kits for K-12 students. This project will expand the museum's outreach program, featuring STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)

content with a focus on Oklahoma geology, life, and cultural science. The museum will share the educational kits, featuring materials aligning with state educational standards, with teachers across Oklahoma. The museum's digitization of the kits will increase the capacity and number of teachers who have access to the material and enable students to experience high-quality STEM educational opportunities offsite and online.

Classroom Learning Experiences—Art Museum of Eastern Idaho (Idaho Falls, ID)

was awarded \$18,440 to expand its "ARTworks" education program by sending museum-sanctioned artist instructors into 100 public school 3rd and 4th grade classrooms in eastern Idaho to teach grade-relevant lessons aligned with the Idaho Humanities Achievement Standards. The ARTworks program will play an important role in strengthening critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and self-direction among students.

Increasing Access to Collections—Peabody Museum of Natural History (Yale University,

New Haven, CT) was awarded \$136,615 to rehouse three components of its invertebrate zoology collection. Much of this material is associated with the research of Yale's first professor of zoology, Addison E. Verrill, and it includes previously unrecognized type specimens. As a result of this grant, the collection will be catalogued and preserved in a state-of-the-art storage facility with greater accessibility for researchers and the public.

School Partnerships and Outreach—California African American Museum (Los Angeles, CA)

was awarded \$131,835 to redesign its hands-on learning exhibition, the Gallery of Discovery, publish a curriculum aligned with California state standards, and provide on-site professional development

workshops and in-class support to a network of teachers from local schools. Through CAAM's Education Expanded! Initiative, the grant will help the museum address the disparity of access to arts and cultural opportunities among middle and high school students from Title I schools.

It should be noted that each time a museum grant is awarded, additional local and private funds are also leveraged. In addition to the dollar-for-dollar match required of museums, grants often spur additional giving by private foundations and individual donors. Two-thirds of IMLS grantees report that their Museums for America grant positioned the museum to receive additional private funding.

IMLS grants to museums are highly competitive and decided through a rigorous, peer-review process. Even the most ardent deficit hawks view the IMLS grant-making process as a model for the nation. Due to the large number of grant applications and the limited funds available, many highly-rated grant proposals go unfunded each year. In 2014:

- Only 35% of Museums for America/Conservation Project Support project proposals were funded;
- Only 22% of National Leadership project proposals were funded;
- Only 17% of Sparks Ignition Grants for Museums project proposals were funded;
- Only 64% of Native American/Hawaiian Museum Services project proposals were funded; and
- Only 37% of African American History and Culture project proposals were funded.

If I can provide any additional information about the essential role of the museums in your community, I would be delighted to do so. Thank you once again for the opportunity to submit this testimony today.