June 27, 2017

Dear Friends and Supporters of Museums in North Carolina,

North Carolina Museums Council expresses its dismay at the proposed elimination of funding in the FY2018 budget for the National Endowment for the Humanities, National Endowment for the Arts, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The NEH and NEA have a direct impact across North Carolina, supporting small art and cultural institutions in innumerable ways. The North Carolina Humanities Council and the North Carolina Arts Council are direct recipients of Federal funding and regularly re-grant these monies to small institutions across the state. The NCHC also coordinates efforts such as the Museums on Main Street program from the Smithsonian Institution that brings national exhibits to museums outside the large metropolitan areas.

Both NEH and NEA provide grants that support culture and life in communities large and small. A good example is the $10,000 provided for the Allegheny County Junior Appalachian Musicians in 2016. Grants of this sort can provide the legitimacy that outside funders need to support a particular program and they supply the multiplier effect that can make the difference in securing extra funding.

IMLS has a direct impact within the state of North Carolina. Annually for the past 22 years, IMLS awards ten institutions the National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the nation’s highest honor given to museums and libraries for service to the community. The North Carolina State University Library and the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences received the honor in 2016 and 2014 respectively.

IMLS also provides grants to museums and cultural institutions within North Carolina, 22 in the past 3 years totaling over $2,133,729. Examples of the breadth of IMLS's support for institutions in the state include

- In 2014, the Oconaluftee Indian Village in Cherokee received $49,900 to recreate, interpret, and operate a historic blacksmith shop.
- In 2015, the Wake Forest Historical Museum received $25,000 to preserve and share 7,000 historic images within their collection.
• Also in 2015, the Children’s Museum of Wilmington received $22,533 to launch a STEM program for third graders in New Hanover County.

• In 2016, the North Carolina Maritime Museum received $149,249 to preserve artifacts excavated from Blackbeard’s shipwreck, the Queen Ann’s Revenge.

Federal grant dollars help North Carolina museums move beyond what basic operating support provides, transforming these sites from local venues into top tourist destinations. Our museums helped North Carolina’s burgeoning tourism industry generate $22.9 billion in direct visitor spending, producing $1.7 billion in federal taxes, $1.2 billion in state taxes and $693 in local tax revenues.

The North Carolina Museums Council, representing over 550 museums of all types and sizes across the Tar Heel state, decries these and other proposed cuts within the FY2018 budget. These include reductions to the National Science Foundation, the National Park Service, and NASA’s Office of Education. These cuts jeopardize America’s long-standing commitment to science education, public history, and support for the arts. These cuts shortchange our citizens and devalue American culture in the global landscape.

Sincerely,

Peter Koch

President, North Carolina Museums Council